

Visualizing Christian Marriage in the Roman World

By

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To Lauren

Quale iugum fidelium duorum unius spei...

In ecclesia Dei pariter utrique,

pariter in conuiuio Dei,

pariter in angustiis, ... in refrigeriis.

—Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.8

And to our children, Kasey, David, Stephanie, Courtney, and Elisabeth

μειζοτέραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν,

ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα.

—3 John 4

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This dissertation is indebted, first of all, to the early Christians whose portraits have captivated me since before I began doctoral studies. At that time my academic interests lay rather generally with intersections of early Christian literature, visual art, and practice, with no special interest in the topic of marriage in the early church. I came to this latter subject somewhat by accident. While I was in a university library one day perusing volumes on early Christian art, P. Gangolf Diener's little booklet *Credo der Urkirche* fell open to a page with an imposing double-portrait of a married couple surrounded by Christian symbols. The man and woman depicted in that image seemed to stare back at me, and for some moments I was transfixed, struck with curiosity, not for the first time but with fresh intensity, about the identities, the lives, the convictions of the "ordinary" people who comprised most of the ancient Christian population. Later that same day, as I was studying the decorative programs on the sarcophagi in the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, my eye was drawn again and again to similar, prominent spousal portraits at the center of many figured panels. They were so large, so obviously important to the people who created them, yet in the catalog descriptions they were identified simply as portraits of "the deceased," without elaboration. I wanted to know more. Who were these people? Why did they choose to be represented in pairs? Were their images making any religious or social claims, and if so, what were they, and how were they to be identified and understood? Such questions ultimately led me more deeply into studies of late antique visual art, iconography, portraiture, literature, and religious and social history, culminating now with this dissertation. If, in some measure, I have succeeded in giving voice to the views of those married, rank and file Christians of late antiquity whose portraits confront us on their monuments, it is largely because they started the process through the arresting images they left behind.

In the course of my research and writing many individuals assisted me. Together with my wife, Lauren, friends Matt Grey, Tom Valletta, and Bryan Maughan got me over the initial hurdle of self-doubt, persuading me that I could and should take this academic journey. Funding making the journey possible

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This dissertation is the better for all these who assisted me. Whatever flaws remain are of my own making.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CLE	Carmina Latina Epigraphica
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EOMIA	Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta Iuris Antiquissima
FC	Fathers of the Church
ICUR	Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae
ILS	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NPNF I	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1
NPNF II	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
Rep. I	Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Bd 1
Rep. II	Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Bd 2
Rep. III	Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Bd 3
SC	Sources chrétiennes

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SEEKING THE VIEWS OF THE MARRIED CHRISTIAN POPULATION

Seeing the Married Christian Population

As identifiably Christian art emerged in the third and fourth centuries, Christians in Rome and its environs commissioned works of visual art decorated with Christian images as objects for their own self-representation. The likenesses of these Christian patrons, or more precisely their idealized representations, appear in such monumental works as sarcophagus reliefs and catacomb frescoes as well as such minor arts as glass vessels, domestic silver, gems, seals, finger rings, and belt ornaments, accompanied by biblical motifs and symbols, and occasionally by distinctively Christian inscriptions. A striking feature of these portrayals is the prevalence of married pairs—double-portraits, wedding scenes, and other representations of a husband and wife together.¹ Using conventions of Roman art and new iconographic forms, married patrons of the new faith depicted themselves in visual programs that made particular statements about their theological commitments, their religious and social identity in the Roman world, and their hopes for the next world. In all this, these patrons wished to be seen and remembered as married Christians.

This dissertation examines the corpus of third- and fourth-century Christian marital imagery in and around Rome, interpreting its iconography and considering its place in the development of Christian

¹ For example, the sarcophagi catalogued in Rep. I include 24 with *clipeus* portraits of married couples, compared to just 12 with a *clipeus* portrait of a man, 11 of a woman, and 8 of a child; see Ulrike Lange, *Ikonoographisches Register für das Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Bd 1 (Rom und Ostia)* (Dettelbach: J. H. Röhl, 1996), 24–28. The 24 portraits of spouses do not include others in additional forms, such as *dextrarum iunctio* scenes, couples in “philosopher”-type portraits, and spouses worshipping at Jesus’s feet. Of the 460 gold glass medallions in Charles Rufus Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections*, ed. Guy Ferrari (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1959), Morey identifies 28 that portray married couples, and an additional 15 that portray married couples with one or more children in a ‘family group’; Janet H. Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality in Family Funerary Monuments in the Roman World,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 552. For comments on the prevalence or prominence of portraits of Christian spouses, see George M. A. Hanfmann, *The Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 55; Janet Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi: Art and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 227.

discourses and practices about marriage. As a body of evidence this visual art casts light on the underrepresented perspectives of the married Christian population during a formative period in the faith's conceptualization of marital and familial life. Christian discourse on this subject throughout the first four centuries was marked by tension between separatist, ascetic impulses and assimilationist, socializing drives. Within these tensions people advocated diverse views about the ways marriage and family life among Christians ought to differ from "pagan" society, and the place they held within the faith community. Debate about the value of celibacy as compared to marriage was a recurring theme, one that became particularly acute at times in fourth-century Rome. However, much of our knowledge of this formative period stems from early Christian literature, which, as Kyle Harper has noted, "overstates the importance of asceticism in late Roman society."² Similarly, Rebecca Krawiec has observed that these written sources can give the impression "that asceticism was an ideal embraced by all Christians in late antiquity." The authors of this literature, "primarily elite, male ascetics," constituted a "small group" that may not represent "the 'norm' of Christianity in this time period."³ Tellingly, the great fourth-century bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who developed rites for consecrating virgins, mentioned in passing that the paths of virginity, celibate widowhood, and marriage were all good, but the longer path of marriage was "the way most take."⁴ Hence the term "the silent majority" that Peter Brown and other historians have used to refer to the mass of ordinary Christians in late antiquity who continued in traditional patterns of Roman life, marrying, raising children, and leading socially-integrated lives.⁵

² Kyle Harper, "Marriage and Family," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 680.

³ Rebecca Krawiec, "Asceticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 768. For other instances where scholars have pointed out this bias in the ancient sources, see Andrew S. Jacobs and Rebecca Krawiec, "Fathers Know Best? Christian Families in the Age of Asceticism," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11.3 (2003): 257–263, esp. 260; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 92–93.

⁴ Ambrose, *Epistula* 14.40 (*Maur.* 63.40); CSEL 82.3, 256: Bona etiam [via] matrimonii, plana et directa longiore circuitu ad castra sanctorum pervenit, ea plurimos recipit; "Good also is [the way] of marriage; level and direct it arrives by a longer course at the camp of the saints. It [is the way] most take" (my trans.).

⁵ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 20th anniversary edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 206, 401, cf. 44, 429; David G. Hunter, "'On the Sin of Adam and Eve': A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster," *Harvard Theological Review* 82.3 (1989): 283; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 113; Carol Harrison, "The Silent Majority: The Family in Patristic Thought," in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 87–105; Harper, "Marriage and Family," 680; cf. Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 110.

Scholarship on Marriage and the Perspectives of “Average” Christians

Scholarship in recent decades has given much attention to ascetic strands of early Christian tradition, exploring concepts that lay behind the practices of celibacy, monasticism, and various forms of sexual, social, and financial renunciation.⁶ Comparatively little attention has been given to the alternate piety of the married rank and file.⁷ What were the perspectives of this group? How did its constituents visualize their position in relation to the rest of the faith community, and in relation to Roman society?⁸ To what extent did they resist or avoid the ascetic ideal or, conversely, incorporate ascetic values into their notions of marriage and family life?⁹ In what ways did their views differ from their non-Christian neighbors?¹⁰

A number of historians have called attention to this underexplored area in existing scholarship and have undertaken studies to retrieve missing perspectives. In a series of articles and the monograph *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, David G. Hunter has examined such fourth-century figures as the monk Jovinian, the theologian Helvidius, and the presbyter Ambrosiaster, who

⁶ E.g., Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101; *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), and 20th anniversary edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Surveys of the scholarship are presented in Krawiec, “Asceticism,” 764–785; and J. William Harmless, SJ, “Monasticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, 493–517.

⁷ A growing number of scholars has pointed out this relative lack of attention to the conceptualization of marriage and the less-ascetic views of the married Christian population; e.g., Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, vii; Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ix. A survey of work on Christian marriage and families is included in Jacobs and Krawiec, “Fathers Know Best?” 257–263. Cornelia B. Horn, “Family. Christianity. Greek and Latin Patristics and Orthodox Churches,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, Vol. 8, ed. Dale C. Allison, Jr., et al. (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2014), 835, remarks: “Scholarship has hardly begun to investigate systematically the reception of ideas pertaining to the family as they emerge from patristic writings interpreting scripture.”

⁸ Jaś Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive: The Psychology of Rhetoric and the Transformation of Visual Culture from non-Christian to Christian Sarcophagi in the Roman World,” in *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Michel Meyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 337–338: Christian sarcophagi serve a “dual purpose in both defining a Christian identity for the deceased and in selectively denying or excluding the applicability of certain definitively non-Christian aspects of traditional culture within its identity claims.”

⁹ Jacobs and Krawiec perceptively warn: “We must also take care not to construct a ‘black-and-white’ vision of the ancient Christian world: to remove the blinders of the ascetic movements is not to deny the power of ascetic discourse altogether. The history of early Christian families need not be a counterhistory, designed to ‘un-mask’ the corporeal reality behind rarefied ascetic rhetoric, any more than the history of early Christian asceticism needs to deny that, at times, pious Christians ate, drank, and biologically reproduced”; “Fathers Know Best?” 260–261; for another example of similar balance, see Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 49.

¹⁰ For two representative studies taking up this question, see Ramsay MacMullen, “What Difference Did Christianity Make?” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 35.3 (1986): 322–343; Harper, “Marriage and Family.”

wrote in defense of marriage and the religious merit of married Christians.¹¹ Though Ambrosiaster's writings on this subject are not among the most-read early Christian texts, and the works of Helvidius and Jovinian are known only in the writings of those who opposed them, these authors and their supporters among the rank and file attest to the presence of Christians in and around Rome who opposed the elevation of celibacy above marriage and resisted the ascetic ideal as sometimes expressed by enthusiasts such as Jerome.

Kate Cooper's studies on the roles of women in late antiquity have examined fourth- through sixth-century texts and traced transformations in marriage and private life. In *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* Cooper explored the notions of womanhood that underlay ways of life chosen by ascetic "separatists" and married "traditionalists."¹² She also discussed these alternatives as represented in the stridently pro-celibate rhetoric of Jerome and the contrasting stance of John Chrysostom, for whom marriage could be "a veritable school for virtue."¹³ In *The Fall of the Roman Household* Cooper acknowledged the academic attention that has been given to ways asceticism transformed the Roman family, and, expanding on earlier work, took up a less-considered, "second aspect in the revolution of family life" regarding how late antique Christians constructed an "ideal of marriage as a commitment for eternity."¹⁴

Judith Evans-Grubbs, in her article "'Pagan' and Christian Marriage: The State of the Question" (essentially chapter 2 from her dissertation, revised and published as *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation*), compared pre-Christian marital ideology, practice, and law to early Christian marital practice using the *Divine Institutes* of Lactantius, the canons of early church councils, and Christian inscriptions from the late third and early fourth centuries. The sources, Evans-Grubbs concluded, suggest "a much greater degree of continuity with pre-Christian values and

¹¹ David G. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," *Theological Studies* 48.1 (1987): 45–64; "On the Sin of Adam and Eve"; "Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy: Asceticism and Clerical Authority in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003): 453–470; *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*.

¹² Cooper, *Virgin and the Bride*.

¹³ Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 150–164, quote 157.

¹⁴ Cooper, *Fall of the Roman Household*, ix.

practice than the writings of more ascetically minded Christian theologians imply.” She made note of recent work on early Christian attitudes towards marriage and family as found in the writings of intellectuals like Augustine, but stated, “Little attempt has been made ... to examine late antique, Christian attitudes toward sexuality and marriage from the viewpoint of the ‘average’ Christian.”¹⁵ Early Christian writings, she observed in *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, “laud the self-control and devotion to God of Christians who renounced marriage and child-bearing, but apart from some interesting assertions by Tertullian, they provide little information about the marriage practices of those Christians (surely the great majority) who did not choose to remain celibate from youth.”¹⁶

More recently, as Evans-Grubbs summarized scholarship on the family for the volume *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, she noted that while Christianity offered an alternative to marriage that “had been the lot of virtually all women” in antiquity, there were “few Christians practicing perpetual celibacy in the west” at the time of Constantine. The sources Evans-Grubbs listed for the study of the family in late antiquity—legal texts, funerary inscriptions, papyri, letters, orations, other Greco-Roman literary works, Christian treatises, hagiographies, sermons, and canon law—did not include visual art.¹⁷ Similarly, Kyle Harper has recently distilled scholarship and findings on “Marriage and Family” for *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*. Stating, “It is imperative to seek out the ideals of the family that prevailed among that ‘silent majority’ who continued to reproduce society, generation after generation,” Harper pointed to “conciliar canons, tracts in defense of marriage, and pastoral instruction” as “the essential sources,” and identified two main, distinctive marital norms developed by late antique Christians: “the doctrine of indissolubility and the ideal of sexually exclusive marriage.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Judith Evans-Grubbs, “‘Pagan’ and ‘Christian’ Marriage: The State of the Question,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.4 (1994): 361–412, quotes 361; *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine’s Marriage Legislation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁶ Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, 147.

¹⁷ Judith Evans-Grubbs, “Marriage and Family Relationships in the Late Roman West,” in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 201, 219.

¹⁸ Harper, “Marriage and Family,” 667–714, quotes 680, 668.

As the foregoing works illustrate, examinations of early Christian views of marriage have relied almost exclusively on written sources.¹⁹ A few, however, have also made note of the potential for physical artifacts and works of visual art to fill out the picture. Peter Brown commented on funerary art depicting Adam and Eve “with their right hands joined in the *dextrarum iunctio* that rendered visible the concord of a Roman marriage” and “spoke for the views of a silent majority that believed ... that God had created humanity for marriage and childbirth.”²⁰ Kate Cooper, observing that less is known about married traditionalists than ascetic separatists in early Christianity, referred to “the archaeological finds that might correct the bias of our narrative sources.” She then briefly discussed one such artifact, the Projecta casket, a silver case bearing a double-portrait of a wife and husband on its lid and representations of the wife and her attendants mirrored by Venus with mythological attendants.²¹ David Hunter made note of visual allusions to marriage in the form of the *dextrarum iunctio* on wedding gifts like glass bowls, finger rings, or metal belts, and further hinted at visual evidence with the image of a sarcophagus double-portrait on the cover of *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*.²² However, a sustained examination of a wide selection of such artifacts was beyond the scope of these authors’ projects.

Yet these very objects that married Christians commissioned for their own self-representation may provide the most direct access to that population’s views and values. Ramsay MacMullen’s statement about the value of material evidence, though made in an argument that may overreach in its stark division between the official and popular church, nevertheless has relevance for this dissertation’s interest in physical artifacts:

[The authors of early Christian texts] count as no more than a hundredth of one per cent of the Christian population at any given moment. It is not to discount their influence, then, that we may fairly ask: How may we catch some glimpse of the great mass of Christians, the commonality?

¹⁹ In addition to the foregoing, Charles Munier, *Ehe und Ehelosigkeit in der Alten Kirche* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987), not discussed here because it does not represent an attempt to articulate lay perspectives, is another example of a work of scholarship that focuses exclusively on written texts in its description of marriage and celibacy in the ancient church.

²⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 401; Brown mistakenly states that Adam and Eve were “frequently” depicted this way, as the only surviving example in visual art is the Velletri plaque (discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation); for a correction, see Robin M. Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve in Early Christian Art and Literature,” in *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art*, ed. Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 50, note 47.

²¹ Cooper, *Virgin and the Bride*, 92–93; Cooper also discusses epigraphic evidence on 97–100, 103–104.

²² Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 70, footnote 68; Hunter also discusses other material evidence of the fourth-century Christian aristocracy on 63–68.

Answer must be chiefly sought underground; for Christians as a population are best known to us not by the written word, except occasionally inscribed. Instead, it is only by excavation ... that their lives and behavior can be drawn up for our inspection. Literary evidence can only represent the upper stratum among the Christian population.²³

Art historians have documented early Christian portraits of married couples and other forms of marital iconography in the course of broader cataloging projects, but this valuable work typically (and necessarily) ventures little beyond the task of description (focusing on provenance, date, form, style, production methods, and basic iconography).²⁴ Two early twentieth-century publications dealt particularly with Christian marital iconography—Otto Pelka's *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler* (1901) and Henri Leclercq's entry "Mariage" for the *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* (1932)—but both catalogued with little theorizing, and given the discoveries, publications, and advances over the past century, both are now somewhat incomplete and dated.²⁵ Since the mid-twentieth century various case studies on individual objects or motifs have discussed their social and theological valences with regard to marriage and family life.²⁶ This dissertation, however, represents the first attempt at a sustained,

²³ Ramsay MacMullen *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), xi; for a critique see Robert Louis Wilken, "The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400, by Ramsay MacMullen [review]," *Conversations in Religion & Theology* 8.2 (2010): 120–125; for other statements on how material evidence can contribute to a richer reconstruction of Christian social history, see Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 140; Suzanne Dixon, "From Ceremonial to Sexualities: A Survey of Scholarship on Roman Marriage," in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 258–259.

²⁴ E.g., Rep. I identifies portraits of spouses on Christian sarcophagi without discussing their significance; see, e.g., nos. 34, 39, 40, 42–44, 87, 112, 187–188, 239, 244, 385, 435, 625, 650, 681, 689, 778, 782, 812, 962, 1010; cf. Kurt Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), nos. 261–263, 281, 362–363, 371, 374, 378, 432, 446, 462.

²⁵ Otto Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler* (Strassburg: JHE Heitz [Heitz & Mündel], 1901); Henri Leclercq, "Mariage," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, ed. Le Rme dom Fernand Cabrol and dom Henri Leclercq, vol. 10 no. 2 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ane, 1932), 1843–1982 (1899–1943 deal with visual art, while 1843–1899 discuss textual evidence and 1943–1982 deal with epigraphy). Examples of dated material: Pelka did not know the whereabouts of numerous pieces, such as the gold glass inscribed *VIVATIS IN DEO* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 95–96; he misdated the mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore to the second half of the fourth century, 108.

²⁶ Examples of case studies include Louis Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio' dans l'iconographie romaine et paléochrétienne," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 31 (1958): 23–95; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "On the Golden Marriage Belt and the Marriage Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960): 1–16; Gary Vikan, "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 145–163; Kathryn A. Smith, "Inventing Marital Chastity: The Iconography of Susanna and the Elders in Early Christian Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 16.1 (1993): 3–24; Alicia Walker, "A Reconsideration of Early Byzantine Marriage Rings," in *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*, ed. Sulochana Asirvatham et al., (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 149–164; Jensen, "The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve," 47–51; Jaś Elsner, "Visualising Women in Late Antique Rome: The Projecta Casket," in *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton*, ed. Christ Entwistle (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2003), 22–36; Dennis Trout, "Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative: Agency, Identity, and the (Bethesda) Sarcophagus of Bassa," in *Life, Death, and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, eds. Jaś Elsner and Janet Huskinson (Berlin: DeGruyler 2010), 337–358; Catherine Taylor, "Painted Veneration: The Priscilla Catacomb

systematic examination of the social, religious, and historical significance of the corpus of Roman Christian marital iconography. In this undertaking it responds to the call some art historians have made for scholars of other disciplines to advance work with historical art. Björn Ewald, for example, has stated that the field of sarcophagus studies needs “non-specialist works which place the sarcophagi in their broader social, historical and cultural contexts,” while Suzanne Dixon has remarked on the encouraging increase in “talking across subject fences” and the exciting scholarship on Roman marriage, the family, and gender being produced by those who are able to work in multiple disciplines.²⁷

Approach to the Evidence

This study employs methods of iconographic analysis to read portraits, images, and inscriptions as expressions of the distinctive identity, values, and religious beliefs of the married Christian population, particularly on the subject of the married way of life. Several theoretical assumptions guide its approach to images.

Symbolism

A long-standing discussion among art historians and scholars of religious visual culture concerns the degree to which images can be said to hold symbolic value. Two sides of the issue are epitomized in mid-twentieth-century publications by Franz Cumont (who interpreted Roman art with a high degree of confidence in its religious symbolism) and Arthur Darby Nock (who argued that in many instances images are better interpreted as classicizing and decorative rather than religiously symbolic).²⁸ Reflecting

Annunciation and the *Protoevangelion of James* as Precedents for Late Antique Annunciation Iconography,” in *Studia Patristica* 59, Vol. 7, *Early Christian Iconographies*, ed. Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 21–37.

²⁷ Björn C. Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators: The Social History of Roman Funerary Art and Its Limits” [review of Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*], *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003): 561; Dixon, “From Ceremonial to Sexualities,” 258.

²⁸ Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1942); a thorough discussion of Cumont, *Recherches*, and its reception appears in Janine Balty and Jean-Charles Balty, eds., *Franz Cumont, Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015); Arthur Darby Nock and J. D. Beazley, “Sarcophagi and Symbolism,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 50.1 (1946): 140–170; Nock, “Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*” [review], *Journal of Roman Studies* 38.1–2 (1948): 154–156.

on the subject, Nock remarked, “At all times students of ancient religion are almost necessarily maximizers or minimizers.”²⁹ Arguably both are necessary to the historical endeavor, spurring dialogue and the processes of discovery and consensus building as researchers challenge each other with reach and restraint.³⁰

The approach taken here self-consciously tends toward that of a maximalist, pushing the exploration of potential symbolism for patrons and viewers, while bearing in mind that in many cases one can articulate only potential, not necessity, with more or less plausibility in each instance. In this approach the risk of over-interpretation is always present, but perhaps this problem is less serious than that of regarding iconography so superficially or with such skepticism as to miss hearing the voices of the individuals who commissioned, created, and viewed it. Real people made considerable investments in time and money to create or purchase objects for personally meaningful uses—funerals, memorials, weddings, domestic display, personal adornment—circumstances in which one might expect heightened degrees of patron agency and intent. This study takes seriously the possibility that religious, social, and intellectual commitments influenced the choices of patrons, creators, and viewers of ancient art. In its attempt to articulate those commitments, it seeks to minimize the risk of missteps and overreaching by employing the controls of iconographic comparanda, epigraphic evidence, and literary sources.

Patrons and Viewers: Agency, Intention, and a Range of Perceptions

Another question concerns the degree to which workshops either mass-produced or custom-made works of art, and thus how much certain images might reflect patrons’ wishes. Recent research on sarcophagi suggests that patrons exercised greater influence over decorative programs than often has been supposed.³¹ Even if workshops followed some degree of “production-to-stock” practice, the images they

²⁹ Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 641.

³⁰ I am indebted to Michael Peppard for spurring my thinking on this subject in remarks made at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, November 20, 2016.

³¹ Stine Birk, *Depicting the Dead: Self-Representation and Commemoration on Roman Sarcophagi with Portraits* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013), 31–34, 183–184; Robert Couzin, “The Christian Sarcophagus Population of Rome,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 27 (2014): 279, 296, arguing on the basis of diversity (no two sarcophagi are exactly alike) and quantitative estimates about demand and production (a workshop with five workers could manufacture only 10 to 30 sarcophagi in a year).

created would still represent a response to patron demand, because the costs of producing works of art were significant investments that artisans were not likely to have made without confidence that they would find buyers.³² This study assumes potential for patron intention, but makes those evaluations on a case-by-case basis. Reading for patron intention involves giving attention to the particular context of images and the idiosyncratic ways they are formed and arranged in each instance, resisting the tendency to regard images as autonomous and independent signifiers.

At the same time, newer “visual culture” approaches move beyond the patron to inquire into the various ways viewers might have perceived images, given their physical, historical, and social contexts.³³ Adam Levine has recently written, “While the intention of the patron is undoubtedly important, an exclusive focus on intentionality overlooks the complex meanings that could be imputed into objects by different viewers; if an object could evoke many different interpretations, then those interpretations should be given full play.” Intent, Levine argues, should not be privileged over reception.³⁴

This study approaches images as polyvalent, and seeks to articulate the range of meanings they might have held for ancient patrons and viewers, as well as particular meanings that likely would have been most prominent in individual cases. Mary Charles-Murray observed that as early Christian art employed existing iconographic forms with adaptations, the resulting “ambiguity meant that these particular images could be made to convey several ideas at once.”³⁵ Images could also serve a range of rhetorical functions, with apologetic, polemic, or panegyric ends, Jaś Elsner has argued.³⁶ Regarding the

³² Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 32; cf. Janet Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 24; sarcophagus designs “were probably developed to appeal to as many customers as possible,” but permitted “limited scope for customers to make the designs more personal.” Yet, no two sarcophagi are alike, and some show significant degrees of uniqueness. The degree of patron influence on each artifact should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

³³ For discussion of this subject, see Robin M. Jensen, “Visuality,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Barbette Stanley Spaeth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 310; David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3, 30.

³⁴ Adam Levine, “The Image of Christ in Late Antiquity” (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2012), 223–225 (punctuation modified).

³⁵ Mary Charles-Murray, “The Emergence of Christian Art,” in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 62.

³⁶ Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 316–349.

range of potential viewer perceptions, Paul Zanker compares “images with good poetry, whose words have the capacity to prompt the reader to multiple interpretations.”³⁷

Engaging Textual Evidence

Since this dissertation aims to discover the views of a population as presented primarily in art, it prioritizes examination of visual data, looking at the messages images and objects convey without assuming they are merely illustrative of textual traditions. Yet it also compares images with relevant texts as a vital part of the interpretive process. This engagement acknowledges that creators and patrons of art chose particular representations, and viewers interpreted them, as motivated and informed by the values, concepts, beliefs, traditions, and narratives that comprised their thought-world.³⁸ Read critically, texts give insight into that world.

In imagining the thought-world of early Christian patrons and viewers of art, this study gives attention to a broad range of early Christian literature, most of it dating to the first four centuries CE. Robin M. Jensen has demonstrated that the biblical motifs that appear “compiled” together on various media of early Christian art “required observers to have some level of literacy, probably mainly through hearing sermons or catechetical lectures.” Viewers would first have to recognize the motifs, then make sense of their selection and arrangement, which could be done by “associating them with the various ways their stories were deployed in the literary or oral tradition.” For example, frieze compositions on Christian sarcophagi visually participate in the same typology-and-fulfillment hermeneutic found in

³⁷ Paul Zanker, “Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi,” *Res* 61/62 (2012): 176.

³⁸ Jensen, “Visuality,” 309–343; see also the discussion of a “dialogical” approach to interpreting artifacts and texts in James F. Strange, “Some Implications of Archaeology for New Testament Studies,” in *What Has Archaeology to Do with Faith?*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 23–31; Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, 64: “Religious images do not stand alone. They are densely interwoven with such media as texts, music, and architecture.” Cf. a minority view assuming a radical disconnect between creators of early Christian art and texts in Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003).

contemporaneous homilies and treatises, and “reflect the religiously shared commitments of the whole Christian community.”³⁹

The careful examination of both art and texts also permits identification of tensions between the two, including cases of variance when patrons and authors might have worked at cross purposes. Engaging both bodies of evidence brings to light historical complexities.⁴⁰ Thus, discontinuities between early Christian marital imagery and literary evidence may permit the identification of distinctive perspectives and developments among the married Christian population.

This study additionally considers non-Christian texts as a key element in identifying the potential meanings viewers might have seen in images. Visual art in late ancient Rome often would have had a diverse viewing audience of Christians and adherents of other religions, and patrons might well have anticipated this. Patrons and viewers alike shared an inheritance of classical tradition. The population that commissioned the art to be examined here might equally well be described as a “Romanized Christian culture” or a “Christianized Roman culture.”⁴¹ Accordingly, both classical *paideia* and Christian literary culture might be considered when identifying the range of potential responses to early Christian images.⁴²

Identifying Appropriation and Adaptation

In order to clarify the ways Christians adopted or adapted Roman marital iconography, Chapters 2–5 of this dissertation first survey precedents of Roman art before examining Christian images. Patterns of selective appropriation and modification of Roman marital iconography provide clues to the distinctive ideas and values of the married Christian population. Detecting these patterns might be compared to redaction criticism; where an author has altered a source, the deletions and additions suggest some

³⁹ Robin M. Jensen, “Compiling Narratives: The Visual Strategies of Early Christian Visual Art,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23.1 (2015): 16, 25–26; see also Robin M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 78.

⁴⁰ For discussions on this subject, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 3; Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.

⁴¹ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 67.

⁴² Levine, “The Image of Christ in Late Antiquity,” 223–225; *paideia* was “a structuring principle of elite thought” for both Christians and non-Christians during the second sophistic; recent works advancing this line of interpretation include Henning Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms: der Beitrag des Senatorenstandes zur römischen Kunst der hohen und späten Kaiserzeit* (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 2001); and Barbara E. Borg, *Crisis and Ambition: Tombs and Burial Customs in Third-Century CE Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

dissatisfaction with the received text and provide clues to the author's intentions. In the same way, Christian adaptations of Roman marital iconography signal an implied critique, and represent the use of images to contest existing ideas and to advance new ones. In this way religious images and visual practice can "displace rival images and ideologies," as David Morgan writes.⁴³ A comparative iconography approach is also somewhat analogous to form criticism: where a visual "genre" is deployed in a distinctive way, one may infer intentionality.

At the same time, patterns of continuity from pre-Christian to Christian art suggest ways Christian patrons did *not* differentiate themselves from their neighbors, and point to degrees of social integration. Therefore, tracking the Christian use and modification of Roman marital imagery permits one to detect ways Christian marriage at Rome was either typical of Roman marriage generally, or differed from it.

This use of images to track social change and continuity among the married Christian population is based on theories of visual culture that consider the "work" images can perform. David Morgan writes: "The study of visual culture concentrates on the cultural work that images do in constructing and maintaining (as well as challenging, destroying, and replacing) a sense of order in a particular place and time."⁴⁴ Morgan's chosen verbs aptly describe the functions of self-representation discussed in this dissertation. In various settings, the images that patrons commissioned suggest their own efforts to *construct* what it meant to be married Christians, to *maintain* selected Roman virtues of familial piety and civic commitment, to *challenge* both extremes of ascetic discourse among Christians and certain aspects of non-Christian tradition, and to *replace* or modify existing notions of marriage.

⁴³ Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, 55.

⁴⁴ Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, 29.

The Material Sources

The sarcophagi, gold glasses, and other artifacts on which this study focuses are identifiable as evidence of Christian marriage, or of married Christians, by the presence of spousal portraits, inscriptions indicating patronage or commemoration by married persons, or other kinds of marital iconography. This last category includes representations of spouses that might not be considered portraiture, strictly speaking, such as diminutive figures of a husband and wife worshipping at the feet of Christ. It also includes images of the joined right hands (*dextrarum iunctio*) and other iconographic elements (such as wreath-crowns, altars, pairs of doves, or Adam and Eve, the archetypal first married couple) that acquire particular marital significance when they appear in a context with some form of spousal representation (e.g., portraiture or epigraphy).

Sarcophagi

Roman sarcophagi were coffins used in the Empire from the second through the fourth centuries as Romans moved from the practice of cremation to inhumation burial. Earlier, Greeks and Etruscans had used sarcophagi as well. Sarcophagi were made of marble or of less expensive stone, lead, or wood. Marble sarcophagi decorated with reliefs constitute a major category of private art and were an important means of commemoration and self-representation. Since Roman sarcophagus production spans the pre-Christian and Christian periods, these monuments provide excellent visual evidence for the emergence of Christian art and the kinds of transformations in visual culture that were distinctive to Christianity. They also preserve images and programs that patrons commissioned for their own uses, apart from the artistic productions of the church.

Figured marble sarcophagi were quite costly, and though they ranged in price depending upon size and quality, they generally indicate a clientele from the wealthiest strata of Roman society. Many of the finer pieces were commissioned by members of the senatorial class, such as the famous sarcophagus of city prefect Junius Bassus (d. 359 CE), its double-frieze front panel carved in extraordinarily high relief

(fig. 1). However, freedmen and other non-elites of various professions could afford simpler varieties; for example, an early fourth-century strigillated sarcophagus depicts the deceased man at the center, seated and reading from a scroll beside open scroll cabinet, on top of which rests an open case of surgical tools indicating the man's profession as a physician (fig. 2). The Greek inscription indicates that he belonged to the large Greek-speaking population of Rome. A fragment of another strigillated sarcophagus features a central tondo depicting the male commemorand, whose profession as a carpenter is suggested by the small scene of a carpenter's workshop beneath the portrait (fig. 3).⁴⁵

A recent study by Robert Couzin finds that a decorated marble sarcophagus would have ranged in price from 25,000 to 150,000 Diocletianic *denarii*. Even at the low end, the sum could have purchased “1,000 days of unskilled labor, 125 months of instruction for a student in Greek or Latin grammar and geometry, or 25 cases pled by an advocate.” Given the costs, “only a small subset of Rome's Christians were in the market for figural marble sarcophagi.”⁴⁶ Due to various economic factors the sarcophagus clientele of Rome varied over time: in the mid-second century it would have comprised only the top 4–5% of the population of Rome; it would have expanded to the top 7.5% by the mid-third century; thereafter it gradually declined to the top 6.1% by the year 300, the top 4.7% by 350, and only the top 3.3% by 400.⁴⁷

The surviving Christian sarcophagi, over 2,000 in number, are well documented, and most of the pieces made in Roman workshops are included in the three current volumes of the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*.⁴⁸ During the fourth century the repertoire of Christian motifs on sarcophagi differed from that used in catacomb painting as sarcophagus patrons commissioned new

⁴⁵ Junius Bassus sarcophagus: see Rep. I, no. 680; Greek physician's sarcophagus: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 48.76.1; carpenter's sarcophagus: Museo Pio Cristiano, Vatican Museums, display no. 3262.

⁴⁶ Couzin, “The Christian Sarcophagus Population of Rome,” 284; cf. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 201–202, note 21.

⁴⁷ Couzin, “The Christian Sarcophagus Population of Rome,” 287–290.

⁴⁸ Rep. I = Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, Giuseppe Bovini, and Hugu Brandenburg, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Bd 1 Rom und Ostia* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1967); Rep. II = Jutta-Dresken Weiland, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, zweiter Band: Italien mit einem Nachtrag Rom und Ostia, Dalmatien, Museen der Welt* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1998); Rep. III = Brigitte Christern-Briesenick, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, dritter Band: Frankreich, Algerien, Tunesien* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2003); two additional volumes are forthcoming: *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Bd. 4: Iberische Halbinsel und Marokko*; and *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage Bd. 5: Konstantinopel und das östliche Mittelmeer*; announcement of these volumes at <https://www.dainst.org/projekt/-/project-display/113557>, accessed November 30, 2016.

subjects, particularly from the New Testament. These sarcophagi also frequently included unusually prominent portraits of the deceased. The innovated iconography, new forms of monuments, and conspicuous portraiture point to a creative, assertive, wealthy clientele that distinguished itself not only from pagan neighbors but also within the Christian community.⁴⁹

Families belonging to this wealthy Christian population commissioned sarcophagi for the burial of their deceased loved ones and placed the sarcophagi within *arcosolia* in family *cubicula* in the catacombs, in family *hypogea*, or (increasingly over the fourth century) in *mausolea* connected with cemetery basilicas or other churches.⁵⁰ For example, the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus was placed within old St. Peter's basilica in Rome; the sarcophagus of Petronius Probus was placed in a mausoleum built onto St. Peter's; the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina was housed in a triple-apse mausoleum that Severina caused to be built in Tolentino.⁵¹ Surviving relatives would visit the tomb on regular occasions to perform traditional memorial rites including funerary meals and pouring out libations.⁵² In the more public places of deposition the sarcophagi could memorialize the deceased's public service and local patronage.

Gold Glass and Other Glass Vessels

A corpus of nearly 500 gold glass medallions survives from late antique Rome. These medallions, either purpose-made or cut from the bases of shallow glass vessels, were made of worked gold foil sandwiched between layers of glass. Most of the surviving pieces were discovered in the 17th–19th centuries in the catacombs of Rome, where they had been placed in the mortar covering burial slots or

⁴⁹ Jutta Dresken-Weiland, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.–6. Jahrhunderts im Westen des römischen Reiches* (Rome: Herder, 2003), 212.

⁵⁰ Dresken-Weiland, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.–6. Jahrhunderts*, 212.

⁵¹ Rep. I, nos. 680, 678; Rep. II, no. 148.

⁵² For discussion of these practices, see Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Robin M. Jensen, "Dining with the Dead: From the Mensa to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity," in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context. Studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials*, ed. Laurie Brink and Deborah Green (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 107–143; Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27–40.

within the *loculi* themselves (fig. 4). Others come from cemeteries in Cologne, Germany, and a few other find-spots.

The primary context of many of the gold glasses was domestic. In household settings, glass vessels would have been used in dining or for display. Their function in funerary contexts constituted a significant secondary use, and some pieces might have been made expressly for burials. “In both uses,” Susan Walker notes, “the combination of gold and glass would surely have been appreciated not only as a sign of material wealth but also for the luminescent glitter of these materials in a dark, subterranean environment.”⁵³ Other types of glass vessels also enjoyed both domestic and funerary uses and bore images or inscriptions comparable to those on gold glass medallions (see Chapter 5).

The main publication on Christian gold glass remains Charles Morey’s 1959 *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections*, though recent work by Andrew Meek, Daniel Thomas Howells, and Susan Walker has updated understanding of this corpus.⁵⁴ Among the findings of this latest research is that late antique glass production transitioned from “small scale production of higher quality objects, to a higher scale production of lower quality items. ... The number of consumers [that workshops] supplied appears to have increased in number over time, coinciding with a reduction in the quality of items they consumed.” Compared to sarcophagi and silver or gold objects, glass vessels were much less expensive, and “were primarily owned by people of modest wealth and status.”⁵⁵ Their decoration indicates a “demand for personal images in media affordable to the populace at large.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Susan Walker, “Gold-glass,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, ed. Robin Margaret Jensen and Mark D. Ellison (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*; Andrew Meek, “Gold Glass in Late Antiquity: Scientific Analysis of the British Museum Collection,” in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, ed. Chris Entwistle and Liz James (London: The British Museum, 2013), 121–130; Susan Walker, “The Wilshire Collection of Late Roman Gold-Glass at the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford,” in *Neighbours and Successors of Rome: Traditions of Glass Production and Use in Europe and the Middle East in the Later 1st Millennium AD*, ed. Daniel Keller, Jennifer Price, and Caroline Jackson (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 68–72; Daniel Thomas Howells, *A Catalogue of the Late Antique Gold Glass in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2015); Susan Walker, “Gold-glass,” (forthcoming); see also Katherine L. Lutraan, “Late Roman Gold-Glass: Images and Inscriptions” (MA Thesis, McMaster University, 2006).

⁵⁵ Meek, “Gold Glass in Late Antiquity,” 128.

⁵⁶ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 61; cf. 64: Glass “was never as costly or valuable as precious metal. ... Compared to gold and silver, it seems likely that gold glass was also affordable to persons lower down the social scale who were perhaps not in a position to purchase luxurious silver plate.” Howells’s assessment of the non-elite, middle-class socio-economic level of

The iconographic similarities between these relatively inexpensive objects and the more costly sarcophagi suggest a set of concepts and values shared among a broader segment of the Christian population than just the wealthiest classes. The glasses bear many of the same biblical themes, along with portrayals of individuals, married couples, and saints. Some new forms of marital iconography appear first in gold glass, and only later in sarcophagus reliefs (discussed in Chapter 2). Inscriptions often include toasts of the dining context (fitting for vessels that might have been used in such settings) such as *PIE ZESES* (Greek rendered in Latin letters, “Drink! May you live!”).⁵⁷ Vessels with double-portraits or *dextrarum iunctio* scenes might have been purchased originally to commemorate weddings, to give as wedding gifts, or for use in wedding feasts. However, Daniel Thomas Howells observes that nuptial-themed vessels might just as well have been “purchased by or for the couple depicted at any stage of their married life,”⁵⁸ and Jutta Dresken-Weiland points to inscriptions on gold glasses as evidence for their use as gifts for anniversaries and other family-related parties, in addition to weddings.⁵⁹ When medallions were translated to burial contexts, portraits could have evoked the memory of the deceased, invitations to drink could allude to the funerary meals and libations family members carried out at the tomb on behalf of their deceased relatives, and legends such as “May you live!” might have been seen as expressions of hope for the afterlife (discussed further in Chapter 5).⁶⁰

gold-glass purchasers accords with that of Alan Cameron, “Orfitus and Constantine: Some Notes on Roman Gold-Glasses,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1996), 295–301; but it departs from Susan Walker’s assertion (admittedly preliminary) that gold-glass recipients were not poor, based on their depicted clothing: Susan Walker, “The Wilshere Collection of Late Roman Gold-Glass at the Ashmolean Museum,” 72. But elaborate clothing, jewelry, or hairstyles may be more idealizing than descriptive; Howells notes: “The emphasis placed on often idealized indicators of wealth and status may ... suggest that gold glass was considered an expensive medium by the strata of society who did purchase it,” 65.

⁵⁷ The use of Latin letters for the Greek expression *PIE ZESES* was common in Late Antiquity; Susan Walker, “The Wilshere Collection of Late Roman Gold-Glass at the Ashmolean Museum,” 69; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 60; Susan H. Auth, “Drink May You Live! Roman Motto Glasses in the Context of Roman Life and Death,” *Annales du 13e Congrès de l’Association Internationale pour l’Histoire du Verre, Pays Bas, 28 août–1 septembre, 1995* (Lochem: Association internationale pour l’histoire du verre, 1996), 103; Alison E. Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 109; John Osborne and Amanda Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities, Volume Two: Other Mosaics, Paintings, Sarcophagi and Small Objects* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1998), 210.

⁵⁸ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 62; cf. C. Louise Avery, “Early Christian Gold Glass,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 16.8 (1921): 173.

⁵⁹ Jutta Dresken-Weiland, “Bilder im Grab und ihre Bedeutung im Kontext der Christianisierung der frühchristlichen Welt,” *Antiquité Tardive* 19 (2011), 76: “Diese passt gut dazu, dass die Gläser mit der Darstellung von Ehepaaren bzw. Familien als Geschenke für Hochzeiten und zu Jahrestagen von Hochzeiten oder zu anderen Festen im Zusammenhang mit Familie zum Beispiel bei der Geburt eines Kindes bei Familienbildern gedient haben müssen, wie Inschriften nahelegen.”

⁶⁰ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 56, 63, 65; Auth, “Drink May You Live!” 103–112; Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 108–111.

Small Personal Objects, Silver Luxury Items, and Catacomb Paintings

Marital imagery also appears on such small personal items as gems, seals, the bezels of finger-rings, and belt ornaments. These objects feature representations of a man and woman, often accompanied by Christian symbols. They have been found not only in Rome but also in spots throughout the Mediterranean, from Lebanon to Spain, and sometimes bear inscriptions in Latin or Greek.⁶¹ As with gold glass medallions, these items were of sufficient expense to be out of reach of the population that lived near subsistence level, but would have been affordable to a much greater proportion of Rome's Christians than those who could purchase sarcophagi. The dispersion of marital iconography on these less-expensive artifacts over a broad geographic expanse indicates that the ideas they conveyed were widely shared. Additionally, the appearance of these images on personal effects invites consideration of their role in expressing personal identity.

Decorated silver objects were among the costly domestic goods prized by the Roman elite. Much ancient silver has been lost as it was melted down in antiquity, but hoards dating from the fourth through the early seventh centuries have been discovered which include objects with Christian decoration. These include items made for domestic and church settings. The only silver artifact this dissertation examines in detail is the late fourth-century Projecta Casket, part of the Esquiline treasure, a hoard of silver objects discovered in 1793 on the Esquiline hill in Rome (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3). This case, perhaps a cosmetics box, might have been given as a wedding present to a Christian woman. The marital imagery and other decorations on this object, coming from an elite domestic context, speak to the identity and views of a wealthy Christian family, and how it regarded one of its female members, at a time of acute Christianization of the Roman aristocracy.⁶²

⁶¹ Marvin C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vols. 1–2 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1962, 1965), 50, nos. 1–2; Gary Vikan, “Early Christian and Byzantine Rings in the Zucker Family Collection,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 45 (1987): 32–43; Vikan, “Art and Marriage,” 145–163; Jeffrey Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2007), 18–25; Sébastien Aubry, “Inscriptions on Portrait Gems and Discs in Late Antiquity (3rd–6th Centuries AD): Between Epigraphical Tradition and Numismatic Particularism,” in *“Gems of heaven”: Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, c. AD 200–600*, ed. Christopher Entwistle and Noël Adams (London: British Museum, 2011) 239–247.

⁶² Kathleen J. Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure* (London: British Museum Press, 1981); Ruth Leader-Newby, “Early Christian Silver: Sacred and Domestic,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, ed. Robin M. Jensen and Mark D. Ellison

Frescoes in the Christian catacombs of Rome contain some of the earliest Christian visual art. Some biblical motifs that appear first in these subterranean cemeteries (such as Adam and Eve, Jonah, or the three Hebrew youths) were selected by married Christians to accompany their portraits on sarcophagus reliefs and, in a few cases, gold glasses.⁶³ This dissertation examines only one catacomb painting in depth, the Priscilla catacomb's third-century "Donna Velata" fresco, which some scholars have claimed includes a representation of a Christian wedding (see Chapter 3). Like portraits on sarcophagi, the representation of individuals in this fresco serves to commemorate and eulogize persons in a funerary context. Its viewing audience consisted of both relatives and other members of the faith community.

Limitations and Clarifications

Time and Geography

The findings of this dissertation do not describe how all Christians across the ancient world or throughout Late Antiquity came to conceptualize marriage or visually represent it. Rather, this study focuses on Rome in the third and fourth centuries. The development of Christian discourses and practices regarding marriage, sexuality, and celibacy is well documented in this period and location, greatly facilitating contextualized analysis of the abundant visual art from the same time and region. Occasionally the analysis refers, with caution, to literary and material evidence from other periods and locations in order to place third- and fourth-century developments around Rome within a broader context. Every attempt has been made to account for all the relevant images and artifacts from third- and fourth-century Rome, but of course some might have been missed. If so, it is hoped that the selection here is sufficiently robust to be fairly representative of the corpus of artifacts and the population that commissioned them.

(London: Routledge, forthcoming); on the late fourth-century conversion of the Roman aristocracy, see Michele Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶³ E.g., Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 430–431, no. 388, and the glass from the Ashmolean Museum discussed in Chapter 4.

Proportion of the Population

The evidence of visual art reflects the perspectives of the population that could have afforded to commission and purchase it, necessarily the wealthier members of late ancient Roman society. However, as outlined above, Christian marital imagery appears on both very costly and relatively inexpensive objects, suggesting that the ideas it represented enjoyed broad reception.

Surveys of the visual and literary productions of the aristocratic Christian population in fourth-century Rome have identified its blending of Roman and Christian tradition, and its defense of family loyalties, wealth, marriage, and public service.⁶⁴ Though these particularly aristocratic values are represented in many of the artifacts to be examined here (especially the sarcophagi), the general “traditional piety regarding marriage and family” might have been “typical of the average Christian at Rome.”⁶⁵ All Christians for whom marriage was available could have shared the marital ideals implied in Christian art. Even slaves who could not legally marry often entered committed conjugal relationships (*contubernium*), which could be commemorated with precision (to the day), implying that such unions were at least sometimes formed on a remembered date with some sort of ceremony.⁶⁶ The existence of a category of fully legal marriage in Roman legislation (*matrimonium iustum, conubium*) does not preclude the possibility that partners living in *contubernium* or another form of relationship such as concubinage held the same marital ideals as couples whose marriages were legally recognized.⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, the visual evidence here speaks most directly and certainly to the views of the wealthier strata, while the possibility that those views were more broadly shared remains an open question.

⁶⁴ E.g., Dennis Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus: Competitive Commemoration in Late-Fourth-Century Rome,” *New England Classical Journal* 28.3 (2001): 157–176; Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), e.g., see 149; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 51–74; John F. Matthews, “Four Funerals and a Wedding: This World and the Next in Fourth-Century Rome,” in *Roman Perspectives: Studies in the Social, Political and Cultural History of the First to Fifth Centuries* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2010), 255–274.

⁶⁵ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 71, referring specifically to the traditional piety seen in the poet Proba’s *Cento De Laudibus Christi*; see also Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 163.

⁶⁶ Karen K. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33, note 70; citing K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 49, note 12.

⁶⁷ Carolyn Osiek, “Family Matters,” in *Christian Origins, A People’s History of Christianity*, Vol. 1, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 211.

Male Bias and Female Voices

The evidence to be examined here permits some correction to the heavily male bias of early Christian literature. Efforts have been made to call attention to artifacts commissioned by women, and to interpret them so as to give voice to female perspectives.⁶⁸ These artifacts include the verse epitaph in the mausoleum of Petronius Probus, in which his wife Anicia Faltonia Proba might have had a hand (discussed in Chapter 5), and the sarcophagus of Flavius Julius Catervius, commissioned by his wife Septimia Severina (discussed in Chapters 2–5).⁶⁹ It also includes an important text authored by a Christian noblewoman, the fourth-century Virgilian *Cento De Laudibus Christi* written by the poet Proba (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). While these images and texts give some access to women’s lives, women like Severina and both Probas functioned within an austere patriarchal society and worked within its norms, which calls for caution in assessing the degree to which their productions reflect women’s perspectives.⁷⁰ The approach taken here assumes that interpretation may reach beyond merely how these women wished to be perceived, and may identify what they genuinely valued.

Still other works not necessarily commissioned *by* women were commissioned *for* women, as memorials or gifts, such as the “Donna Velata” fresco in the Priscilla catacomb, the Projecta Casket of the Esquiline Treasure, and many of the sarcophagi. While these permit some insight into women’s lives, they may do so through the lenses of male expectations. For example, the sarcophagus of Bassa, who died at age 22, features an epitaph that speaks in Bassa’s voice to her bereaved husband Gaudentius—an epitaph that appears to have been written by Gaudentius himself (discussed in Chapters 2 and 5).⁷¹

⁶⁸ In this effort I am indebted to approaches described or modeled in Janet H. Tulloch, “Art and Archaeology as a Historical Resource for the Study of Women in Early Christianity: An Approach for Analyzing Visual Data,” *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology* 12.3 (May 2004): 277–304; Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality in Family Funerary Monuments”; I am also indebted to the catalytic observation of Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 140: “...written sources so seldom preserve the reflections of women in the Early Christian period. But perhaps what is lacking in literary sources has been made up in the visual sources. It is not unlikely that many of the sarcophagi were commissioned by women—wives or widows—and that the imagery reflects their vision.”

⁶⁹ Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus”; Rep. II, 52–54, no. 148.

⁷⁰ Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 56: “Aristocratic women were as deeply embedded in the status culture as the men. As members of aristocratic families, women were part of an aristocratic man’s social identity; they were ennobled with their husbands, a clear indication of how intimately associated female status was to that of their men.”

⁷¹ Trout, “Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative,” 340.

Laity, *Saeculares*, Clergy, and Ascetics

So far as can be determined, the spousal portraits and memorials examined in this study were commissioned by and for lay Christians. To a degree these artifacts cast light on efforts to use images in the construction of a lay identity. However, the category of “laity” in late antique Christianity was somewhat complex. The word *lay*, from the Greek *laos*, meaning “people,” connotes that which is related to the common, ordinary people, as distinguished from a religious elite.⁷² It thus served in the construction of a dyad of “clergy” and “laity” which sought to make a distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained, but this bifurcation does not adequately reflect a number of realities. The lives of some lower orders of clergy did not differ in great degree from ordinary, non-clerical Christians (particularly in marital status), while monks and other ascetics, originally part of a lay movement and not technically “clergy,” constituted a spiritual elite whose lifestyles differed dramatically from the married laity.

Both clergy and ascetics, Lisa Kaaren Bailey writes, “frequently referred to the laity as the ‘people of the world’—the *saeculares*. By this, they meant that lay Christians were those Christians who continued to engage in ‘worldly’ pursuits such as marriage, warfare, and economic activities. The clergy and ascetics, on the other hand, presented themselves as people who were ‘unworldly’ and who had devoted themselves to lives of religion instead of engaging in secular concerns.”⁷³ Due to the equation of *lay* and *secular*, the term *laity* could refer not just to ecclesiastical status as unordained, but also to marital status or familial lifestyle.⁷⁴ “Ability to marry was a defining characteristic of the laity, who were sometimes termed *conjugati* in the sources. Renunciation of marriage, or of sex within marriage, was therefore a gesture of separation from the lay world.”⁷⁵ Yet a distinction along the lines of marital status, too, was not so simple. In the fourth century bishops, priests, and deacons could be married, though by the latter half of the century the church at Rome had developed a rationale for the perpetual sexual continence

⁷² Karen Jo Torjesen, “Clergy and Laity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 390; Margaret A. Schatkin, “Laity,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 661–663.

⁷³ Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 2.

⁷⁴ Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 22.

⁷⁵ Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 42, see also 119, “that defining lay act, marriage.”

of these clerical orders.⁷⁶ It was not until the sixth century that celibacy became required of bishops.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, regarding the laity, both literary sources and visual art give evidence of late antique Christians who sought to articulate ways that married laypersons could live lives of holiness.⁷⁸

Whether delineating certain roles in church life or different lifestyles, the categories *clergy* and *laity* may give the misleading impression that ecclesiastical authorities simply imposed ready-made Christian ideas and practices upon their congregations. In fact, Bailey observes,

Lay people [played] a pivotal role in the development and transformation of Christianity, from a minority religion to the dominant cultural force of the middle ages. Christianity was not spread by force. It was not a worked-out system imposed from above upon a population below. On the contrary, lay Christians helped to shape Christianity. They made their own decisions about what being Christian meant in their daily lives. They were responsible, in part, for the formation of beliefs, institutions, rituals, and environments.⁷⁹

This statement aptly describes findings to be presented in this dissertation, which indicate that both ordinary believers and church teachers mutually engaged in the process of developing Christian concepts of marriage and family life, through visual, literary, and ritual means.

For all its problems, the term *laity* may still serve in the discussion of the physical artifacts in this study, insofar as the laity may be understood to refer to the non-clerical, non-ascetic mass of the Christian community whose lives involved such secular concerns as marriage, family life, and economic pursuits. Ultimately, however, the term did not imply a neatly defined group, and as Bailey states, it may be “more useful to think in terms of a spectrum of religious commitments and behaviours rather than strictly delineated categories.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 161–162, 213–216.

⁷⁷ Joseph T. Lienhard, S. J., “Clergy,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 266.

⁷⁸ For literary examples see, e.g., the discussion in Chapter 3 of couples who practiced chaste marriage; the saying about the physician in the city who rivaled Antony in holiness, in Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 6, no. 24; John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* 3.15, calling upon all Christians, including the married, to lead the life of monks in the world; and the lives of holy laypersons described in Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 119–120.

⁷⁹ Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 3.

⁸⁰ Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 38.

Ideals, Paradigms, and Realities

Visual depictions of marriage or married pairs are highly idealized in Roman art. Typically they reflect ancient notions about gender roles, and are meant to eulogize or commemorate the individuals portrayed. They make use of stock types and poses that accord with idealized paradigms. While these images are a means of identifying the discourses in which patrons participated, they do not represent individuals' exact visual likenesses or the complex realities of their actual lived experience. Spousal portraits, therefore, might visually emphasize *concordia* and marriage "in Christ," and epitaphs might employ commonplaces signaling a conjugal fidelity that endured beyond death, even amid circumstances that did not harmonize with those ideals. For example, even during its post-Constantinian Christianization, Roman society continued to uphold a double standard in which young women were expected to remain virgins before marriage while young men were assumed to become sexually experienced, and married women were expected to abstain from extramarital intercourse while married men might legally engage in sexual activity with slaves or prostitutes.⁸¹ Church officials like Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus called attention to the inconsistency of the double standard or flatly opposed it, but the fact that they felt a need to speak out on the subject proves its persistence in the practice of some Christians.⁸²

Nevertheless, people had reasons for creating and commissioning idealizing images. They spoke to certain shared values (however imperfectly practiced), reflected a desire to be perceived in terms of those values, and represented beliefs and conceptions about how a married Christian's life ought to be lived. That images were idealized does not necessarily mean there were no realities behind them; the human experience of spiritual aspiration, or love for one's spouse, or grief at losing one's partner is not

⁸¹ David G. Hunter, "Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: vol. 2 Constantine to c. 600*, ed. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 586.

⁸² Hunter, "Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family," 588; Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, demonstrated that the assumption that Christian marriage was superior (in practice, not just in principle) to "pagan" marriage, and that Constantine's legislation influenced changes in marital practice, are overly optimistic; Constantine's legislation stood in continuity with earlier Roman views, did not truly make drastic changes, and did not prevent divorce or adultery from happening. For a description of a little-changed society over the first centuries of Christianization, see Brown, *Body and Society*, 430–432.

made less real simply by being expressed with conventional words, phrases, or images.⁸³ A productive way of understanding idealized images is as a form of visual rhetoric. Andrew S. Jacobs and Rebecca Krawiec propose that since the ascetic emphasis of ancient Christian textual sources makes it difficult to assess the lived realities of early Christian families, a fruitful approach would be to “move into more rhetorically-informed methods of historiography in order to think in new ways about how family discourses, like ascetic discourses, could effectively construct Christian reality in antiquity.”⁸⁴ Visual representations of marriage, married Christians, or biblical figures related to marriage constitute forms of just such family discourses, with a rhetorical edge.

The iconography examined in this dissertation represents marriage as it was understood in ancient Rome, i.e., as heterosexual monogamy.⁸⁵ In practice, there was the possibility of many life situations that would not have fit this paradigm. At Colossae, archaeologists have discovered that graves with an image of a husband and wife contained burials of additional individuals (such as one man and two women), raising questions about the complexity of actual family relationships.⁸⁶ While double-portraits on many Christian sarcophagi depict married couples, a tondo on one monument portrays two praying females (*orantes*), one older and one younger, with a cross between them—an image that may represent two individual holy women, perhaps a mother and daughter or an elder mentor and younger protégé in a consecrated vocation, but in any case “an alternative to marriage,” as Janet Huskinson observes.⁸⁷

On another Christian sarcophagus, the famous mid-fourth-century “sarcophagus of the two brothers,” the central shell frames busts of two bearded men posed in the same manner as married couples in contemporaneous spousal portraits—a unique case that has piqued interest among modern viewers, in

⁸³ For discussion of this subject, see Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 70.

⁸⁴ Jacobs and Krawiec, “Fathers Know Best?” 262.

⁸⁵ Modestinus, *Digest* 23.2.1: *Nuptiae sunt coniunctio maris et feminae et consortium omnis vitae, divini et humani iuris communicatio* (“Marriage is the joining together of a male and a woman, and a partnership for life in all areas of life, a sharing in divine and human law”), trans. Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 9.

⁸⁶ Alan Cadwallader, “One Grave, Two Women, One Man: Complicating Family Life at Colossae” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, November 22, 2015).

⁸⁷ Rep. I, 139, no. 240; Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 235.

light of present-day discussions of same-sex marriage.⁸⁸ The conventional, matrimonial pose of the two male figures, the female-style draping of the left figure's palla, and the suggestion of a woman's breast marked by the fold of the left figure's tunic might best be explained by workshop practices of roughing in sarcophagi which would then be customized at the patron's request.⁸⁹ Plausibly, or probably, this sarcophagus had been partially worked to depict a married man and woman (a popular form of portraiture), with facial features left unfinished (as seen on many sarcophagi), when some circumstance led to its being completed for the commemoration of the two men—perhaps brothers who died at the same time, whose family selected the sarcophagus for their burial.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, same-sex lovers were not uncommon in the ancient world. Whether such relationships were ever regarded as “marriage” in antiquity is less certain. In a 1994 study, John Boswell argued for evidence of same-sex unions in medieval Europe on the basis of certain monastic texts, but Brent D. Shaw critiqued Boswell's work for misunderstanding the source documents, which, in context, attest not to same-sex marriages but to archaic rites of forming brotherhood bonds.⁹¹ More recently, Karen K. Hersch's *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* includes an excursus discussing the few references to same-sex weddings in ancient literary sources.⁹² The weddings in question—those of Nero to Pythagoras (recorded by Tacitus), Gracchus to a horn-player (reported by Juvenal), and two others alluded to by Martial—are all said to have occurred between two men, and are openly ridiculed. The “weddings” described by the satirists may be literary fictions. Nevertheless, Hersch (citing Richard

⁸⁸ E.g., the question of whether this depicts an ancient same-sex marriage is posed by Ally Kateusz, “Holy Marriage in Early Christian Sarcophagi,” accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.slideshare.net/DivineBalance1>.

⁸⁹ Rep. I, 43–45, no. 45, Taf. 15: “Die Büsten der Muschel als Ehepaar angelegt, wie die Wendung beider zueinander, die Drapierung des Palliums der l. als Palla, die durch die Faltengebung gekennzeichnete weibl. Brust in der Tunica der l beweisen.”

⁹⁰ The affectionate pose in double-portraits, though used to depict married couples, need not require that the two are married—see the *clipeus* double-portrait with two females, “probably mother and daughter,” in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 155, fig. 86; the *dextrarum iunctio*, too, could be used to depict either marriage or the bond of loyalty between two men; see the cameo of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus discussed in Chapter 2, or the depiction of two men with right hands clasped, the arm of the figure at left resting upon the shoulder of the figure at right, in Rep. III, no. 262. The concept of same-sex *matrimonium* did not exist in Roman law, though same-sex lovers certainly existed in Roman society. If the same-sex “weddings” ridiculed in by Tacitus, Juvenal, and Martial imply that some such weddings actually took place, one must face the question of how likely it is that the “sarcophagus of the two brothers,” if it had been perceived to memorialize a same-sex marriage, would have been preserved, given the early church's uniform condemnation of male homosexual behavior; on church teaching see David F. Wright, “Homosexuality,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 542–543. With gratitude to Ally Kateusz (who disagrees with my conclusions) for engaging in dialogue with me on this subject.

⁹¹ John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Villard Books, 1994); Brent D. Shaw, “A Groom of One's Own? The Medieval Church and the Question of Gay Marriage,” *New Republic* 18 (1994): 33–41.

⁹² Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 33–39.

Saller) points out that even authors who employed exaggeration might not have falsified certain events, and therefore “in the descriptions we may detect the differing agendas of the authors, and perhaps the differing intentions of the marrying couples.” Possibly some men threw themselves weddings, seeking “to have what heterosexual married couples enjoyed ... to openly proclaim a deep *affectio maritalis* and a desire to live and love one another as married people until death parted them.”⁹³

The subject of relationships that lay outside the monogamous, heterosexual marriage defined in Roman law and represented in marital imagery is not taken up in this dissertation, beyond the foregoing survey. This is not to make or imply any normative judgments, but simply to focus on a particular research question based on a given body of evidence. Rather than asking what evidence might speak to non-heterosexual, non-monogamous relationships in antiquity, this project takes as its starting point the emphasis of the visual evidence itself, asking what the plentiful, conspicuous, and assertive self-representation of married Christians is meant to convey about their social and religious identity.

Descriptive, not Prescriptive

This project’s aims are descriptive and historical, not prescriptive or confessional. It seeks to describe and interpret the visual self-representation of married Christians in third- and fourth-century Rome, and to explore how this population contributed, through images, to the development of Christian concepts of marital and familial life. It does not aim to establish some sort of basis for any modern agendas regarding marriage, the family, or their definition.⁹⁴ It is, however, undertaken with mindfulness that subjects related to marriage and family are of importance to modern religious communities and society more broadly, and that questions about church teachings and policies are being debated with much at stake for participants.⁹⁵ But this study does not propose policies or imply solutions or norms for modern

⁹³ Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 33–34, 37.

⁹⁴ See the similar caveat expressed in Jacobs and Krawiec, “Fathers Know Best?”, 263, to which I am indebted.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016); “Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage,” <http://www.monomakhos.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/OCA-Statement-on-Marriage.pdf>, accessed December 1, 2016; Position Statements of the Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/positionstatements.asp>, accessed December 1, 2016; the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order*

society or religious communities. At most, it provides a glimpse at an earlier point in Christian history when questions about the value of marriage, and how marriage ought to be understood and practiced, were under discussion. If it demonstrates that the discussions were pursued in community, with rank and file believers as well as church teachers contributing their voices to the conversation, in word and in image, perhaps it illustrates one way a particular region of the church lived out its commitment to the idea that the body of Christ “does not consist of one member but of many,” each of which is “indispensable,” and that “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Cor 12:14, 21–22, NRSV used throughout for biblical quotations). But the extent to which such an ideal is pursued by modern communities, and the decisions they reach, are matters beyond the scope of this project.

Seeing Images in Context: Marriage and Celibacy in Early Christianity

Before examining Christian marital iconography, a brief survey of the diverse views on marriage and celibacy over the first four centuries will clarify the religious context in which that iconography arose.⁹⁶ Third- and fourth-century Christians who commissioned portraits of wedded couples and other forms of marital imagery added a visual component to a long conversation on marriage, celibacy, and sexuality. Late antique discourse on these subjects is marked by tensions that characterize the Christian movement generally in its formative period—tensions between anticipation of an imminent, apocalyptic eschaton and commitment to a long-term project; between a radical critique of the world’s social order and a peaceful, benevolent integration with society; between views of a good creation and a deeply flawed world in need of re-creation; between greater and lesser degrees of renunciation in the pursuit of the divine.

amendment on marriage, see “Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approves marriage amendment,” Mar. 17, 2015, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2015/3/17/presbyterian-church-us-approves-marriage-amendment/>, accessed December 1, 2016.

⁹⁶ For a similarly concise survey, see David G. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 1–28; for a more detailed treatment, see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 87–129; for a survey focusing specifically on sexual renunciation, see Brown, *Body and Society*.

Marriage and Celibacy in the New Testament World

Christianity emerged as a sect within Judaism and inherited its tradition that God had created the first man and woman and given them the commandment to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). In Second Temple Judaism the creation story was remembered as a way of conceptualizing marriage as divinely instituted. The author of the deuterocanonical book of Tobit recorded a prayer marking the occasion of Tobias and Sarah’s wedding: “You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the human race has sprung. You said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself’” (Tob 8:6). The importance of family life in Judaism was reflected in kinship identities and the Decalogue’s commandment to honor father and mother. Yet Judaism in the first century also included groups of people who practiced sexual renunciation in pursuit of a holy way of life. These included the all-male Qumran community, the Essenes described by Pliny the Elder (possibly the same group), and the celibate male and female Therapeutae mentioned by Philo.⁹⁷ Though the Hebrew Bible nowhere commands a practice of lifelong celibacy, it does mention temporary abstinence for the ritual purity needed to participate in acts of worship.⁹⁸ By the first century this connection between sexual abstinence and religious activity had developed into an opinion that a prophetic vocation required lifelong continence.⁹⁹

Roman culture also had its own ambiguities regarding marriage and sexuality. On one hand, a life expectancy of less than twenty-five years exerted an inexorable pressure for marriage and reproduction.¹⁰⁰ Roman law and philosophy promoted marriage and family as crucial to the sustaining of society: Augustan legislation penalized adultery and bachelorhood and promoted legitimate childbearing; the first-century Stoic Musonius Rufus taught the necessity of sound households, stating, “whoever destroys human marriage destroys the home, the city, and the whole human race.”¹⁰¹ Roman marriage was a

⁹⁷ Brown, *Body and Society*, 38–39; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 5.17.73; Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 3.33, 8.68.

⁹⁸ E.g., Exod 19:10–15; Lev 15:18–23.

⁹⁹ For a discussion of this subject and its relevance to Christianity, see Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 99–102.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Musonius Rufus, frag. 14, “Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?” trans. Cora E. Lutz, “Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates” *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 93.

private agreement formed between two consenting free persons, often arranged by families. No formal ceremony or contract was legally required, though these were often part of Roman weddings. The main legal concerns regarding Roman marriage (*matrimonium iustum*) revolved around the production of legitimate heirs of the family's name and wealth who would perpetuate the *familia* as an institution. Yet for all its concern about replicating itself, Roman society had its own ascetic expressions. Sexual renunciation was seen as key to forming religious specialists (as in the Vestal Virgins) and sexual restraint was regarded as an essential element in the philosophical way of life (some philosophers denied themselves marriage and reproduction, while others taught that sexual intercourse was proper only in marriage for the procreation of children).¹⁰²

Anxieties about the body and sexuality, and exploration of alternatives to traditional familial structures, were not unique to Christianity but to a degree were characteristic of late antique society.¹⁰³ In this milieu, the writings of the New Testament are generally typical of the age in preserving both teachings that affirm marital and familial relationships, and others that question or subvert them, yet this meant that “from its very inception early Christian tradition was fractured on the question of marriage and sexuality.”¹⁰⁴ Jesus himself was remembered as unmarried and in some respects a model of ascetic pursuits (retreating to the desert, for example, to fast and battle demons of temptation), but he was also remembered in strikingly non-ascetic terms associated with his convivial and inclusive table fellowship—

¹⁰² Margaret A. Schatkin, “Virgins,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 1165: the cultic requirement for virginity in pagan religions was “based on the twin considerations of avoidance of the ritual pollution resulting from sexual intercourse (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 733f.) and furtherance of union with the divinity (Herodotus 1.182)”; Mark J. Edwards, “Early Christianity and Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*, ed. Jeffrey Bingham (London: Routledge, 2010), 38; James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 14, 17; compare Tobit 8:7 “I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity”; Ignatius, *Epistula ad Polycarpum*, 5; Justin Martyr, *Apologia I* 29; Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 33; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10.91, 95–96; *Stromata* 3.7.58; 3.12.79; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31.5; Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1.5.4; 1.16.14; 1.17.15.

¹⁰³ Brown, *Body and Society*, 40: “When Jesus of Nazareth preached in Galilee and Judaea after 30 A.D., the options open to him and to his followers were already clearly mapped out on the landscape of Palestine”; cf. Peter Brown, “Person and Group in Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Paul Veyne (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 263–267; here Brown emphasizes the distinctions in sexual *mores* between Christians and Greco-Romans, but also notes that the marital harmony urged upon married Christians was an ideal already being valorized by Roman elites.

¹⁰⁴ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 87.

“a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matt 11:18; cf. Matt 9:11; Luke 15:2; 19:7).¹⁰⁵

The sayings of Jesus in the gospels often subordinate family ties to allegiance to God and the new “family” of the church.¹⁰⁶ Jesus’s statement that in the resurrection people “neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25; par. Matt 22:30; Luke 20:34–36) seemed to portray a kingdom defined by non-conjugality. When his disciples raised the question of whether it was better not to marry, Jesus replied that not everyone could receive the teaching of celibacy, “but only those to whom it is given,” and went on to speak approvingly of those who “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can” (Matt 19:10–12). Yet this saying was immediately preceded by an affirmation of the goodness of marriage; in response to a question about the permissibility of divorce, Jesus appealed to the creation story in Genesis as basis for his position on the ideal permanence of marriage: “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matt 19:4–6). Jesus “seems not to have envisioned the total disappearance of family structures,” Peter Brown observes; rather, “he insisted on monogamous marriage as a renewal of the undivided union of Adam and Eve.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, the “ascetic” content of Jesus’s teachings can be seen as effecting an elevation of the married relationship; Elaine Pagels notes: “By subordinating the obligation to procreate, rejecting divorce, and implicitly sanctioning monogamous relationships, Jesus reverses traditional priorities, declaring, in effect, that other obligations, including marital ones, are now more important than procreation.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ On Jesus’s marital status, see the discussion in Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 99–102.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Mark 3:31–35 (par. Matt 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21) in which Jesus defines his mother and brothers as those who do the will of God; Luke 9:59–60 (par. Matt 8:21–22) which prioritizes following Jesus above seeing to the burial of a deceased father or bidding farewell to family members; Luke 11:27–28 where Jesus implies that discipleship is a more important role than motherhood; Matt 19:29 (par. Mark 10:29–30; Luke 18:29–30) which speaks of recompense and rewards for Jesus’s followers who leave behind house, wife, siblings, parents, or children; Luke 14:26, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.”

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Body and Society*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 16.

Paul's writings also display a complex attitude toward marriage. In response to a question from the church at Corinth, Paul discouraged sexual abstinence within marriage except for temporary, mutually agreed-upon periods of prayer (1 Cor 7:1–5). On the other hand, expecting an imminent parousia, he discouraged virgins from marrying (unless they could not contain) and described the unmarried state as preferable in allowing unencumbered devotion to God (1 Cor 7:6–40). Later New Testament texts reflect similarly diverse viewpoints—marriage is honorable in Hebrews (Heb 13:4), while the redeemed multitude in John's Apocalypse are virgins (Rev 14:1–4). But it was Paul's legacy that proved to be the site of particular contestation for late first- and early second-century Christian writers, as both ascetic enthusiasts and proponents of familial piety claimed Pauline support for their positions. The household codes embedded in the deutero-Pauline epistles “reinforced the family values of domestic order in a hierarchical universe,” yet sought to foster distinctively Christian norms among the wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters who comprised ancient households. The codes redescribed familial relationships in terms of each individual's relation to deity, encouraged members of Christian households to submit to each other, and addressed subordinate members first, treating wives, children, and slaves “as persons in their own right endowed with dignity” and having “a significant role to play.”¹⁰⁹ The Pastoral Epistles upheld patriarchal structures, required that bishops and deacons be married men, and opposed giving women leadership or speaking roles in church.¹¹⁰ These letters reflect a context in which expectation of the eschaton was diminishing.¹¹¹ Additionally, they seem to have been written in response to tales and viewpoints like those found in the noncanonical *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which presents Paul as a teacher of celibacy, virginity as the essence of his preaching, and his convert Thecla as a revolutionary female teacher whose authority is linked to her renunciation of marriage and family obligations.

¹⁰⁹ Osiek, “Family Matters,” 216; Col 3:18–4:1; Eph 5:21–6:8.

¹¹⁰ 1 Tim 2:1–15; 5:11–6; 6:1–2; Titus 2:2–10; cf. 1 Pet 2:18–3:7.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth A. Clark, “Sexuality,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed., Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), “Given the delay of the eschaton..., Christians continued to make use of worldly institutions, hoping to make them, marriage included, more ‘Christian.’”

Marriage and Celibacy in Second-Century Christianity

In the second century, ascetic Christian sects advocating the practice of celibacy for all their members included the Encratites, Marcionites, Montanists, various gnostic groups, and other similar communities associated with the apocryphal Acts (texts that enjoyed wide popularity). Irenaeus opposed these groups in *Against Heresies* (c. 180 CE), arguing that by preaching against marriage and abstaining from eating meat they were “setting aside the original creation of God” and “proving themselves ungrateful to God, who formed all things.”¹¹² The author of the apologetic epistle to Diognetus painted a picture of Christians as harmless, integrated members of society rather than practitioners of separatism:

For Christians are no different from other people in terms of their country, language, or customs. Nowhere do they inhabit cities of their own, use a strange dialect, or live life out of the ordinary. ... They marry like everyone else and have children....¹¹³

In the closing years of the second century, Clement of Alexandria wrote teachings that were some of the most favorable to marriage in early Christian literature. Like Musonius Rufus, he viewed marriage as a civic good in which sexual relations served only for procreation; like Irenaeus he cited Genesis 1:28 (“be fruitful and multiply”) as evidence that marriage and procreation were intended parts of the divine plan for humanity.¹¹⁴ Clement, however, elaborated on spiritual purposes to marriage and procreation: through these, “the human being becomes the image of God, by cooperating in the creation of another human being.”¹¹⁵ Clement even viewed the married way of life as superior, in certain ways, to celibacy:

True manhood is not shown in the choice of a celibate life; on the contrary, the prize in the contest of men is won by him who has trained himself by the discharge of the duties of husband and father and by the supervision of a household, regardless of pleasure and pain—by him, I say, who in the midst of his solicitude for his family shows himself inseparable from the love of God and rises superior to every temptation which assails him through children and wife and servants and possessions. On the other hand, he who has no family is in most respects untried.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.28.1, SC 264, 354: ...qui uocantur Continentes abstinentiam a nuptiis adnuntiauerunt, frustrantes antiquam plasmationem Dei ... ingrati existentes ei qui omnia fecit Deus; cf. 4.11.1; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF 1:353; see similar arguments made later by Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.29; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.6.

¹¹³ *Epistula ad Diognetum* 5.1–2, 6, trans. LCL 25, 138–141: Χριστιανοὶ γὰρ οὔτε γῆ οὔτε φωνῆ οὔτε ἔθεσι διακεκριμένοι τῶν λοιπῶν εἰσὶν ἀνθρώπων. οὔτε γὰρ ποὺ πόλεις ἰδίας κατοικοῦσιν οὔτε διαλέκτῳ τινὶ παρηλλαγμένη χρῶνται οὔτε βίον παράσημον ἀσκοῦσιν. ... γαμοῦσιν ὡς πάντες, τεκνογονοῦσιν....

¹¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10; *Stromata* 2.23.

¹¹⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10.2, SC 108, 164: καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο εἰκὼν ὁ ἄνθρωπος γίνεται τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς εἰς γένεσιν ἀνθρώπου ἄνθρωπος συνεργεῖ; trans. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 41.

¹¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.12.70.7–8, SC 428, 222–223: καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἀνὴρ οὐκ ἐν τῷ μονήρῳ ἐπανελέσθαι δείκνυται βίον, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνος ἄνδρας νικᾷ ὁ γάμῳ καὶ παιδοποιᾷ καὶ τῇ τοῦ οἴκου προνοίᾳ ἀνηδόνως τε καὶ ἀλυπτήτως ἐγγυμασάμενος,

Marriage and Celibacy in Third-Century Christianity

Clement's view of the spiritual preferability of marriage does not seem to have been shared by writers after him. In the early third century Tertullian wrote "the first consequential statement ... of the belief that abstinence from sex was the most effective technique with which to achieve clarity of soul."¹¹⁷

Think of how a man feels in himself when he abstains from a woman. He thinks spiritual thoughts. If he prays to the Lord, he is next door to heaven; if he turns to the Scriptures, he is all of him present to them; if he sings a psalm, it fills his whole being with enjoyment; if he exorcises a demon, he does so confident in his own strength.¹¹⁸

Tertullian also reinforced the notion of a non-conjugal afterlife, alluding to Jesus's saying about its angelic state: "no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of the resurrection, translated as they will be into the condition and sanctity of angels."¹¹⁹

As for the practice of marriage in this life, Tertullian promoted notions of marital permanence and sexual exclusivity by discouraging remarriage after the death of one's spouse.¹²⁰ He also urged Christians to marry fellow Christians rather than pagans, extolling the advantages of spouses who are co-believers:

What a bond is this: two believers who share one hope, one desire, one discipline, the same service! ... Together they pray, together they prostrate themselves, together they fast, teaching each other, exhorting each other, supporting each other. Side by side in the church of God and at the banquet of God, side by side in difficulties, in times of persecution, and in times of consolation. Neither hides anything from the other, neither shuns the other, neither is a burden to the other. They freely visit the sick and sustain the needy. They give alms without anxiety, attend the sacrifice without scruple, perform their daily duties unobstructed. They do not have to hide the sign of the cross, or be afraid of greeting their fellow Christians, or give blessings in silence. They sing psalms and hymns to one another and strive to outdo each other in chanting to their Lord. Seeing and hearing this, Christ rejoices. He gives them his peace. Where there are two, he also is present.¹²¹

μετὰ τῆς τοῦ οἴκου κηδεμονίας ἀδιάστατος τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ γενόμενος ἀγάπης, καὶ πάσης κατεξαιστώμενος πείρας τῆς διὰ τέκνων καὶ γυναικὸς οἰκετῶν τε καὶ κτημάτων προσφερομένης. τῷ δὲ οἴκῳ τὰ πολλὰ εἶναι συμβέβηκεν ἀπειράστῳ; trans. in Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, 60.

¹¹⁷ Brown, *Body and Society*, 78.

¹¹⁸ Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 10.2, SC 319, 102–104: *Recogitemus enim ipsam conscientiam nostram, quam alium se homo sentiat, cum forte a sua femina cessat. Spiritualiter sapit; si orationem facit ad dominum, prope est caelo; si scripturis incumbit, totus illic est; si psalmum canit, placet sibi; si daemonem adiurat, confidit sibi;* trans. in Brown, *Body and Society*, 78 (mis-cited as *De exhortatione castitatis* 10.1).

¹¹⁹ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 1.1.4, SC 273, 94: ... *nulla restitutio nuptiarum in diem resurrectionis repromittitur, translatis scilicet in angelicam qualitatem et sanctitatem;* trans. S. Thelwall, ANF 4:39. See further discussion in Chapter 5.

¹²⁰ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem; De exhortatione castitatis; De monogamia*; this topic also appears in the second-century *Shepherd of Hermas*, discussed in Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 9–10, and Brown, *Body and Society*, 65–72.

¹²¹ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.8.7–8; SC 273, 148, 150: *Quale iugum fidelium duorum unius spei, unius uoti, unius disciplinae, eiusdem seruitutis. ... simul orant, simul uoluntantur, simul ieiunia transigunt, alterutro docentes, alterutro exhortantes, alterutro sustententes. In ecclesia Dei pariter utrique, pariter in conuiuio Dei, pariter in angustiis, in persecutionibus, in refrigeriis. Neuter alterum celat, neuter alterum uitat, neuter alteri grauis est. Libere aeger uisitatatur, indigens sustentatur. Elemosinae sine tormento, sacrificia sine scrupulo, quotidiana diligentia sine impedimento; non furtiua signatio, non trepida gratulatio, non muta benedictio.*

Other third-century writers were still more pronounced in emphasizing the superiority of celibacy over marriage, even marriage between two believing Christians. In Syria, the author of the *Acts of Thomas* depicted conversion and baptism as a commitment to lifelong sexual abstinence, whether in a continent marriage or an unmarried state. The *Acts of Thomas* appears to have originated among Encratite Christians, but its popularity reflects an enthusiasm for asceticism characteristic of the region.

In the West, there emerged a tradition of speaking in terms of three degrees of heavenly reward or holiness for those who practiced virginity, celibate widowhood, or marriage. Drawing on the language of the hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold harvests in Jesus's parable of the sower (Matt 13:8, 23), a third-century writer in North Africa composed the homily *De centesima, sexagesima, tricesima*, which was preserved among the writings of Cyprian. The hundredfold reward was for virgins (Jesus had said that those who left home and family for his name's sake would receive "a hundredfold"; Matt 19:29), the sixtyfold reward was for chaste widows, and the lowest tier was only for the married who renounced sexual relations; sexually active married couples were apparently disqualified from reward.¹²² In other texts, the three-tiered rewards might be apportioned differently. Cyprian's mid-third-century treatise *De habitu virginum* claimed that all the baptized are reborn and receive the divine gift and inheritance, but to virgins there belonged an even greater holiness. However, the virgin's reward was only sixtyfold, as Cyprian reserved the hundredfold reward for martyrs.¹²³ Jerome, like the anonymous third-century North African writer, connected the hundredfold harvest to virginity, the sixtyfold to widowhood, and the thirtyfold to marriage, both in his letter to Eustochium, written at Rome around 384, and again in his polemic *Against Jovinian* in 393.¹²⁴ Ambrose, too, employed the three-tiered model in describing the superiority of virginity to widowhood and marriage, though he opted for a metaphor of different paths rather than different harvests: virginity was the highest path for the strongest travelers; the path of

Sonant inter duos psalmi et hymni, et mutuo prouocant, quis melius Domino suo cantet. Talia Christus uidens et audiens gaudet. His pacem suam mittit. Vbi duo, ibi et ipse; ubi et ipse, ibi et malus non est. Trans. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 38–39.

¹²² Philip Sellew, "The Hundredfold Reward for Martyrs and Ascetics: Ps.-Cyprian, *De centesima, sexagesima, tricesima*," *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 94–98; also discussed in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 114–115.

¹²³ Cyprian, *De habitu virginum* 21, 23; CSEL 3.1, 201–204.

¹²⁴ Jerome, *Epistula* 22.15, 19; CSEL 54, 162–163, 168–170; *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.3, PL 23, 222–224.

widowhood was not as difficult; the way of marriage was the easiest of the three and would still lead to the camp of the saints, though by a longer route.¹²⁵ In one variation or another, a “hierarchy of ascetic merit” characterized third- and fourth-century Christian discourse about marriage and celibacy.¹²⁶

Marriage and Celibacy in Fourth-Century Christianity

In the fourth century, some of the factors that had motivated asceticism and devalued marriage in Christianity’s first three centuries—acute tension between the group and society, expectations of an impending eschaton—were no longer pressing concerns after Constantine, yet the prospect of a Christianity on good terms with the Roman empire provided its own reasons to rethink society. This period saw the rise of monasticism and unprecedented levels of enthusiasm for forms of sexual renunciation.¹²⁷ There are no quantitative estimates for the percentage of the population that embraced celibacy, though Peter Charanis has estimated, based on the number and size of monasteries in certain locales, that monks comprised 1–2% of the population of society more or less throughout the existence of the Byzantine Empire.¹²⁸ In addition to monks, those who practiced sexual renunciation included lifelong consecrated virgins, some of whom might have lived at home (especially in the early fourth century), chaste widows, older married persons who entered a practice of continent marriage after their childbearing years, and the higher orders of clergy by the latter half of the fourth century. In the absence

¹²⁵ Ambrose, *Epistula* 14.40 (*Maur.* 63.40); CSEL 82.3, 256; cf. the late fourth-century *Liber Graduum* (Book of Steps) 14–15, which describes marriage as a path leading away from God, and only the path of sexual renunciation leading to perfection; again, this reflects the more radical asceticism of the East.

¹²⁶ Hunter, “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 596; cf. other discussions of a three-tiered reward: The homily *Hom. In Ps.50.8* (once attributed to John Chrysostom) “awards virginity a crown, marriage moderate praise, and fornication punishment and torment,” Schatkin, “Virgins,” 1166. Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 2.10–11, describes Paradise as a mountain to which God allots inheritances on three levels (not described here on the basis of ascetic merit): “In this way He allots the foothills to the most lowly, the slopes to those in between, and the heights to the exalted. . . . With justice He raises up each one to the degree that accords with his labours; each is stopped at the level whereof he is worthy, there being sufficient levels in Paradise for everyone”; Sebastian Brock, *Treasure-house of Mysteries: Explorations of the Sacred Text through Poetry in the Syriac Tradition* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012), 42. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* 46, CSEL 41, 291–292, raises the question of whether the hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold rewards are properly assigned to virgins, widows, and the married (without specifying whether continent or not), or to martyrdom, continence, and marriage, or are ultimately too narrow as categories, inadequate for the description of God’s multiplicity of gifts.

¹²⁷ The causes and motivations of the monastic movement are complex; many stem from biblical traditions, Gospel sayings, and fundamental notions of personhood, the material world, and society. For fuller discussions, see C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1989), 1–18; and Brown, *Body and Society*.

¹²⁸ Peter Charanis, “The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971): 61–84; with thanks to Kristian Heal for helping me locate this source.

of quantitative data, historians have generally used terms like “small minority” and “great majority” to describe the celibate and married populations.

The rank-and-file majority could view ascetic virtuosi as spiritual heroes, take inspiration from tales of their deeds, give them material support, and regard themselves as beneficiaries of their prayers in a kind of spiritual symbiosis.¹²⁹ However, the perception that ascetic teachers viewed married Christians as “second-class citizens” did not sit well with status-conscious Roman society—particularly with the Roman elite for whom civic offices (*honores*), wealth, and marriage constituted “the traditional triad of elite goods.”¹³⁰ Additionally, ordinary believers and clergy alike wanted to see the divine hand at work in the lives of holy men and women without negating biblical affirmations of a good creation and familial piety. Consequently the fourth century was punctuated by episodes of pronounced resistance to ascetic extremes and the hierarchy of ascetic merit.

The Synod of Gangra, for example, produced a list of twenty canons opposing the ascetic teachings of Eustathius of Sebaste, with an epilogue setting forth a more moderate view of asceticism. The canons anathematized anyone who condemned marriage, implied that sexually active married Christians were barred from the kingdom of heaven, discouraged receiving communion from a married presbyter, practiced celibacy or left a spouse simply out of abhorrence of marriage, practiced celibacy while treating the married arrogantly, or neglected children or parents under pretense of asceticism.¹³¹ The epilogue to the synodal letter clarified that the synod did not seek to cut off any who taught ascetic principles “according to the Scriptures,” but only teachers who were “exalting themselves above those who live more simply, and introducing novelties contrary to the Scriptures.” The clerics carefully affirmed:

¹²⁹ Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity”; Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 3–4.

¹³⁰ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 127 (“second-class citizens”); Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus,” 176 (“triad of elite goods”); Augustine, *Confessiones* 6.6.9, CSEL 33, 122.

¹³¹ *Concilium Gangrense*, canons 1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, EOMIA II.145–214; Greek and Latin texts in PL 67, 55–60. The date of the Synod is uncertain, and usually estimated to be in the 340s–360s; see Timothy D. Barnes, “The Date of the Council of Gangra,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 40.1 (1989): 121–124, who estimates c. 355 CE; Angelo di Berardino, et al., ed., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 2:98, s.v., *Gangra*; Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland, 1998), 452, s.v. *Gangra*.

We do, assuredly, admire virginity accompanied by humility; and we have regard for continence, accompanied by godliness and gravity; and we praise the leaving of worldly occupations, [when it is made] with lowliness of mind; [but at the same time] we honour the holy companionship of marriage, and we do not contemn wealth enjoyed with uprightness and beneficence.¹³²

At Rome, as at Gangra, there were concerns about excessive praise of virginity and devaluation of marriage. In the 380s, an anonymous Roman presbyter wrote an earnest defense of marriage and procreation in a section of his larger work *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti*. The author, once incorrectly thought to be Ambrose, was called Ambrosiaster (the “would-be Ambrose”) in the 16th century. Section 127 of his commentary, entitled *De peccato Adae et Evae* (“On the Sin of Adam and Eve”), seems to oppose not only Encratite sects but also some Catholic teachers, possibly including Jerome: “Hear now, O Catholic, while the gospel testifies that the birth of a human being is something good.”¹³³ Ambrosiaster presented three main arguments: (1) the blessing of Genesis 1:28 is of continued validity and affirms the goodness of marriage and procreation in the divine plan of creation; (2) the view of marriage found in the Old Testament is affirmed in the New Testament; and (3) sexual relations neither caused the sin of Adam and Eve nor were impugned by it.¹³⁴

In the early 380s a contemporary of Ambrosiaster named Helvidius wrote a treatise objecting to Jerome’s teachings about the virginal ideal. The work, now lost, is known through Jerome’s refutation *Against Helvidius*.¹³⁵ Helvidius focused mainly on the subject of the perpetual virginity of Mary, arguing that Mary and Joseph had children after Jesus, apparently implying that matrimony was to be esteemed higher than virginity, rather than the reverse.

A few years later, the monk Jovinian authored a book containing similar anti-ascetic teachings, also now lost and known through the writings of others, most importantly Jerome, Siricius, and Ambrose.

¹³² *Concilium Gangrense*, EOMIA II.212–213 (cf. PL 84, 115): nos autem et uirginitatem cum humilitate admiramur, et continentiam cum castitate et religione Deo acceptissimam dicimus, et renuntiationem saecularium negotiorum adque actuum cum humilitate discessum adprobandum laudamus; et nuptiarum uinculum quod secundum castitatem secum perdurat honoarmus, et diuites cum iustitia et operibus bonis non abicimus...; trans. Henri Percival, NPNF II, 14:101.

¹³³ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti*, 127.19, CSEL 50, 407, Audi nunc, catholice, euangelio teste prodesse hominis natiuitatem; trans. in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 163. Ambrosiaster’s *Quaestiones* 127 discussed in Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 283–299, and in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 159–170.

¹³⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 127.1–3 (first argument); 127.33–34 (second argument); 127.23–24, 29–30 (third argument); discussed in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 164.

¹³⁵ Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium de perpetua uirginitate b. Mariae*, PL 23, 193–216; FC 53, 3–34.

Jovinian was condemned as a heretic in synods at Rome and Milan in 393, and was exiled. Prior to this, however, his views won the acceptance of many in the church at Rome.¹³⁶ Jerome referred to four main points of Jovinian's argument: (1) virgins, widows, and married women were equal in merit by virtue of their baptism (assuming no difference in other works); (2) those who have been born again through baptism cannot be overthrown by the devil; (3) there is no difference between abstaining from food and eating it with a thankful disposition; (4) there is one reward in heaven for all who have kept their baptismal vow.¹³⁷ The appeal to baptism in Jovinian's arguments may explain, in part, why his teachings won such a following. Christians would have been personally acquainted with baptismal catechesis and ritual, and could have seen Jovinian's "emphasis on the power of baptism to free a person from sin, his stress on the equality of all the baptized, and his insistence on the unity of the one Church" as concepts they already "ritually enacted in the contemporary practice of baptism."¹³⁸

Jerome's polemic against Jovinian was not well received at Rome; even Jerome's friends thought it abusive and excessive in its praise of virginity and deprecation of marriage, and attempted to suppress it. This reception was not the first time Jerome's immoderate commitment to asceticism had met with disfavor in Rome. Nine years earlier (in 384), Jerome had undertaken the instruction of the recently-widowed twenty-year-old Blaesilla, daughter of Paula, urging upon her a rigorous regime of fasting and self-discipline, despite her poor health. When she died a short time later ("from what might now be understood as the aggravated symptoms of anorexia," Kate Cooper notes), public opinion placed the blame on Jerome; the negative backlash was such that a year later, accused of an inappropriate relationship with Paula, Jerome had to leave Rome.¹³⁹ In addition to these events, stray comments in Jerome's letters hint at a population at Rome that was receptive to Jovinian's teachings and resistant to his own. Writing to Paula after Blaesilla's death, Jerome acknowledged the common view that she had been

¹³⁶ Siricius, *Epistula* 7.2–6, CSEL 82.3, 297–301; Jerome, *Epistula* 48.2, CSEL 54, 352; Augustine, *Retractiones* 2.22, CCSL 57, 107–108.

¹³⁷ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.3; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 26.

¹³⁸ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 50; see 43–50 for an excursus on baptismal practice in the early church.

¹³⁹ Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 68.

“killed with fasting” and that Rome’s citizenry viewed him and others like him as “detestable monks.”¹⁴⁰ To Pammachius, Jerome remarked, “Men of the world [*saeculi homines*] are indignant that they are in a rank lesser than that of virgins,” revealing that the married Christian population took offense at the three-tiered hierarchy of ascetic merit.¹⁴¹

A resolution to the dispute came a few years later with two treatises written c. 400–401 by Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginit*y. Augustine responded to Jovinian without the excesses of Jerome, charting a middle ground between them that became normative. He opposed Jovinian by agreeing in theory with the hierarchy of ascetic merit, but did so in a way that subtly undermined it: he observed that there are in the Christian life virtues more important than celibacy, such as obedience, humility, and willingness to face martyrdom. These virtues may exist in the married, and since such virtues are invisible until they are made evident by crisis, it cannot be known whether any particular virgin is or is not more virtuous than a married Christian.¹⁴² In 410, Augustine argued in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* that sexual reproduction had been part of God’s intention for humanity from the time of creation, and thus procreation was one of the goods of marriage.¹⁴³

In the unsettled period before Augustine, however, the literary evidence points to contestation between the ascetic ideal and familial piety, with particular indications of Christians at Rome who felt indignant over implications that their familial commitments diminished their religious merit. It is in this setting that the visual art of Roman Christians emerges, including their production of prominent spousal portraits and other kinds of marital imagery. The context of these images in the history of Christian discourse on marriage and celibacy begs for consideration of how they figured in the construction of a lay identity and the concept of marriage as a Christian vocation—how they communicated rhetorically to signal not just religious affiliation to non-Christian viewers, but self-understanding to fellow Christians. Before Augustine wrote *De bono coniugali*, what did married Christians have to say on the good of

¹⁴⁰ Jerome, *Epistula* 39.6, CSEL 54, 306; *ieiuniis interfectam... detestabile monachorum*.

¹⁴¹ Jerome, *Epistula* 48.2, CSEL 54, 352; *...saeculi homines indignantur in minori gradu se esse quam uirgines...* (my trans.).

¹⁴² Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, 46–47; discussed in Hunter, “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 596; Augustine also argued here that the multiplicity of God’s gifts are so great that they cannot be adequately described using a simple model of three-tiered rewards.

¹⁴³ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.9.14–5; Hunter, “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 597.

marriage by means of their iconographic productions? As Christian writers fervently described the transformed lives of holy men and women, how did rank-and-file believers attempt to depict the effects of the faith on their own, relatively secular lives? The pictures they left behind tell the story.

Overview

This dissertation proceeds with two chapters examining forms of self-representation chosen by married Christians in visual art of the third and fourth centuries. Chapter 2 focuses on spousal portraits that employed the *dextrarum iunctio* and other elements of wedding scenes. It traces the origins of this iconography in Roman art, and the ways Christians adopted and modified it to express their own developing concepts of marriage. Chapter 3 examines three additional forms of spousal portraiture: intellectual-type representations, double-portraits in circular frames, and diminutive figures posed as worshipers at Jesus's feet.

Chapter 4 discusses images of Adam and Eve and the range of theological ideas they could convey in various contexts. It identifies instances when these images were used in the context of the commemoration or representation of married Christians, and explores the potential meanings the first parents might have accrued in those settings. Chapter 5 takes up the subject of spousal devotion after death and the ways individuals expressed hopes of an afterlife for themselves and their partners. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a brief conclusion summarizing the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER II

SPOUSAL PORTRAITS, PART I: *DEXTRARUM IUNCTIO* AND WEDDING SCENES

Dextrarum Iunctio Portraits and Wedding Scenes

Married Christians in third- and fourth-century Rome chose to represent themselves in visual art using various kinds of portraiture. As highly idealized forms of representation, portraits suggest what their patrons valued and how they wished to be perceived and remembered. These images are less likely to represent patrons' actual likenesses or the more complicated realities of their lives.¹ Portraiture was a strategy for constructing a public identity and memory. The ways Christians in the Roman world used existing iconography point to areas of continuity with pre-Christian Rome, while the ways they adapted forms of spousal representation indicate their distinctive values and notions, and their own contributions to the Christianization of Roman marriage.

This chapter focuses on forms of portraiture that employed the iconography of the *dextrarum iunctio*—the joining of right hands—and other elements of traditional wedding scenes. Over the course of the fourth century, married Christians at Rome took these existing forms of self-representation that displayed civic-minded harmony within the household and society, subtracted certain iconographic elements (traditional wedding deities), and added others (figures or symbols of Christ and wreath-crowns), creating distinctively Christian images conveying that same domestic *concordia* while simultaneously signaling citizenship and honor in the kingdom of God.

¹ A succinct discussion of the issues of Roman portraiture is presented in Jane Fejfer, "Roman Portraits," in *A Companion to Roman Art*, ed. Barbara E. Borg (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 233–251; a fuller treatment is Jane Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

Dextrarum Iunctio Portraits and Wedding Scenes in Non-Christian Roman Art

The Typical Wedding Scene

By the time identifiably Christian art began to emerge in the late second/early third century, a type of wedding scene had become conventional in Roman visual culture, having spread from imperial coinage and public sculptures to funerary monuments and private objects. August Rossbach described its main elements in 1871, and for the most part historians continue to accept his analysis, with some qualifications.² In the typical wedding scene, spouses stand, turned three-quarters toward each other, posed in the *dextrarum iunctio*. The bride is veiled, the groom often holds a scroll, human attendants may stand beside the spouses, and divine attendants may include Hymenaeus, Cupid/Amor, Venus, and more often, a crowned female figure standing between the spouses in the background. Rossbach, followed by many others, interpreted this middle figure as Juno, goddess of marriage, who bears the epithet *pronuba* in literary sources.³ The scene was believed to allude to the actual wedding rite, in which a respected Roman *matrona* would serve as bride's attendant (*pronuba*) and join the right hands of the bride and groom.⁴ More recently, other historians have called attention to the ambiguous literary evidence for identifying the central female figure as Juno, and have questioned whether the visual imagery represents an actual ceremony. The "wedding scene" found in art from the second century forward might not illustrate a real event in the lives of the commemorated individuals, but might rather symbolize their married status and particularly the ideal harmony of their private life. The central figure may be better understood as the personification of Concordia.⁵

² August Rossbach, *Römischen Hochzeits- und Ehedenkmäler* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1871), 12–13; Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 208.

³ August Rossbach, *Untersuchungen über die römische Ehe* (Stuttgart: C. Macken, 1853), 307–308; Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.166–168: Juno is the first woman in Latin literature to be identified as a *pronuba*; Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 192–193, 207, n. 302.

⁴ Rossbach, *Römischen Hochzeits- und Ehedenkmäler*, 12–13, 308; S. Weinstock, "Pronuba," *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* 23.1(1957): 750–756; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 164–165; Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 206–208.

⁵ Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 23–95; Carola Reinsberg, "Concordia: Die Darstellung von Hochzeit und ehelicher Eintracht in Spätantike," in *Spätantike und frühes Christentum. Ausstellung im Liebieghaus, Museum alter Plastik, Frankfurt am Main. 16. Dezember bis 11. März 1984*, ed. Herbert Beck and Peter Bol (Frankfurt am Main: Das Liebieghaus, 1983), 312–317; Anna Marguerite McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978.), 124; Guntram Koch, *Früchrichtliche Sarkophage* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000), 111; Carola Reinsberg, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben: Vita Romana. Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs I*, 3 (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 2006), 78, 81;

The evidence surveyed in this section about the history of the “wedding scene” suggests that the female mediator probably was meant as a personification of Concordia, and was understood as such. However, images can be polyvalent and viewers interpret them in various ways depending on the knowledge and assumptions they bring to the viewing experience. Ancient viewers might have seen the female mediator as the goddess Concordia herself, a personification of the virtue of marital harmony, another goddess (like Juno), a symbolic reference to the person who actually performed the role of a *pronuba* at the wedding, or a combination of these.⁶ The discussion to follow considers what Christians at Rome potentially saw in these wedding scenes as a basis for interpreting how they appropriated and modified the scenes.

History of the *Dextrarum Iunctio* and Wedding Scene

The history of both images—the *dextrarum iunctio* and the mediator figure—suggests a range of symbolic values Christians might have perceived in the wedding scenes they encountered. Before its use in Roman art, the image of two figures clasping right hands appeared in Greek and late Etruscan scenes representing close association between family members, farewell at death, posthumous reunion, or simultaneous combinations of these.⁷ In Greek art the *dexiosis* handclasp sometimes appeared in depictions of married persons, but was not inherently associated with marriage; rather, Greek wedding scenes tended to show the groom taking the bride by the wrist (*cheir’ epi karmo*, “hand on the wrist”), a

Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 15, 190–212; Karen K. Hersch, “Confarreatio,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, 1st ed., ed. Roger S. Bagnall et al., (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1702; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 29, 62, 65. See also Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *The British Museum Concise Introduction to Ancient Rome* (London: British Museum, 2008), 125, which still identifies the female figure as Juno *pronuba*; Hersch, *Roman Wedding*, 207, n. 304, notes this as persistence of the earlier common opinion, but regards the question as settled: “Juno *pronuba* ... has now yielded her place on Roman sarcophagi to Concordia,” 287.

⁶ Also discussed in Janet Huskinson, “Reading Identity on Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi,” *Res* 61/62 (2012): 85. Susan Treggiari, “Putting the Bride to Bed,” *Echos du Monde Classique* 38 (1994): 314–315: the *dextrarum iunctio* and *pronuba* were elements of the wedding rite that were simply “more commonly represented in art than stressed in literary sources”; whether the figure in art represented Juno or Concordia matters little, for “whichever goddess it was, she was represented in real life by a *pronuba*.” Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, emphasizes the ambiguity of evidence for a *pronuba*’s role in joining the hands at a wedding ceremony, but by time Christian wedding scenes emerge the evidence is less ambiguous, and a joining of hands seems to have been conventional. Celia E. Schultz, “Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity*” [review], *The Classical Review* 62.1 (2012), 232–234, critiques Hersch for excessive uncertainty in her treatment of the evidence upon which earlier common opinions were based.

⁷ Glenys Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 89.4 (1985): 627–640.

gesture that gives more emphasis than the *dextrarum iunctio* to the husband's dominance and possession of the bride.⁸ In Etruscan art the image of joined right hands acquired particular marital significance on some sarcophagi, while also retaining its earlier associations with leave-taking and (perhaps) greeting in the afterlife.⁹

In the early Roman Empire, funerary stelae, cinerary urns, and grave altars portrayed pairs of individuals joined by the *dextrarum iunctio* (fig. 5).¹⁰ Usually the figures were male and female, sometimes identified by inscriptions as married couples, but in a few cases the individuals were patron and *libertus/liberta* or parent and child, sometimes of the same sex (evidently mother and daughter or father and son).¹¹ Though uncommon, these exceptional cases indicate that in Roman art the *dextrarum iunctio* retained the polyvalence of its Greek and Etruscan precedents.¹² Thus, the gesture could be used in depictions of mythological lovers, both those who were married (e.g., Protesilaus and Laodamia), and some who were famously not married (e.g., Venus and Mars).¹³ Tacitus referred to the joined right hands as a token of friendship, and it appeared in art of the political-military sphere to symbolize alliance, as on a cameo plaque of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, made c. 166 CE to celebrate the defeat of the Parthians (fig. 6).¹⁴ The two co-emperors face each other, turned three-quarters profile, and join hands as a small winged Victory between them places a wreath upon the head of Marcus at left: because of their alliance and unity (symbolized by the *dextrarum iunctio*), Lucius's victory becomes Marcus's.

In short, the handclasp was a generic image signaling a bond between two individuals, and it could be put to use to represent any number of relationships—political, familial, or conjugal—though

⁸ Davies, "Handshake Motif," 628; Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 209.

⁹ Davies, "Handshake Motif," 632, citing the example of the sarcophagus from Vulci now in the Boston Museum of Fine Art, accession no. 1975.799, discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁰ For examples see Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 103–106, figs. 18–19.

¹¹ Davies, "Handshake Motif," 633–634.

¹² Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture: The Funerary Reliefs of the Late Republic and Early Empire* (New York: Garland, 1977), 22–46; Davies, "Handshake Motif," 632–635, 640.

¹³ Davies, "Handshake Motif," 635–637; Reinsberg, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben*, 79; Hersch, *Roman Wedding*, 208.

¹⁴ Tacitus, *Historiarum* 1.54.1; 2.8.2.

Roman artisans found it a particularly suitable means of indicating the married relationship.¹⁵ One reason for this may be that an actual joining of hands took place in marriage ceremonies (though marriages could be formed without such ceremonies).¹⁶ The handclasp had probably been an element of rites performed in the forming of *manus* marriages (in which the bride came under the “hand,” or control, of her husband and left that of her father); though this form of marriage had all but disappeared by the time of the late Republic, wedding celebrations retained the act of joining right hands to symbolize marital *concordia*.¹⁷

In the second century the *dextrarum iunctio* underwent iconographic development and became more defined as a marital image due to Antoninus Pius’s efforts to advertise the harmony of marriages in the imperial *familia*. A denarius issued c. 141 CE after death of Antoninus’s wife, Faustina, to celebrate her deification, depicted Antoninus and Faustina on the reverse, standing in the *dextrarum iunctio* (fig. 7). On some of these coins the royal couple is encircled by the inscription *CONCORDIAE*.¹⁸ This image underwent elaboration in a sestertius of c. 145–147 CE: Antoninus holds up a statuette of Concordia between himself and Faustina as they join right hands, and below them the smaller figures of their daughter, Faustina Minor, and Antoninus’s adopted son, Marcus Aurelius, also join hands, mirroring their elders. The inscription *CONCORDIAE* encircles the scene (fig. 8).¹⁹ Issued to celebrate the betrothal of Marcus and the younger Faustina, the coin disseminates a message about the marital harmony in two generations of the imperial household, and thus about the stability of the Empire.²⁰ Around 145 CE an

¹⁵ Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 633. The endurance of the handclasp’s ability to signify a harmonious and loyal relationship between non-spouses is seen in Rep. III, no. 262, Taf. 67.5, a fragment of a sarcophagus with a *clipeus* portrait of two standing apostles joining right hands, one with his arm over the other’s shoulders.

¹⁶ Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 199–205, discusses the evidence for a joining of hands at Roman wedding ceremonies; she acknowledges the art historical evidence but does not see unambiguous literary evidence for a practice of bride and groom joining hands until the late fourth-century writings of Claudian (200); cf. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 164–165; Bruce W. Frier and Thomas A. J. McGinn, *A Casebook on Roman Family Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26, 481: the legal requirements for forming a marriage were primarily *conubium*, or legal capacity to marry, and *consensus*, with minimal process requirements. Tertullian, *De idolatria* 16, pointed to the ring and the “joining [of hands?]” as defining elements of marriage rites: ...*anulus aut coniunctio maritalis...*, CSEL 20, 49. Art historians have tended to interpret the *dextrarum iunctio* as both a symbol and a reference to an actual ceremony; e.g., Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture*, 24, states that the gesture referred to “the most important moment of the marriage ceremony,” and probably symbolized the “affection, devotion, and fidelity which unite the pair.”

¹⁷ Gordon Williams, “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 48 (1958): 21, n. 20.

¹⁸ Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum, Vol. IV, Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (London: Spink, 1940/2005), 44 nos. 298–300, Pl. 7.13.

¹⁹ Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, lxxxvii, 198–199, nos. 1236–1240, Pl. 28.8.

²⁰ William E. Metcalf, *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 435.

important iconographic development occurred with the issuing of a gold aureus that represented the marriage of Marcus and Faustina posed in the *dextrarum iunctio* before a full-size female figure who stands between them, resting her hands upon their shoulders—the image of Concordia (fig. 9).²¹

Images of the harmonious imperial household presented a role model to the populace and had an impact on public expressions of the formation of marriages. At Ostia, a slab believed to have been part of an altar of Concordia bears an inscription announcing that newly married couples were to offer a sacrifice in front of statues of Antoninus and Faustina on account of the imperial couple's excellent harmony (*ob insignem eorum concordia*).²² Dio Cassius mentioned a senatorial decree in Rome in 176 CE: silver statues of Marcus and Faustina II were to be erected in the Temple of Venus and Roma, along with an altar where all maidens in the city who marry and their husbands were to offer sacrifice.²³ Carola Reinsberg proposes that one should probably imagine a large sculpted monument similar to the wedding images on the Antonine coins; "Marriage, a thing that touched upon every Roman citizen, at least each for whom it was available, was linked by this program with a virtue, and had undergone a particular ethical elevation in the postulation of marital harmony."²⁴ The Antonine marriage images not only fostered a public valorization of marital harmony, but also played a role in the ritual induction of Rome's married couples into a civic-minded imitation of the good Emperor and his wife. "As a result," states Peter Brown, "the married couple came to appear in public as a miniature of civic order."²⁵ Antonine iconographic

²¹ Harold Mattingly and Edward A. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol. 3: Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (London: Spink & Son, 1930), 17; Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, xlviii, 48–49, no. 326, Pl. 8.5, 13.4, 43.4. An accompanying inscription, *VOTA PUBLICA*, indicates a vow made by the state related to the marriage. Reinsberg, "Concordia," 312, takes it as a reference to public vows for the happy outcome of the marriage. Cf. McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi*, 128–129.

²² CIL XIV, 5326. *DECVRIONVM DECRETO IMP(eratori) CAESARI T(ito) AELIO HADRIANO ANTONINO AVG(vsto) PIO P(atri) P(atriciae) ET DIVAE FAVSTINAE OB INSIGNEM EORVM CONCORDIAM VTIQVE IN ARA VIRGINES QVAE IN COLONIA OSTIENS(i) NVBENT ITEM MARITI EARVM SVPLICENT*; cf. Rachel Kousser, "Mythological Group Portraits in Antonine Rome: The Performance of Myth," *American Journal of Archaeology* 111.4 (2007): 675.

²³ Dio Cassius, *Historian Romana*, 72.31.1–2, LCL 177; this and the Ostian inscription cited in Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings," 14–15.

²⁴ Reinsberg, "Concordia," 314 (my trans.): "Die Ehe, eine Sache, die jeden römischen Bürger betraf, zumindest einem jeden zugänglich war, war durch dieses Bildprogramm mit einer Tugend verknüpft worden und hatte in dem Postulat der ehelichen Eintracht eine besondere ethische Überhöhung erfahren." Cf. Paul Zanker and Björn Ewald, *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi*, trans. Julia Slater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 190.

²⁵ Peter Brown, "Late Antiquity," in *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Paul Veyne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 248.

developments resonated with Stoic idealization of *homonoia*; harmony in the household, city, and empire were microcosms for harmony in and with the universe.²⁶

Accordingly, the propagated Antonine wedding scene, with the *dextrarum iunctio* and the figure of Concordia, began to appear in the personal art of Romans. Its use was part of “the gradual adoption of the handshake motif for the public expression of more private and domestic harmonies,” Davies observed.²⁷ One sees an early example of a patron’s adoption of the *concordia*-wedding scene on the famous Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, dated to about 180–190. At the center of the lid, the military commander for whom the sarcophagus was made is represented joining right hands with his wife, who is veiled (their portraits unfinished here as elsewhere on the sarcophagus), Concordia stands between them, and at their feet a diminutive Hymenaeus bears a torch (fig. 10). On this and other biographical (*vita humana*) sarcophagi the marriage scene joins other motifs alluding to the life and virtues of the deceased in a sort of visual eulogy: *virtus* (in battle or hunting scenes), *clementia* (in images showing conquered barbarians kneeling before the seated general), *pietas* (in sacrifice scenes), and *concordia* (marriage scenes featuring the *dextrarum iunctio* and Concordia).²⁸ The placement of the marriage scene at the center of the lid reflects the importance of marital *concordia* in the late Antonine period.²⁹

As this image type continued to grow in popularity, small-scale vignettes that decorated second-century sarcophagus lids became dominant scenes filling the front panels of some third-century sarcophagi.³⁰ An example of this is the so-called Annona sarcophagus, dated to 270–280 (fig. 11). Distinctive for its line-up of personifications (left to right: Portus, Annonus, Genius Senati, Fortuna/Abundantia, and Africa), it features the conventional wedding scene at the center of the casket: a

²⁶ Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 5.

²⁷ Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 638.

²⁸ Gerhart Rodenwaldt, *Über den Stilwandel in der antoninischen Kunst* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935), 6; Natalie B. Kampen, “Biographical Narration and Roman Funerary Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 85.1 (1981); Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 638; Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 60; Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 565; the comparison with eulogy is mentioned in Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 14.

²⁹ Kampen, “Biographical Narration and Roman Funerary Art,” 56; Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 565; Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 14.

³⁰ Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 301–302.

husband and wife in the *dextrarum iunctio*, between them a crowned Concordia in the background, and in the foreground a small fire on a pedestal altar representing a nuptial sacrifice.³¹

Other Deities in the Wedding Scene

In the third and fourth centuries, the period in which Christian art emerges, the wedding scene underwent still more developments, notably in the substitution of other deities for the central figure of Concordia. The reverse of a coin issued by Aurelian (270–275) depicts the emperor standing at right in military dress, holding a scepter in his left hand, and joining right hands with his wife, Severina, standing to the left. A radiate bust of the god Sol appears in the field above and between them (fig. 12). Aurelian elevated the cult of Sol in an effort to unify the empire and lead it out of the chaos of the mid-third century; Kantorowicz observed, “the Sun god, . . . who by his rise conquers the demons of darkness and brings peace and security to man,” fittingly serves here “as the *pronubus*, the unifier and solemnizer of the marriage of Aurelian and Severina.”³²

A glass vessel base dated to 360–400 depicts in gold leaf the busts of a man and woman, with a diminutive figure of Hercules standing on a disk between them, a “*Hercules pronubus*” (fig. 13).³³ Hercules is dressed in the skin of the Nemean lion, holding a club in one hand and three apples in his other hand.³⁴ Encircling this image, an inscription in a double-band border reads *ORFITVS ET CONSTANTINA IN NOMINE HERCVLIS*, and a dedicatory inscription within the field reads *ACERENTINO FELICES BIBATIS*. The two inscriptions, taken as continuous, may be translated, “Orifitus and Constantia, drink happily in the name of Hercules, the conqueror of the Underworld.”³⁵ The

³¹ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 320, no. 666; cf. Katharina Meinecke, “Invisible Sarcophagi: Coffin and Viewer in the Late Imperial Age,” in *Patrons and Viewers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stine Birk and Birte Poulsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2012), 96–99.

³² Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 6.

³³ Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 6. Cf. Lucy Grig, “Portraits, Pontiffs, and the Christianization of Fourth-Century Rome,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004), 208, for the possible connection of this glass with a known prefect of Rome.

³⁴ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 121–123, no. 35; Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, no. 316.

³⁵ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 122–123; although if *ACERENTINO* refers the town of Acerentia rather than to Acheron/the Underworld, another possibility is, “Orfitus and Constantia, may you drink in happiness in the name of Hercules of Acerentia.” Howells also proposes the possibility of “may you live” rather than “may you drink”; on the exchange of b for v in

artisan used green enamel to overpaint the apples and the bride's jewelry, drawing the viewer's attention to these details. The apples from the garden of the Hesperides grew from fruit that Gaia had given as a wedding present to Hera and Zeus, and so are associated with wedding gifts and marriage; perhaps a blessing on the bride's fertility is also implied. Though there is no reference here to the myth of Alcestis, the role of Hercules in that legend may also be a factor in his service as a patron deity of marriage; the image of Hercules delivering the devoted wife Alcestis from Hades and reuniting her with her husband Admetus was chosen by married couples for use in funerary art and seems to have been particularly prized by women.³⁶ Janet H. Tulloch identifies afterlife nuance in the iconography: "This couple is under the protection of Hercules. His small figure precedes the couple as though to ward off unwanted obstacles as they make their way to the underworld."³⁷

Another late fourth-century gold glass vessel base with portrait busts of a married couple includes a full-length figure of a winged, naked Cupid floating above the shoulders and between the heads of the spouses, resting his hands upon their heads (fig. 14). Kantorowicz called this a case of Cupid "acting as an *Amor pronubus*."³⁸ A broken-off part of the medallion apparently contained the name of the bride; the remaining inscription toasts the groom: [...]*NE TZVCINVS BIBITE* ("[...]ne Tzucinus, drink!").³⁹ Some historians have suggested that this piece was a precedent for Christian versions of marriage scenes, but Walter states that the opposite may be the case—this image (and, one might add, the preceding example with Hercules) may reflect a renaissance of "pagan" themes in the late fourth century.⁴⁰ Then again, winged putti appear frequently in Christian art, so one may wonder whether the presence of a Cupid necessarily signals a non-Christian identity or a specifically "pagan" wedding rite.⁴¹

biba/vivas, see Dennis Trout, "Inscribing Identity: The Latin Epigraphic Habit in Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 176.

³⁶ Susan Wood, "Alcestis on Roman Sarcophagi," *American Journal of Archaeology* 82.4 (1978), 499–510; Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers*, 60–63. Cf. other possible associations of Hercules with Concordia and marriage in Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings," 6.

³⁷ Tulloch, "Devotional Visuality," 553.

³⁸ Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings," 6.

³⁹ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 123–124, no. 36.

⁴⁰ Christopher Walter, "Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography," *Zograf* 10 (1979): 84–85; cf. Grig, "Portraits, Pontiffs, and the Christianization of Fourth-Century Rome," 208, note 34.

⁴¹ Raffaele Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovanti nei cimiteri dei cristiani primitivi di Roma* (Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1858), 57–58, tav. 28.6. The glass's provenance is not known, but Garrucci seems to have assumed it came from a

In rare cases divine attendants appear beside the spouses rather than between them, as in the *dextrarum iunctio* scene on so-called “sarcophagus of the brothers” made c. 240–260 CE for a Gallic consul (fig. 15). At left, Venus places a wreath of flowers on the bride’s head, as Cupid hovers in the background. At far right a male figure identified as the *Genius* of the Roman people stands beside the groom holding a cornucopia.⁴² The placement of attendant deities to either side of the bride and groom, rather than between them, emphasizes the favor they bestow upon the marriage rather than their role in forming the union or personifying its harmony.

The placement of figures like Cupid, Hercules, Venus, Genii, and Sol in the place often occupied by Concordia or to the side of marrying spouses reflects the tradition of inviting the presence of deities at the Roman wedding. Literary sources as well as visual ones refer to a variety of gods—Hymenaeus, Juno, Venus, Concordia, Vesta, Janus, Ceres, Tellus, and the family *lares, penates*, and *genii*—whom wedding participants propitiated at stages throughout nuptial rites.⁴³ Their visual representation, to the extent it was not mere classicizing decoration, could have announced the religious and social loyalties of the spouses, and the favor spouses and their families hoped to secure from their patron deities for the well-being and harmony of marital unions.

***Dextrarum iunctio* Portraits and Wedding Scenes in Christian Art: Description**

Generally, *dextrarum iunctio* portraits of spouses enjoyed use in Christian art throughout the period of this study’s focus, from the third century and throughout the fourth century and beyond. These portraits appear on sarcophagi of the late third and early fourth century, then apparently fell out of use in the mid-fourth century as *clipeus* portraits rose in popularity, before returning to use on some late fourth-

Christian context; he remarked that while he did not believe the Cupid was a figure of completely pagan cultic practice, he also found it reprehensible that its makers had not rather depicted Christ crowning the spouses, as on other gold glasses: “Nè io credo che l’amore coniugale in forma di Erote alato e nudo che unisce i due sposi, debba dichiararsi onninamente figura di culto pagano, trovo però riprovevole, che non abbiano fatto invece rappresentare Cristo, come altri pur fanno.”

⁴² Naples National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 6603; N. Himmelmann-Wildschütz, “Sarkophag eines gallienischen Konsul,” in *Festschrift für Friedrich Matz*, ed. N. Himmelmann-Wildschütz and H. Beisantz (Mainz: Zabern, 1962), 110–124; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 316, no. 641, fig. 78 (p. 144); Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 89–90.

⁴³ Discussed in Hersch, *Roman Wedding*, 227–288.

century sarcophagi.⁴⁴ Gold glasses made in the mid to late fourth century also portray Christian spouses with the handclasp motif, as well as in forms of portraiture that made variations on the received wedding iconography.

***Dextrarum Iunctio* Portraits without Attendant Figures**

A number of Christian sarcophagi from the late third century through the fourth century bear conventional portraits of married couples in the *dextrarum iunctio* with no *pronuba*, matrimonial deities or, for that matter, no distinctively Christian elements in the scene itself.⁴⁵ In many of these cases the scene is enclosed within an architectural framework of columns and pediments and it is only surrounding images that identify the portrayed couple as Christian. For example, at Ancona a very conventional *dextrarum iunctio* portrait of Titus Flavius Gorgonius and his wife (not named in the inscription) appears on the back panel of his sarcophagus (fig. 16); the decoration of the front, lid, and sides includes such biblical scenes as Christ teaching the apostles, the Adoration of the Magi, David and Goliath, the baptism of Jesus, Moses receiving the Law, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the Hebrew youths refusing to worship the king.⁴⁶ On another late fourth-century sarcophagus in Arles, the so-called “Dioscuri and spouses sarcophagus,” a *dextrarum iunctio* portrait appears amid a combination of Christian and mythological figures (fig. 17). The front panel is divided by columns into four niches. The two center niches depict, at right, the spouses with right hands joined, and to the left, a very similar farewell scene (the bride rests her hand upon her husband’s shoulder).⁴⁷ The niches to either side each contain a representation of one of the

⁴⁴ Manuela Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 224.

⁴⁵ Rep. I, no. 1039 (late 3rd century), no. 63 (early 4th century), no. 688 (4th century), no. 678 (end of 4th century); Rep. II, no. 149 (late 4th century); Rep. III, no. 51 (late 4th century).

⁴⁶ Rep. II, 54–56, no. 149; cf. the very similar sarcophagus of S. Petronius Probus, Rep. I, 277–278, no. 678; Leclercq, “Mariage,” col. 1912.

⁴⁷ Rep. III, 37–38, no. 51, Taf. 18.1–3; Reekmans, “La *dextrarum iunctio*,” 55–59; Vassiliki Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l’Arles antique* (Arles: Musée de l’Arles et de la Provence antiques, 2005), 124–130: “Il avance sa main droite vers la femme, alors qu’elle pose sa main droite sur l’épaule gauche de l’homme” (“He moves his hand to the woman while she places her right hand on the left shoulder of the man,” p. 125, my trans.). The farewell scene at left center is sometimes misidentified as a second *dextrarum iunctio* scene; e.g., Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 211; Rachel Meyers, “Representations of Elite Roman Marriage” (n.p. 2011), 3, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://www2.cnr.edu/Home/araia/Meyers-Abstract.pdf>. This may be because the woman’s right hand resting on her husband’s arm is difficult to detect in many photos; in-person examination makes this clear (one can see the thumbnail and individual fingers on the woman’s hand), and removes all doubt that this is not a

Dioscuri, while the short sides of the sarcophagus bear Christian motifs (the Multiplication of the Loaves and a seated teacher [Peter?] reading).⁴⁸ Leclercq noted the absence of Juno and Hymenaeus who are present in the parallel *dextrarum iunctio* scene on a four-niche columnar sarcophagus at Tipasa (two spousal portraits at center are, as at Arles, flanked by Dioscuri at either end). The two marriage deities were omitted on the Arles sarcophagus, Leclercq proposes, “without doubt because of their pagan character.”⁴⁹ This is possible, given the otherwise similar design of the Tipasa sarcophagus, but the Arles sarcophagus patrons evidently felt comfortable with the “pagan” Dioscuri framing their portraits. Further, *dextrarum iunctio* scenes featuring only the spouses had been a common form of portraiture well before marriage deities were added, and continued to be produced even after *pronuba* scenes became popular. A simple handclasp portrait like that on the Arles sarcophagus was always an option; the situation was not, as Leclercq stated, one in which Juno *pronuba* was rarely lacking.⁵⁰ (A fuller consideration of this sarcophagus appears in Chapter 5.)

Wedding Scenes with a *Pronuba*

Some Christian sarcophagi did feature wedding scenes including the Concordia figure as found on earlier, non-Christian sarcophagi—though these are relatively few and date to the early fourth century (first third of the century or earlier). The only fully intact example is the so-called Ludovisi or Pronuba sarcophagus (original provenance unknown, relocated to the villa Ludovisi, now in the Vatican’s Museo Pio Cristiano). This large, strigillated sarcophagus bears Christian images in the corner panels (the creation of Adam and Eve, Christ healing the blind man, the raising of Lazarus, and Peter’s water miracle) and a prominent *dextrarum iunctio* scene, the largest image on the sarcophagus, at the center, above a small depiction of winged genii and a cock fight (fig. 18). The spousal portrait has been damaged;

dextrarum iunctio scene, though it certainly bears compositional similarities to such scenes. The similarities do invite the viewer to consider the pair’s marriage, as does the knot of Hercules in the woman’s attire. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁴⁸ The teacher is identified as Peter by Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l’Arles antique*, 126, but could also be seen as another teacher figure, or a symbolic reference to authoritative teaching of scripture in the church. Writing in the fourth century, Rufinus of Aquileia, in his preface to the *Clementine Recognitions*, stated that Peter had occupied “the teacher’s seat” (which Clement received upon Peter’s death); trans. Thomas Smith, ANF 8:76.

⁴⁹ Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1902: “...sans doute à cause de leur caractère païen” (my trans.).

⁵⁰ Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1901: “cette figure manque rarement sur les représentations de ce genre.”

the joined right hands are missing. The *pronuba* figure stands in the background between the spouses, while a diminutive Psyche stands at the feet of the wife, to the left, and a companion Amor/Cupid, now missing, stood to the right at the feet of the husband.⁵¹ Use of the marriage scene, Janet Huskinson writes, identifies the sarcophagus owners “with ‘traditional social values and with the blessings of love and concord, while the competitiveness of the cockfight shown below adds connotations of worldly success,’” and the Christian images to either side “set their marriage in a religious context.”⁵²

Only a fragment remains of another strigillated sarcophagus of typical design (figurally decorated center and corner fields): a *dextrarum iunctio* scene at center includes the frontally-posed Concordia between the spouses, wearing a diadem in her hair; a ram-carrying “Good Shepherd” stands in the field at far right, and part of a hornless sheep (originally carried by a now-missing shepherd) can still be seen in the far left field (fig. 19).⁵³ The placement of a ram to the right and a sheep to the left, corresponding to the locations of the husband and wife at right and left in the center scene, suggest an attempt to allude to the safe conveyance of both spouses’ souls into the afterlife.⁵⁴

The same design—*pronuba*-wedding scene, strigils, Good Shepherd—appears on another fragment, except the full extent of the wedding scene is preserved and includes a diminutive Eros at the feet of the wife and husband (fig. 20).⁵⁵ On another sarcophagus, a double-register frieze of biblical scenes was interrupted at the center of the panel by a full-length wedding scene placed in front of a *parapetasma*. Like the Ludovisi sarcophagus, the original composition here would have given viewers an imposing display of the sarcophagus owners’ marriage. The surviving panel is broken and preserves only the *pronuba* and the husband, and to the right, parts of the Multiplication of the Loaves (top register) and the Denial/Commissioning of Peter (lower register). Josef Wilpert proposed drawings of the missing portrait of the bride and hypothesized additional biblical scenes (fig. 21). The husband’s position as a

⁵¹ Rep. I, 71–72, no. 86; Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1903–1904, no. 11.

⁵² Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 231.

⁵³ Rep. I, 359, no. 853; Leclercq, “Mariage,” col. 1903, fig. 7645; Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcophagi Cristiani Antichi I* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), 89, Taf. 70.3.

⁵⁴ For discussion of the Good Shepherd as a bearer of souls into the afterlife, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 39.

⁵⁵ August Stegensek, “Santa Maria in Vescovio, Kathedrale der Sabina,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 16 (1902): 23, fig. 6; Leclercq, “Mariage,” cols. 1905–1906, no. 13, fig. 7646; apparently not included in the 3-volume *Repertorium*.

civic authority (perhaps a consul) is indicated by the scepter decorated with an emperor's portrait bust that he holds in his left hand.⁵⁶

A columnar sarcophagus dating to the last quarter of the third century features a *dextrarum iunctio* portrait of a wife and husband in the middle niche, with a diminutive figure of Hymenaeus standing between them. However, though this sarcophagus has been published in a number of catalogues of Christian sarcophagi, including the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, there does not seem to be anything in its decoration, provenance, or inscription that would identify it as having been made for Christian patrons.⁵⁷

Spousal Portraits with *Christus Pronubus*

While the foregoing spousal portraits on Christian artifacts appear in the form of the *pronuba* wedding scene popular since the Antonine period, or the simpler *dextrarum iunctio* image seen in early imperial funerary reliefs, there emerged over the course of the fourth century a number of innovations and adaptations which added distinctively Christian elements to the received iconography. In a new form of the wedding scene, the *pronuba* figure was replaced by the figure of a young male who places crowns upon the heads of the spouses.

A fragment from the front-center of a late fourth-century strigil sarcophagus from the Villa Albani preserves part of this new image. The figure of the wife at left is almost entirely lost, with only her right hand remaining, clasped by the hand of the husband to the right. Their hands are joined over a lectern.⁵⁸ Between the spouses is the upper body and head of a young male figure, looking slightly toward

⁵⁶ Rep. I, 397–398, no. 952; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol 1, Tav. 86.1.

⁵⁷ Rep. I, 381–383, no. 918, Taf. 145; the provenance is given as the Villa Ada, and before that the Villa Ludovisi. Marion Lawrence did not consider it a Christian sarcophagus: Marion Lawrence, "A Sarcophagus at Lanuvium," *American Journal of Archaeology* 32.4 (1928): 424-429, 433 (on 433 she mentions another sarcophagus as her only Christian example, implying that she does not regard this one as Christian). Cf. the similar scene at the center of a strigillated sarcophagus in Munich: Ewald, "Sarcophagi and Senators," 569, fig. 2.

⁵⁸ Upon the lectern lies a book which Wilpert and Leclercq identify as a diptych and interpret as a gospel book, and a reference to a church setting with a liturgical rite performed over the gospel book: Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 91: "nel leggito col libro delle Sacre Scritture, cosei solennemente esposto, si dovrà vedere un mobile liturgico, per conseguenza un'allusione a quella chiesa dove fu contratto il matrimonio"; Leclercq, "Mariage," cols. 1905–1906, no. 14: "Au point de vue liturgique il faut signaler que les époux contractent la dextrarum iunctio sur le livre des évangiles." Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings," 8, cites Wilpert's identification without objection. One wonders, though, whether a diptych would call to

the left (toward the wife), holding a wreath-crown (mostly broken off) with his left hand over the head of the husband. Wilpert supplied a hypothetical reconstruction of the wife and the mediator's missing right arm placing a matching wreath-crown on the wife's head (fig. 22).⁵⁹ The central figure crowning the spouses has been identified as Christ *pronubus*, a variation on the image of the youthful Christ popular in fourth-century Christian art.⁶⁰

The marriage scene on the Villa Albani fragment has been compared to the tondo portrait of Flavius Julius Catervius and Septimia Severina that appears on their late fourth-century sarcophagus in Tolentino (fig. 23).⁶¹ Rather than portraying the spouses full-length and standing, this *imago clipeata* contains portrait busts, but departs from the conventional, affectionate pose used in earlier fourth-century double-portraits (see Chapter 3) and instead presents the spouses frontally in the *dextrarum iunctio*, as if harking back to the style of the grave reliefs of the early Empire. Severina is depicted veiled (as are the women in figs. 10, 17, 18). Above their heads a hand holds out a jeweled wreath-crown. Most have interpreted this as the hand of God bestowing an eschatological reward, but Theodor Klauser saw the crown as a wedding wreath, and Wilpert regarded the hand as that of Christ, on the basis of the two christograms in the spandrels to either side of the portrait and the inscription on the lid above the portrait announcing that the all-powerful Lord had joined Catervius and Severina in sweet marriage (*QVOS ... VINXIT MATRIMONIO DVLCI OMNIPOTENS DOMINVS*).⁶²

A floating crown appears between spouses joining right hands on a gold glass medallion in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 24). The couple stands; the groom wears a toga while the bride wears an elaborate hairstyle, a jeweled necklace, and a richly embroidered dress. Their hands join over a short

viewers' minds a gospel book, and whether late fourth-century artists wanting to represent a gospel book might have been more likely to depict a codex or scroll rather than a diptych.

⁵⁹ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 90, *Tav.* 74.3; cf. 91, *Tav.* 74.2, a small fragment containing only a crown held by a hand; Wilpert's drawing hypothesizes a similar wedding scene with Christ *pronubus* crowning spouses.

⁶⁰ Rep. I, 384–385, no. 922; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 91; Leclercq, "Mariage," 1905; Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings," 8; Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 73–74; Reinsberg, "Concordia," 315.

⁶¹ E.g., Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 90; Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 69–77.

⁶² Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 90; Rep. II, 52–53; John Osborne and Amanda Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities, Volume Two: Other Mosaics, Paintings, Sarcophagi and Small Objects* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1998), 166; Aldo Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavio Ivlius Catervius a Tolentino* (Citta del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1996), 89.

column or pillar.⁶³ A narrow band of gold encircles the scene, and along its inner contour appears the inscription *VIVATIS IN DEO*, “may you [two] live in God.”⁶⁴ While this gold glass medallion and the portrait of Catervius and Severina retained the element of the *dextrarum iunctio*, but gave only abbreviated reference to a crowning *pronubus* (just a hand extending a crown, or a floating crown),⁶⁵ in other cases the opposite occurred: the central crowning figure was retained while the spouses were represented in the form of portrait busts that omitted the joining of right hands.

This form was popular in gold glass. A typical example is a piece in the British Museum: busts of the bride and groom appear side by side, while between their heads a smaller male figure extends his arms to hold a crown over each spouse’s head (fig. 25). An inscription encircling the scene reads *DVLCIS ANIMA VIVAS* (“Sweet soul, may you live,” or as Howells favored, “Sweet-heart may you live”).⁶⁶ The identification of the crowning figure as Christ is based on instances where the same figure is so identified by an inscription or christogram on other gold glasses, where he crowns saints or a married couple (fig. 26).⁶⁷ Charles Morey’s 1959 catalogue of gold glass in the Vatican Library and other collections includes four other medallions similar to the British Museum piece, each composed of portrait busts of a wedded couple being crowned by the diminutive Christ figure placed between their heads.⁶⁸ Other gold glasses

⁶³ Avery, “Early Christian Gold Glass,” 173, interprets the altar as “a pillar, symbolic of the church” and the crown as “the reward of conjugal fidelity”; Leclercq, “Mariage,” col. 1919, interprets it as a column which perhaps represents an altar (“une colonnette qui veut peut-être figurer un autel”). The altar was a common element of wedding scene iconography, as seen in the Annona sarcophagus (fig. 11), alluding to offerings made in connection with weddings. The Christian couple depicted here evidently did not feel it problematic to be shown with an altar; perhaps it served merely as a familiar symbol that visually signalled “marriage.”

⁶⁴ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 72, no. 447; Avery, “Early Christian Gold Glass,” 173; Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 282–283, no. 261; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, tav. 26.11. Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 62: this piece “does represent the marriage ceremony quite explicitly and was therefore evidently produced to mark the occasion.”

⁶⁵ Reekmans, “La dextrarum iunctio,” 77, identifies the floating crown on the Metropolitan Museum’s gold glass as “the abridged representation of the crowning by Christ or by the hand of God” (“la représentation abrégée du couronnement par le Christ ou par la main de Dieu”).

⁶⁶ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 124; cf. Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality,” 554: “Sweet Spirit Live.”

⁶⁷ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, nos. 50, 278; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 124, 131 (fn 74); Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, 5 vols. (Prato: Guasti, 1872–1880), vol. 3, pl. 184.3; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, tav. 12.1–2, 15.3, 29.3; Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 253.

⁶⁸ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, nos. 29, 109, 240, 397; cf. Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 232–233, no. 267 = Morey no. 109.

feature just a floating crown placed between the spouses' portrait busts in yet another degree of abbreviation.⁶⁹

The image of Christ crowning spouses also appears on an early fifth-century gold medallion in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 27).⁷⁰ The spouses' portrait busts face each other on this repoussé work (hammered on the reverse side), and a small figure of Christ *pronubus* between them holds crowns over their heads. In an intriguing combination of Christian and (ostensibly) non-Christian imagery, this medallion was one of two on a gold necklace found in Rome in 1908. The other was a smaller, second-century hematite gem engraved with Abrasax, a cock-headed figure with serpentine legs (obverse), and Harpocrates accompanied by an amuletic inscription (reverse).⁷¹

Spousal Portraits with a Christogram, Staurogram, or Cross

Another variation on the *Christus pronubus* theme is the placement of a symbol of Christ between the spouses, instead of a figure of Christ. A gold glass medallion, location now unknown but published in a late 17th-century watercolor painting and Raffaele Garrucci's 1858 drawing (fig. 28), depicts a woman and a man standing, turned three-quarters toward each other, with their right hands joined. To this *dextrarum iunctio* scene is added a christogram floating between their faces, and a scroll to the left, behind the wife. An inscription encircling the scene within a gold border reads *MARTVRA EPECTETE VIVATIS* ("To Martura and Epectetus, may you [two] live").⁷² A fragment of another gold glass medallion portrays a man and woman standing frontally with arms raised in the posture of prayer (*orans*), a christogram above and between them.⁷³ On a fourth-century gilded copper alloy belt ornament made in

⁶⁹ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, nos. 98, 259, 315, 440, 441.

⁷⁰ Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 307–308, no. 281.

⁷¹ Caroline Kerrigan Quenemoen, "92. Necklace with Marriage Scene and Amulet," In *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, ed. Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996), 151–152. The pair depicted is thought to be an imperial couple based on their diadems, probably Aelia Flacilla and Theodosius I or Eudoxia and Arcadius. If the amulet was included on a chain at same times as medallion, it was possibly meant to protect the imperial marriage.

⁷² Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 244–245, no. 274; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, tav. 26.12; Leclercq, "Mariage," col. 1920, 1923, fig. 7663; cf. Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 54, no. 315, Pl. 29 (family group, husband wife and child, *chi-rho* and wreath between the spouses).

⁷³ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 63, no. 379, Pl. 32; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, tav. 25.4; Walker, "Gold Glass in the Ashmolean Museum," 71–72, fig. 8.10. The fragment is damaged and it is difficult to make out

Rome and now displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, figures of a man and a woman stand in the *dextrarum iunctio*, a *chi-rho* between their heads (fig. 29).⁷⁴ The reverse side of this buckle bears an image of Bellerophon, a mythological figure whose slaying of the Chimera could have been seen as an analogue to Christ defeating Satan.⁷⁵ The christogram and Bellerophon imply an amuletic purpose to the buckle, securing protection from evil on behalf of the married pair.⁷⁶

The placement of a symbol of Christ (rather than a figural representation of Christ) between spousal portraits also occurs on a number of fourth-century gems and seals. Busts of a woman and man identified as Matrona and Probianos face each other on a quartz crystal with a *chi-rho* between their heads; on a nicolo seal, a *tau-rho* appears between busts of an unnamed couple.⁷⁷ A little-known but sizeable corpus of recently published metal seals includes 20 pieces with busts of a man and a woman, often accompanied by inscriptions in Latin or Greek. The seals, which are said to come from spots throughout the Mediterranean, from Lebanon to Spain, include three with a christogram between the spouses, and seven others with a cross there.⁷⁸ One of the metal disks with a christogram between the spouses also includes the inscription *VIVAS IN DEO* (“may you live in God”).⁷⁹ Another seal has the letters *I* and *N* to the left and right of the *chi-rho*, an abbreviated way of expressing “in Christ.” Appearing directly above the confronted busts of a man and woman, this inscription combines with the names of the spouses inscribed below, *CRESCENTINE APVLE*, to suggest that these two are “in Christ” or that they are recipients of the abbreviated blessing, “Crescentine and Apule, [may you two live] in Christ.”⁸⁰

details, but Morey additionally identifies a rolled scroll between the spouses, a rocky cavern to the left with a seated figure within, and along the top the conventional inscription *DIGNTIASAMIC(orum)*, “[May you live] worthy of friends.”

⁷⁴ Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession no. 1993.166.

⁷⁵ Adam Levine, “Does the Hinton St. Mary Mosaic Depict Christ?” in *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in its Imperial Context*, ed. Lee Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 307–349; cf. Janet Huskinson, “Some Pagan Mythological Figures and Their Significance in Early Christian Art,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974): 68–97.

⁷⁶ On this subject see Gary Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38, (1984), 65–86; Alicia Walker, “Myth and Magic in Early Byzantine Marriage Jewelry: The Persistence of Pre-Christian Traditions,” in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 59–78.

⁷⁷ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 20–21, nos. 25–26, Pl. 5–6; Aubry, “Inscriptions on Portrait Gems and Discs,” 242, Pl. 19.

⁷⁸ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 22–25; nos. 40, 42, 48 (christogram); 45, 47, 63, 64, 65, 66, 79 (cross), see also 190, no. S1, Pl. 148, a 4th-century lead sealing with a cross between confronted busts of a husband and wife, with a child below; cf. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities*, 50, nos. 51–52 (cross).

⁷⁹ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 23, no. 48, Pl. 8.

⁸⁰ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 22, no. 40, Pl. 7; Aubry, “Inscriptions on Portrait Gems and Discs,” 242.

This iconography of a christogram or cross placed between spousal portraits became a popular decoration on finger-ring bezels in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. An example is a ring in the British Museum: the spouses' portrait busts face each other, and a balanced cross appears above and between them (fig. 30).⁸¹ That the portraits are generic representations of aristocratic Romans, but not individuals' likenesses, is evident from the nearly identical busts on a signet ring in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, which adds the spouses' names, Aristophanes and Vigilantia, inscribed (retrograde) along the sides and top of the bezel (fig. 31); such rings were "stock items to be personalized on demand."⁸²

Later Iconographic Developments on Byzantine Jewelry

The symbolic references to Christ placed between spousal portraits on fourth and fifth century rings, gems, belt ornaments, and glass medallions developed into an iconography, popular on Byzantine rings and marriage-belts in the sixth and seventh centuries, in which the full-scale figure of Christ stands between the standing husband and wife, all posed frontally. In these images reminiscent of earlier *Concordia pronuba* scenes, *Christus pronubus* joins the spouses' hands in marriage or extends his arms to bless or place crowns on each (fig. 32).⁸³ Though these lie beyond the third- and fourth-century focus of this dissertation, they constitute, as Gary Vikan pointed out, "counterparts" to their earlier Roman precedents; they speak to the symbolic values the Byzantines perceived in those earlier forms, on which they elaborated.⁸⁴ Sometimes the Virgin joins Christ in these sixth- and seventh-century images, the Virgin placing a crown on the bride and Christ placing a crown on the groom, or Christ and the spouses may be represented by busts rather than standing figures. Often the short inscriptions *OMONOIA* (harmony), *CHARIS* (grace), or *HYGIA* (health) appear, sometimes with the genitive *THEOU* added to

⁸¹ Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities*, no. 50; Vikan, "Art and Marriage," 149, fig. 10; Anne Ward, Barbara Cartlidge, John F. Cherry, and Charlotte Gere, *The Ring: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 47, pl. 100.

⁸² Vikan, "Art and Marriage," 148–149, fig. 4; Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities*, Vol. 2, 48–50, no. 50, inv. 4718; Anastasia Lazaridou, *Transition to Christianity: Art of Late Antiquity, 3rd–7th Century AD* (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation; Athens: Byzantine & Christian Museum, 2011), 109, no. 57; see also Jeffrey Spier, ed., *Byzantium and the West: Jewelry in the First Millennium* (London: Holberton, 2012), 58–60.

⁸³ Gary Vikan, "Early Christian and Byzantine Rings in the Zucker Family Collection," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 45 (1987), 32–43; "Art and Marriage," 150–151, 153; Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings."

⁸⁴ Vikan, "Art and Marriage," 153.

indicate “harmony of God,” “grace of God,” or combinations of these.⁸⁵ Ernst Kantorowicz and Gary Vikan were inclined to see these developments as fairly revolutionary innovations spurred by imperial art (such as the *solidi* of Pulcheria and Marcian issued in 450 CE).⁸⁶ But a gold marriage ring inscribed *OMONOIA* found in the Christian building at Dura-Europos (destroyed 256 CE) indicates that Christians by the mid-third century were giving visual expression to the ideal of marital harmony (fig. 33).⁸⁷ Perhaps the Byzantine marriage iconography was simply a more overt, developed expression of concepts and images that were already present in fourth-century Rome, now elaborated in the eastern Empire where the visual language of legitimacy and divine favor was especially important to the ruling set.⁸⁸ Spouses in and around fourth-century Rome had already taken to bringing figures or symbols of Christ into their portraits on sarcophagi, gold glasses, gems, seals, and jewelry.

To summarize the Christian reception of the *dextrarum iunctio* image and wedding scenes in Roman art:

- Throughout the third and fourth centuries, Christians made use of *dextrarum iunctio* forms of self-representation, sometimes with no *pronuba* or mythological figures.
- A few early fourth century sarcophagi bore wedding scenes with the traditional female *pronuba* figure.
- In the mid-fourth century *Christus pronubus* began to appear in various forms—as a standing figure placing crowns on spouses, or in abbreviated reference such as a hand presenting a crown, or a crown alone.

⁸⁵ Vikan, “Art and Marriage,” 151, 153, fig. 12; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings”; Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 285, no. 263; Lazaridou, *Transition to Christianity*, 110, nos. 59–60; Alicia Walker, “Early Byzantine Marriage Rings,” in *Sacred Art, Secular Context*, ed. Asen Kirin, James Nelson Carder, and Robert S. Nelson (Athens, Ga.: Georgia Museum of Art, 2005), 78–81, esp. fig. 26a and no. 27; Reinsberg, “Concordia,” 315.

⁸⁶ Vikan, “Art and Marriage,” 159, 163; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings.”

⁸⁷ Jennifer Y. Chi and Sebastian Heath, eds., *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos* (New York, NY: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University; Princeton, NJ: Distributed by Princeton University Press, 2011), 70, fig. 3–15, identified as an engagement ring; Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, ed., *Dura Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011), 362, Pl. 60, no. 60; Caroline Kerrigan Quenemoen, “90. Engagement Ring,” in *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, 150–151; Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building* (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967), 28 (note 2), 31, mentions a silver ring with “no distinguishing characteristics” discovered in the excavations of the Christian building, but does not mention the gold ring.

⁸⁸ Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 91.

- Also in the fourth century a symbol of Christ (christogram, staurogram, or cross) began to appear between spouses in their portraits.
- These distinctively Christian adaptations appear on a variety of media—sarcophagi, glass vessel bases, a belt ornament, gold medallions, gems, metal seals, and marriage rings.

***Dextrarum Iunctio* Portraits and Wedding Scenes in Christian Art: Interpretation**

What historical, social, and religious inferences may be drawn from the Christian reception of Roman *dextrarum iunctio* portraits and wedding scenes? In many respects one may see continuity with Roman precedents in the Christian use of this iconography. Some early fourth-century Christians saw no problem in portraying themselves beside a personification of Concordia. Even the later emergence of *Christus pronubus* can be seen as an expression of existing visual conventions. In a sense there is nothing new in depicting a patron deity in a wedding scene in order to invoke divine favor on the marriage or to represent the deity's role in forming a harmonious union. What is new, however, is the particular deity represented and the forms in which that representation occurs. This section discusses these novelties, engaging historical texts. Taken together, they may represent more than mere “continuity by transference,” as Kantorowicz described it.⁸⁹ They suggest the emergence of distinctively Christian notions about marriage, and the efforts of married Christians to give those notions visual expression.

From *Pronuba* to *Christus Pronubus*: An Earlier Interpretation

In the visual evidence outlined above, early 20th-century art historians perceived a fairly straightforward replacement of “Juno *pronuba*” with Christ, a view that some continue to put forth without question.⁹⁰ Wilpert based this interpretation on a passage in the epithalamium (wedding poem)

⁸⁹ Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 8.

⁹⁰ Jos Schrijnen, “La couronne nuptiale dans l’antiquité chrétienne,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 31.1 (1911): 312; Wilpert, *I Sarcophagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. I, *Testo*, 91; Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1095; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 4, 8; Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 84; Enrico Josi, “The Museo Pio Cristiano,” in *The Vatican*:

that Paulinus of Nola wrote for the marriage of Julian and Titia, children of bishops, between 400–404, or possibly in 407.⁹¹ Near the beginning of the poem, Paulinus banishes Juno along with Cupid and Venus: “None of the wanton conduct of the mindless mob must mar this marriage. Juno, Cupid, Venus, all symbols of lust, must stay well away.”⁹² Wilpert took this as a reference to Juno *pronuba*; instead of her, “Jesus pronubus” must attend or assist at the wedding.⁹³

Paulinus, however, did not use the epithet *pronuba* in his lines referring to Juno.⁹⁴ Since the mid-20th century art historians have increasingly come to interpret the female mediator figure in art as Concordia rather than Juno (as the figure’s origins in Antonine coinage would suggest), and literary evidence suggests that was a common understanding in Paulinus’s time. Around 400, Severianus of Gabala commented (in a text later attributed to Peter Chrysologus) on the *concordia* image—both its earlier forms and its use in Christian portraits:

When the images of two persons, kings or brothers, are painted, we often notice that the painter, so as to emphasize the unanimity of the couple, places at the back of them a Concordia in female garb. With her arms she embraces both to indicate that the two persons, whose bodies are separated, concur in mind and will. So does now the Peace of the Lord stand in the center to teach us how separate bodies may become one in spirit.⁹⁵

Here Severianus does not need to persuade his readers that the female figure in traditional images is Concordia; that is a given, and it serves as the basis for his point that the lately-popular images of Christ standing between spouses and saints represented the Christian God as the creator of harmonious relationships.

Spirit and Art of Christian Rome, ed. John P. O’Neill and John Daley (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: H. N. Abrams, 1982), 230; Walker, “A Reconsideration of Early Byzantine Marriage Rings,” 79, n. 9. Rep. I, 71, indicates the uncertainty of the identification of the pronuba on the Ludovisi sarcophagus (“*Iuno pronuba?*”) but on the next page refers to the figure as Juno.

⁹¹ Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 215, n. 103.

⁹² Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25, 9–10, CSEL 30, 238: absit ab [his] thalamis uani lasciua uulgi, Iuno Cupido Venus, nomina luxuriae; trans. Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 31–32.

⁹³ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, *Testo*, 91, “invece della ‘Giunone pronuba’ deve assistere ‘Gesù pronubo’”; cf. essentially the same claim in Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler*, 106; and in P 63, add to note 89 as example of appealing to Paulinus’s *Carmen* 25 for support of “Christ replaced Concordia” argument. Quenemoen, “92. Necklace with Marriage Scene and Amulet,” 151–152.

⁹⁴ Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 196, states that the epithet *pronuba* is not applied to Juno in any Latin epithalamia, Christian or non-Christian, but Ausonius, *Cento nuptialis*, 7, mentions *pronuba Iuno*, “Juno, patroness of wedlock,” trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, LCL 96 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 384–385.

⁹⁵ Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 149, PL 52 598D–599A; source identified as Severianus of Gabala in Carl Weyman, “Omonioia,” *Hermes* 29 (1894), 626–627; translation by Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 9; also cited in Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 126.

Paulinus's statement mentioning Juno, Cupid, and Venus refers not to a single female officiator, but to three deities often associated with marriage celebrations. It alludes not to wedding scenes in art, but rather to the conventions of Latin epithalamia, which typically described the roles of mythological deities in wedding festivities and rites.⁹⁶ These conventions could prevail even in epithalamia written for weddings of Christians. Just a few years before Paulinus wrote, Claudian composed a wedding poem with a cast full of marriage deities—Venus, Cupid, Hymenaeus, Graces, Nymphs, Nereids—plus repeated allusions to other mythical figures, for the marriage of the young emperor Honorius to Maria, daughter of Stilicho, at Milan.⁹⁷ The bride, groom, and their parents were all Christians. Paulinus, by contrast, announced that there would be no such imagery in his poem, for he was celebrating a marriage of a different quality. Dennis Trout has proposed that Paulinus may have written in direct response to Claudian.⁹⁸

Michael Roberts notes that Paulinus's poem was in several ways a special case, unreplicated by any other writer in late antiquity, composed by “no ordinary Christian, but a convert to an ascetic, monastic style of Christianity,” and written for a bishop's son headed for clerical life whose wedding therefore required an unusual degree of sacralization.⁹⁹ Paulinus's vision of marriage and wedding celebration, Searle and Stevenson observe, was “very sober” and “can hardly be said to reflect the outlook of the average Christian family.”¹⁰⁰ For lay Christians, references to traditional, mythical imagery at their weddings may have been relatively common and unproblematic: cupids or putti sometimes accompany portraits of Christian couples (fig. 34),¹⁰¹ and the famous late fourth-century Projecta Casket, a silver cosmetics box apparently given to a Christian bride as a wedding gift (to be discussed in Chapter 3), was

⁹⁶ Michael Roberts, “The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia from Statius to Venantius Fortunatus,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989), 321–348.

⁹⁷ Claudian, *Epithalamium de nuptiis honorii augusti*, LCL 135.

⁹⁸ Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 215–217.

⁹⁹ Roberts, “The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia,” 337.

¹⁰⁰ Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 30; nor can Paulinus's poem tell us how he felt about ordinary Christians celebrating weddings with poetry and art featuring mythological figures; cf. Roberts, “The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia,” 338.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Rep. I, nos. 43, 150, 188, 650; Rep. II, no. 150; Rep. III, no. 49; Projecta Casket. Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus wrote to his fellow bishop Eusebius approving of references to Erotes at a Christian wedding, though he thought it childish: Gregory, *Epistula* 231 to Eusebius; Eusebius was to “let others call on the Loves [*Erōtas*] since this childish game fits in a wedding feast!” trans. Georges A. Barrios, *The Fathers Speak: St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nazianzus, St Gregory of Nyssa* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 200.

lavishly decorated with images of Venus, Nereids, and sea creatures (fig. 35)—the same mythological retinue that Claudian imagined celebrating the wedding of Honorius and Maria.¹⁰² So-called “pagan” images like Venus or Concordia gradually became neutralized and seen more for their aesthetic and cultural value than for any religious content.¹⁰³

It seems doubtful that Paulinus’s rather unique perspective, given in the early fifth century, can, by itself, explain why patrons of Christian sarcophagi had discontinued the use of Concordia-*pronuba* scenes some 70 years earlier. Some further reasons for this transformation in Christian iconography must be sought.

From *Pronuba* to *Christus Pronubus*: Toward a Revised Interpretation

Evidence of early Christian discourse on marriage, and particularly the development of nuptial liturgy, suggests that the iconographic transformation might have been due less to discomfort with the image of Concordia than to the attractions of new visual ways of expressing a concept of marriage as specially formed and blessed by the Christian God.¹⁰⁴

Though Paulinus’s wedding poem did not speak directly to the decline in *pronuba* scenes, other details in it do reflect the rise of a concept of *Christus pronubus*. Like his contemporary Severianus of Gabala, Paulinus (in his *Carmen* 25) described unions formed by Christ who figuratively stands at the center, bringing two individuals together into a harmonious bond. Paulinus prays for the bride and groom, “Christ God, draw these paired doves towards Your reins, and govern their necks beneath Your light yoke [*iugo*, used figuratively of marriage].”¹⁰⁵ The central role of Christ in the married relationship arises

¹⁰² Roberts, “The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia,” 336–337; cf. the references to Venus in Ausonius, *Cento nuptialis*, 3, 8 LCL 96, 380–381, 386–387.

¹⁰³ The process of secularization of “pagan” art is discussed in Roberts, “The Use of Myth in Latin Epithalamia,” 335–336; see also the discussion in Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 204–207; “a distinctive Christianity—the Christianity of Constantine and his successors—had come to coexist, for a moment, with a classical heritage that seemed at the time to be unshakable and unproblematic,” 207.

¹⁰⁴ Huskinson, “Reading Identity on Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi,” 90: figures of “Concordia” and Hymenaeus no longer appear in Christian *dextrarum iunctio* portraits of the later fourth century; “Presumably they had no place in an emphatically Christian iconography, which replaces them with Christ and his saints as witnesses and guarantors of the couple’s relationship.”

¹⁰⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25, 3–4; CSEL 30, 238: *Christe deus, pariles duc ad tua frena columbas / et moderare leui subdita colla iugo*; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 31.

repeatedly throughout the poem. “Young people, you belong to Christ,” Paulinus reminds the newlyweds; “Christ as all in all must be our common Head.”¹⁰⁶ Alluding to the wedding at Cana in the Gospel of John as one of the biblical examples of proper marriage, Paulinus states, “When Jesus’ friends were married like this, He attended as a groomsman [*pronubus*], and changed water into wine like nectar.”¹⁰⁷

Among Christians, this concept of deity forming the marriage union did not originate with Paulinus and Severianus, but was rooted in traditions dating to the first century. Two of the synoptic gospels contain a pericope in which Jesus answers a question about the permissibility of divorce by referring to the biblical creation story: “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore *what God has joined together*, let no one separate” (Matt 19:4–6, emphasis added; cf. Mark 10:6–9).

The notion that husband and wife are “what God has joined together” became a standard expression in Christian discourse on marriage. Henri Crouzel states, “There was in marriage—and this was felt from the start—a supernatural ‘bond’ established by God and expressed in diverse forms.”¹⁰⁸ So Ambrose, addressing his married parishioners, referred to “God, who is the author of your marriage,” and wrote, “Where there is harmony, God joins them together.”¹⁰⁹ As noted above, Severina inscribed in stone that the Lord had joined her and Catervius in sweet matrimony.¹¹⁰

Since Christians held that Jesus was the image of the Father and God’s agent of creation, they very naturally came to see Christ creating the concord of husband and wife. Tertullian, after describing the mutually sustaining activities of the ideal Christian spouses, stated, “When Christ sees and hears such

¹⁰⁶ Paulinus, *Carmen* 25, lines 69, 187; CSEL 30, 240, 244: uos autem, iuuenes Christi ... et commune caput stet in omnibus omnia Christus; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 34, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Paulinus, *Carmen* 25, 151–152; CSEL 30, 243: tali lege suis nubentibus adstat Iesus / pronubus et uini nectare mutat aquam; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Henri Crouzel, “Marriage. I. Theology of Marriage,” in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:528.

¹⁰⁹ Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii Lucae* 8.4, 3; CSEL 32.3.393.11, 8–10. *Ubi armonia, Deus iungit*; trans. William Joseph Dooley, *Marriage According to St. Ambrose* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 16–17.

¹¹⁰ Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavivs Ivlivs Catervivs*, 89; *QVOS ... VINXIT MATRIMONIO DVLCI OMNIPOTENS DOMINVS*.

things he rejoices. To these he sends his own peace. Where there are two, there also he is himself. And where he is, evil is not.”¹¹¹

Though the general concept of a divinely-favored marriage might not have seemed revolutionary to traditional Romans (who entreated the gods at weddings), the particularly Christian understanding of marriage “as a divine institution rather than as a civic duty” evidently grew in the consciousness of Roman Christians over the course of the fourth century as they developed the practice of the nuptial blessing.¹¹² The earliest unambiguous evidence for blessings pronounced by a bishop or presbyter upon a marrying couple comes from fourth century Rome. The author known as Ambrosiaster, a presbyter writing at Rome between 366–384, alludes in several places to nuptial blessings, indicating that the practice had become common by his time.¹¹³ Ambrosiaster refers to the divine formation of marriage when he states that the purpose of the blessing is “so that the creature of God may be joined under the blessing of God” (*ut dei creatura sub dei benedictione iungatur*).¹¹⁴

The Verona Sacramentary, a collection of prayers compiled in the early sixth century, includes prayers for the nuptial veiling of a bride, and constitutes “the best claim to approximate the form of the blessing that would have been used in the late fourth-century church at Rome.”¹¹⁵ Three times the rite refers to the concept that the marriage is formed by God: “She is joined by your gift in the companionship of marriage” (*sic consortio maritali tuo munere copulata*); “We beseech you, almighty God, ... to keep in lasting peace those whom you will join in lawful union” (*Quaesumus, omnipotens deus, ... quos*

¹¹¹ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.8.8; SC 273, 148, 150: Talia Christus uidens et audiens gaudet. His pacem suam mittit. Vbi duo, ibi et ipse; ubi et ipse, ibi et malus non est (my trans.).

¹¹² Musonius Rufus, “Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?” in Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” 93: “How great and worthy an estate is marriage is plain from this also, that the gods watch over it, great gods, too, in the estimation of men; first Hera (and for this reason we address her as the patroness of wedlock), then Eros, then Aphrodite, for we assume all of these perform the function of bringing together man and woman for the procreation of children. Where, indeed, does Eros more properly belong than in the lawful union of man and wife? Where Hera? Where Aphrodite? When would man more appropriately pray to these divinities than when entering into marriage? What should we more properly call the work of Aphrodite than the joining of wife and husband?” Margaret A. Schatkin, “Marriage,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 722.

¹¹³ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 127, *De peccato Adae et Evae* 2–3, CSEL 50, 399–400; *Comm. in 1 Cor* 7:40, CSEL 81/2, 90; *Comm. in 1 Tim* 3:12, CSEL 81/3, 268. See also Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 283–299; “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 590–592; “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality: Early Christian Marriage Liturgy and the Formation of a Scriptural Imagination,” paper given at the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference, Villanova University, Oct. 17, 2015, n.p., 3–4.

¹¹⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones* 127, *De peccato Adae et Evae* 3, CSEL 50, 400 (my trans.).

¹¹⁵ Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 5. With gratitude to Dr. David G. Hunter for calling my attention to this text and sharing his paper with me.

legitima societate connectes, longeua pace custodi); “Listen favorably, O Lord, to our prayers and graciously grant your help ... so that what is joined by your authority might be preserved by your help” (*Adesto, domine, supplicationi[bu]s nostris, et ... benignus adsiste: ut quod te auctore iungitur, te auxiliante seruetur*).¹¹⁶

These liturgical and literary traditions suggest that a factor in the development away from Concordia wedding scenes was that *Christus pronubus* images could visually symbolize how Christians were conceptualizing marriage as divinely formed and blessed. Though the role of an actual *pronuba* or *pronubus* at weddings might have been filled by a parent, family member, or priest pronouncing a blessing, Christians nevertheless imagined their unions formed in an ultimate sense by deity, and developed both visual and ritual ways to express this concept.

A literary parallel to the transformation of Roman wedding images can be seen in the Vulgate version of the deuterocanonical book of Tobit. In the Greek text of Tobit, Raguel gives his daughter Sarah in marriage to Tobias with the blessing, “May the God of heaven prosper your journey with his peace.”¹¹⁷ The blessing in the Vulgate, however, is expanded to emphasize the role of God in forming the union: “May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may he himself join you together [*et ipse conjungat vos*], and fill you with his blessing.”¹¹⁸ (The Vulgate also more explicitly describes the *dextrarum iunctio*: “And taking his daughter’s right hand, he [Raguel] placed it in the right hand of Tobias,” while the Greek text has simply, “he took [Sarah] by the hand and gave her to Tobias.”¹¹⁹) The emphasis fourth-century Christians at Rome placed upon the divine role in joining spouses seems to have influenced the Vulgate’s wording of the nuptial blessing in Tobit; the Latin text

¹¹⁶ *Sacramentarium Veronese* 31.1107–1109; Leo. C. Mohlberg, Leo Eisenhöfer, and Petrus Siffrin, eds., *Sacramentarium Veronese* (Rome: Herder, 1956), 139–140; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 42.

¹¹⁷ Tobit 7:11, ed. Robert Hanhart, *Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum*, Vol. VIII, 5, Tobit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 121: ὁ δὲ ἐλεήμων Θεὸς εὐδοῶσει ὑμῖν τὰ κάλλιστα; trans. Tobit 7:12, NRSV.

¹¹⁸ Tobit 7:15 Vulgate, *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis*, Tomus II, (Ratisbonae: George Joseph Manz, 1863) 102: ... Deus Abraham, et Deus Isaac, et Deus Jacob vobiscum sit, et ipse conjungat vos, impleatque benedictionem suam in vobis; trans. Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 6; cf. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 22.

¹¹⁹ Tobit 7:15 Vulgate, *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis*, T. II, 102: Et adprehendens dexteram filiae suae dexterae Tobiae tradidit...; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 22; Hanhart, *Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, Vol. VIII, 5, Tobit, 125: καὶ λαβὼν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς παρέδωκεν αὐτὴν Τωβία γυναικα, trans. Tobit 7:12, NRSV; cf. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 6, regarding “the tendency in the Vulgate text to add liturgical material.”

describes the wedding of Sarah and Tobias in terms of Roman Christian practices.¹²⁰ In a similar way, the Roman Christian conceptualization of marriage exerted an influence on the iconography of marriage, making alterations to received images so that they would reflect ideas and practices of Christian marriage at Rome.

An Innovation: Christ Presenting Wedding Crowns

Fourth-century images of *Christus pronubus* were novel not only because the figure of Christ replaced Concordia, but also because they introduced the bestowal of crowns into the traditional wedding scene. In Roman wedding celebrations brides often wore a wreath-crown of flowers (possibly to symbolize life and fertility), while grooms also might wear some kind of garland on their heads.¹²¹ However, the giving of crowns did not play a major role in pre-Christian Roman wedding iconography. The depiction of Venus placing a wreath of flowers on a bride's head on the third-century "brothers" sarcophagus (fig. 15, above) is an exception, and not a crowning of both bride and groom by a presiding figure. The form of crown, too, is different. Floral wreaths or garlands have what Walter identifies as a "festive sense" that "is evident in representations of weddings and Bacchanals."¹²² One sees, for example, wreathed heads and garland-draped bodies among the revelers on a late second-century Dionysus and Ariadne sarcophagus that might have been made for the co-burial of a husband and wife (fig. 36).¹²³ Iconographically, the coronation of Christian spouses by Christ more closely resembles the form used in imperial and military images, such as the cameo of Marcus and Lucius mentioned above (fig. 6) on which a diminutive Victory appears between the two co-emperors, crowning Marcus as he and Lucius clasp right hands.¹²⁴ Crowning was a military honor bestowed during triumph ceremonies, formal and weighty

¹²⁰ For comparable Romanization of Greek wedding ceremonies as depicted in Latin literature, see Williams, "Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals," 16–29.

¹²¹ Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 89–92; Korbinian Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes du Ier au XIe siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 76; cf. Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom*, D2, LCL 222, 300–301.

¹²² Walter, "Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography," 91.

¹²³ Walters Art Museum, inv. 23.37; the sarcophagus was large enough to accommodate the burial of a married couple; <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/23618/sarcophagus-with-dionysus-and-ariadne/>, accessed 3/29/2016.

¹²⁴ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 125: The "central diminutive figure was first produced in art relating to the Roman army."

occasions, in contrast to the festive Dionysiac revelry.¹²⁵ Reimagining the wedding wreath as a victory crown, bestowed simultaneously on bride and groom, was a Christian innovation; as Kantorowicz remarks, it had not previously been a custom to depict “the *pronubus* ... acting at the same time as the *stephanophorus*, holding the bridal crowns over the heads of the couple.”¹²⁶ Nevertheless, viewers could have detected both nuptial and triumphal allusions in the new image; its precedents invited such polyvalence. Walter aptly noted that Christian images of nuptial crowning carried both “a primary and ... a subordinate significance.”¹²⁷

The crowning Christ was the earliest form of *Christus pronubus*, appearing well before the sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine rings and marriage belts depicting Christ overseeing the joining of hands (a composition more reminiscent of the earlier *Concordia-pronuba* scene).¹²⁸ In fourth-century Christian nuptial iconography, both the replacement of *Concordia* and the addition of crowning emerged simultaneously—a fairly dramatic development. Surprisingly, literary sources do not initially lead one to expect that this iconography would emerge in Rome. Sources from the East better attest the practice of crowning at Christian weddings and a Christian significance of wedding crowns, while in the West the few early references to wedding customs do not favorably regard the use of crowns.

In Roman North Africa, Tertullian’s early third-century treatise *De corona* urged Christians not to use wedding crowns. The entanglement of Roman customs with pagan deities, not to mention the sometimes bawdy and unruly setting of Roman weddings, underlay Tertullian’s anxieties. For Tertullian, crowning at weddings (and in other settings in Roman society) was a dangerous activity with potential to draw Christians astray: “Marriage ... decks the bridegroom with its crown; and therefore we will not have

¹²⁵ Robin M. Jensen, “Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography,” in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*, ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 164.

¹²⁶ Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 8; cf. Reinsberg, “Concordia,” 315: this new iconography was “a uniquely Christian symbolism” (“eine eindeutig christliche Symbolik”); Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 84: “Coronation on objects commemorating a marriage seems to be introduced into iconography by Christians.”

¹²⁷ Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 91.

¹²⁸ Reinsberg, “Concordia,” 315, seems not to recognize the *Christus stephanophorus* as simultaneously a *pronubus* (“Der Westen, der den Christus Pronubus nicht kennt...”), apparently meaning that the West did not create images like those found on sixth- and seventh-century marriage rings and belts of Christ standing between bride and groom overseeing the *dextrarum iunctio*. Reinsberg recognizes the crowning Christ as unique, but apparently not as a form of *Christus pronubus*, contra Kantorowicz.

heathen brides, lest they seduce us even to the idolatry with which among them marriage is initiated.”¹²⁹

Yet Tertullian implies that not all Christians shared his separatist leanings or thought it religiously problematic to participate in customs of crowning.¹³⁰

Tertullian’s contemporary, Minucius Felix, also refers to Christian use of wedding crowns. His dialogue *Octavius*, set in Ostia, includes a complaint from the pagan interlocutor Caecilius: “You [Christians] are abstaining from respectable enjoyments. ... You do not wreath your heads with flowers.”¹³¹ To this Octavius sarcastically responds: “You must excuse us for not crowning our heads; our custom is to sniff sweet flower perfumes with our nose, not to inhale them with the scalp or the back hair.” Christians, Octavius goes on to explain, do not make use of a “fading crown, but expect from God the crown that blossoms with eternal flowers.”¹³² Here is a seemingly descriptive reference to Christian practice, as compared to Tertullian’s prescriptive statements, indicating that Tertullian’s opposition to wedding crowns was not entirely idiosyncratic. However, *Octavius* is an apologetic work, and these passages may present an idealized picture of Christian behavior in the third century Latin West.

The earliest descriptions of nuptial rites in the West—Paulinus’s epithalamium and the Verona Sacramentary—do not describe a crowning of bride and groom, but rather a veiling ceremony.¹³³ Paulinus refers to a joint veiling of both spouses, while the Verona Sacramentary includes prayers that accompany the veiling of a bride.¹³⁴ The *Veronese* rite does, however, conclude with a prayer that might have called to mind the symbolism of wedding crowns: *et ad beatorum requiem adque ad caelestia regna perveniat*,

¹²⁹ Tertullian, *De corona* 13.25–27, CSEL 70, 182: Coronant et nuptiae sponsos. Et ideo non nubemus ethnicis, ne nos ad idololatricam usque deducant, a qua apud illos nuptiae incipiunt; trans. S. Thelwall, ANF 3:101; cf. 102: “We have recounted, as I think, all the various causes of the wearing of the crown, and there is not one which has any place with us.... [There is] in them all idolatry.”

¹³⁰ E.g., Tertullian, *De corona* 1, in which all but one of the Christian soldiers wears a crown, and Tertullian states that he writes in opposition to “the laurel-crowned Christians”; *De corona* 10, where Tertullian writes “in answer to those who ... maintain the right of participation in all things,” including the use of wreath-crowns; ANF 3:93, 99.

¹³¹ Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 12.28; LCL 250, 346–347: Vos vero suspensi interim atque solliciti honestis voluptatibus abstinētis ... Non floribus caput nectitis; trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, ANF 4:179.

¹³² Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 38; LCL 250, 430–433: Sane quod caput non coronamus, ignoscite: auram bonam floris naribus ducere, non occipitio capillisve solemus haurire ... nec adnectimus arescentem coronam, sed a deo aeternis floribus vividam sustinemus; trans. LCL 250, 431, 433.

¹³³ Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmal*, 100–107, interpreted the gold glasses with Christ crowning spouses as “symbolische benedictio nuptialis” (symbolic nuptial blessing), but there is no conclusive evidence in fourth century Rome that priests were blessing marriages as part of a crowning ceremony.

¹³⁴ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25.225–230; *Sacramentarium Veronese*, 139–140; Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 30–44.

“And may she come to the rest of the blessed ones and to the heavenly kingdom.”¹³⁵ At the formation of marriage this prayer invoked an afterlife blessing using a regal image—in that respect mirroring the symbolism of spousal coronation images.

Nevertheless, these sources from the West do not offer a comprehensive description of Christian wedding practices in fourth-century Rome. Tertullian and Minucius Felix predate our period by a century, and Paulinus and the *Sacramentarium Veronese* describe rites performed by clergy in a church setting. The bestowal of crowns, along with most wedding celebration in the fourth century, usually took place in homes, where practices and views might have resembled the picture in Eastern sources.¹³⁶

Texts from the East suggest a more enthusiastic practice of coronation at weddings, which later came to form a key part of Byzantine and Coptic nuptial rites.¹³⁷ This developed despite Clement of Alexandria’s opposition to the wearing of floral crowns, voiced along much the same lines as his late second/early third-century contemporaries Tertullian and Minucius Felix: “The use of crowns and ointments is not necessary for us... The anointed ones [wear] Christ symbolically on their head ... and this crown, after the image of the Lord, fades not as a flower.” The crown is to be avoided “because it has been dedicated to idols.”¹³⁸ As seems to have been the case in the West, the anti-pagan positions taken by writers in the late second and early third centuries, if they ever reflected actual Christian practice, do not represent that practice in the fourth century. Customs thought to be dangerously idolatrous in the time of Clement, Tertullian, and Minucius Felix perhaps no longer seemed so threatening after Constantine.¹³⁹

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–390) implied that in his time crowning the bride and groom was a regular feature at Christian weddings, performed in the home—though he felt it was a duty that belonged

¹³⁵ *Sacramentarium Veronese* 6b viii, 140 (my trans.); cf. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 44.

¹³⁶ Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 3, cites Pope Nicholas I, *Epistolarum tomus vi, Karolini aevi iv*, ed. Ernest Perels (Berlin, 1925), 568–600, who remarked that even by his time in the 9th century, most people could not afford the expense of many wedding customs like the giving of a ring, a dowry, the veiling ceremony in a church, and so forth.

¹³⁷ Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 55–99.

¹³⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.8.61.1, 64.4–5, 72.2; SC 108, 124, 128, 144; trans. William Wilson, ANF 2:256.

¹³⁹ Schrijnen, “La couronne nuptiale dans l’antiquité chrétienne,” 309–319, esp. 316–317; 317: “Chrétiens finirent par perdre l’horreur de la couronne nuptiale” (“Christians eventually lose the horror of the nuptial crown”). Schrijnen proposed that Christians accepted the practice of nuptial crowning in the third century, based on dating the Christian gold glasses to that time; cf. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes*, 95. Though this does not align with current research dating the glasses to the mid-to-late fourth century, Schrijnen’s basic proposal of a gradual Christian acceptance of crowning still seems valid. The adoption of the practice of nuptial crowning probably preceded the production of fourth-century crowning images.

to the father (of the bride, presumably) rather than to an attending priest. He instructed his fellow bishop Eusebius regarding an upcoming wedding: “Let the father impose the crowns, as he had wished! For here is what we have decided when we attend weddings: to the fathers the crowning, to us the prayers.”¹⁴⁰

In a homily written between 386–398, John Chrysostom also referred to the custom of crowning bride and groom, and identified a Christian significance to the crowns: “Garlands (*stephanoi*) are wont to be worn on the heads of bridegrooms, as a symbol of victory, betokening that they approach the marriage bed unconquered by pleasure.”¹⁴¹ Chrysostom here signals the redefinition of the wedding crown—its dissociation from the festival context and its comparability to the crowns of martial, athletic, and imperial contexts in order to highlight the spiritual victory of chastity over *hēdonē*.¹⁴² Chrysostom’s statement occurs in the course of a plea to parents to keep their children chaste before marriage. It is unclear whether he devised the interpretation of the wedding crown himself or appealed to a view that had become broadly shared in order to support his exhortation; either seems possible.¹⁴³

Certainly from the first century Christians had thought of the *stephanos* as a symbol of spiritual victory, and Paul, like Chrysostom, described a victory crown won by continence: “Athletes exercise self-control [*enkrateuetai*, often associated with sexual self-control] in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland [*stephanon*], but we an imperishable one” (1 Cor 9:25). Other New Testament passages refer to “crowns” of eternal reward: “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8); “the crown of life” (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10); “the crown of glory” (1 Pet 5:4); “golden crowns” (Rev 4:4). Crowns on gold

¹⁴⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistula* 231, PG 37, 373–374; Τάλλα δὲ ὑμῖν μελέτω καὶ στεφανούτω πατήρ, ὡς εὔξατο. Τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ εἴ που γάμοις παραγεγόναμεν, ἐτυπώσαμεν· ἐκείνων μὲν εἶναι τοὺς στεφάνους, ἡμῶν δὲ τὰς εὐχάς, ἃς οἶδα μὴ τόποις ὀριζόμενας; trans. Barrios, *The Fathers Speak*, 200; Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 2, note 4. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.18, describing baptism as a “marriage” with the bridegroom Christ, and referring to the crowning of the bride; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 22, comments that Gregory would not have made such a reference if the crowning of brides had not been a custom at Christian weddings.

¹⁴¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilia* 9 on 1 Tim 2, PG 62, 546; Διὰ τοῦτο στέφανοι ταῖς κεφαλαῖς ἐπιτίθενται, σύμβολον τῆς νίκης, ὅτι ἀήττητοι γενόμενοι, οὕτω προσέρχονται τῇ εὐνῇ, ὅτι μὴ κατηγωνίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς; trans. Philip Schaff, NPNF I, 13:437; date: Robert Wilken, “John Chrysostom,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 623; cf. Avery, “Early Christian Gold Glass,” 173: the laurel crown symbolizes “the reward of conjugal fidelity.”

¹⁴² See Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 91, for a discussion of the distinction between the victory crown and the festival wreath.

¹⁴³ But see Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 2: Chrysostom “attempted to give the traditional ritual a new, Christian meaning”; Jaclyn Maxwell, “Lay Piety in the Sermons of John Chrysostom,” in *Byzantine Christianity: A People’s History of Christianity, Volume 3*, ed. Derek Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 21: “Chrysostom, like other church authorities of this period, called for people to think consciously about things that they normally would not question...”

glass medallions with inscriptions like *VIVATIS*, *VIVAS*, and *ZESES* (“May you live!”) suggest an association with “the crown of life” and a wish for a blessed life both here and hereafter (to be discussed further in Chapter 5). The popularity of crowns in Christian nuptial iconography, Kantorowicz observes, shows “how easily the bridal wreaths of flowers assumed an almost transcendental connotation anticipating the eternal crown of life.”¹⁴⁴

If this iconographic development did occur easily, it was no less remarkable. To appropriate the victory symbol previously reserved for triumphant emperors and athletes seems a bold move. Compounding its boldness was the fact that in early Christian art coronation was used for images of exceptional spiritual victors like apostles, saints, martyrs, and Christ himself. The adoration of the magi, a popular image throughout the fourth century, typically depicted the first of the magi bringing the Christ child a crown, and a mid-fourth century Passion sarcophagus includes a scene in which a soldier places a *stephanos* (rather than a crown of thorns) upon Christ’s head, signifying victory rather than shame (fig. 37).¹⁴⁵ Fourth-century gold glass medallions depict the apostles Peter and Paul being crowned by a small figure of Christ standing between them, the same composition used for spousal portraits on gold glass (fig. 4).¹⁴⁶ Late fourth-century “stars and crowns” sarcophagi depict the hand of God holding a crown over the head of each apostle in a procession (fig. 38), the very iconography that Septimia Severina applied to the portrait of her and her husband (fig. 23, above).¹⁴⁷ The striking use of the same coronation iconography for both the heroic apostles of Rome and everyday believers sometimes receives little more

¹⁴⁴ Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 8.

¹⁴⁵ Jensen, “The Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography,” 163–164 (re. the Passion sarcophagus), 166–169 (re. the magi); Robin M. Jensen, “Allusions to Imperial Rituals in Fourth-Century Christian Art,” in *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in its Imperial Context*, ed. Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 15–24 (esp. 21); the Passion sarcophagus is Museo Pio Cristiano inv. no. 31525.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, nos. 37, 50, 51, 58, 66, 241; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 79–80, no. 10; Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 227–228, no. 264. Walker, “Gold Glass,” proposes that the proliferation of saints’ images on gold glasses was spurred by the Church’s promotion of martyr veneration and discouragement of elaborate funerals for family members. Without methods of precise dating, we cannot fully identify the chronological relationship of spousal coronation glasses to saint-coronation glasses. However, Walker notes that individual portraits continued to appear on glasses to the end of the fourth century, and we do know that spousal coronation images appear in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, well after the rise of saint-coronation images, such as on the Villa Albani and Catervius sarcophagi and the gold necklace medallion in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Rep. III, 35–36, no. 49, Taf. 17.1–5; Rep. I, 28, no. 31, Taf. 11.

than passing mention.¹⁴⁸ Reekmans, however, remarked that “the heavenly crown above the heads of the simple faithful is quite exceptional in the iconographic record.”¹⁴⁹

The spousal coronation image evidently represents a popular, lay perspective. It appears on personal objects—sarcophagi, glass vessels, jewelry—made for individual customers, apart from the artistic productions of the church.¹⁵⁰ Recent research on gold glass, the medium on which these images were especially popular, finds that glass vessels were much less expensive than sarcophagi, silver, or gold; they “were primarily owned by people of modest wealth and status,” and their decoration indicates a “demand for personal images in media affordable to the populace at large.”¹⁵¹ This demand, like the practice of crowning at weddings, seems to reflect a popular-level, grass-roots enthusiasm, while to judge from Clement, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Gregory, and Chrysostom, crowning was a practice only gradually embraced by church teachers and clergy, who seem to come relatively late to the consideration of what crowns meant to marrying Christians.¹⁵² Chrysostom’s interpretation of wedding crowns dates to some 30 years after spousal coronation images emerged in Rome. Gregory of Nazianzus emphasized a distinction between crowning and blessing: crowning was merely a festive custom alongside other “childish” wedding traditions like calling on the *Erōtas* and strewing flowers, while the nuptial prayers

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 80, 124; Jutta Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab, und Wort: Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2010), 63, though Dresken-Weiland does comment that the crowning of couples “is probably to be understood in the context of the Christianization of pagan *dextrarum iunctio* representations, in which Christ takes the place of Concordia” (“die Übergabe von Kränzen an ein Ehepaar ist wohl im Rahmen der Christianisierung der paganen *dextrarum iunctio*-Darstellungen zu verstehen, in denen Christus die Stelle der Concordia einnimmt”).

¹⁴⁹ Reekmans, “La *dextrarum iunctio*,” 72; “la couronne céleste au-dessus des têtes de simples fidèles est tout à fait exceptionnelle dans la documentation iconographique” (my trans.). Reekmans here refers to the tondo portrait on the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, but also discusses the Villa Albani sarcophagus fragment and glass vessel bases, 73–77.

¹⁵⁰ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 61, discusses reasons why it is very unlikely that the church was involved in gold glass production in an official sense; cf. Walker, “Gold-glass,” [forthcoming]; Olaf Steen, “The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio: Hope for Salvation through the Word of Christ,” in *Imperial Art as Christian Art, Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian* (Rome: Bardi, 2001), 283; official art used in church decoration is differentiated from the “personal” messages conveyed via sarcophagus decoration.

¹⁵¹ Meek, “Gold Glass in Late Antiquity,” 128; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 61, 64–65: Glass “was never as costly or valuable as precious metal. ... Compared to gold and silver, it seems likely that gold glass was also affordable to persons lower down the social scale who were perhaps not in a position to purchase luxurious silver plate.” See also Cameron, “Orfitus and Constantine,” 295–301, and the discussion of gold glass in Chapter 1.

¹⁵² In a comparable way, Robert Markus argued that enthusiasm for sites associated with Jesus’s life originated with the laity, while the clergy, as Lisa Kaaren Bailey puts it, played catch-up: Robert Markus, “How on Earth could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 261; Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 54.

were sacred and required a priest.¹⁵³ The iconography from Rome, however, suggests that married Christians there placed more religious significance upon crowning than Gregory recognized; the figure of Christ sacralized the custom. The work this image did was to bestow upon the wedding wreath, Christian spouses, and their marriages the rich symbolic associations of Christian victory crowns.

Thus, while Reinsberg saw the coronation of spouses as a sign that the victory wreath had been reduced to a mere marker of religious identity—a “general Christian epithet”—the reverse seems more likely: rather than a reduction of the symbolic value of “victory,” spousal coronation images represent an effort to elevate ordinary Christians to the status of spiritual victor, thereby to claim religious merit.¹⁵⁴ This aspiration is already present in the New Testament texts mentioned above; the author of 2 Timothy believed the Lord would give the “crown of righteousness” not only to him, “but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim 4:8). Crowned spouses claimed religious merit alongside saints and martyrs. On a gold glass medallion now held in Florence, for example, the couple at center being crowned by Christ is surrounded by six saints (Peter, Paul, Laurentius, Sixtus, Cyprianus, and Epolitus), who stand between columns topped by *tabulae* inscribed with their names (fig. 39).¹⁵⁵ The couple’s portrait busts are the largest likenesses in the composition; the pair occupies a position of honor, remembrance, and benefaction among Christ and the saints.¹⁵⁶ In the context of fourth-century disputes about the relative merits of the married and celibate ways of life, these images resist the notion of a hierarchy of merit based on degree of sexual renunciation. They further suggest a desire on the part of ordinary Christians to sacralize their marriages and invite divine favor, analogous to the way they increasingly invited their priests and bishops to their bless unions.

¹⁵³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistula* 231; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 22, however, saw in Gregory’s letter a “*connection* between the crowns and the prayers” (emphasis added). I take Gregory’s statement as articulating a difference, not forming a connection.

¹⁵⁴ Reinsberg, “Concordia,” 316; *allgemein christlichen Epitheton*.

¹⁵⁵ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, no. 240; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, Pl. 19, no. 7; Garrucci’s drawing is of the portrait in reverse, except (oddly) for the inscriptions, which read forward.

¹⁵⁶ Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 236, states regarding portraits of spouses with saints on sarcophagi: “the presence of ‘saints’ could draw them into Christ’s heavenly kingdom.”

Symbols of Christ between Spouses

The significance Christians gave to the figure of Christ crowning spouses would seem to call for special consideration of instances when a symbol of Christ—a christogram, staurogram, or cross—rather than a figure of Christ was placed between spousal portraits. Surprisingly, these symbols have often been described as little more than markers of religious identity. Smith and Cheetam noted that gems and glasses inscribed with blessings for Christian spouses sometimes omit the words *in Deo* or *in Christo* and substitute a christogram, but they identify its function as merely “to insure the Christian significance.”¹⁵⁷ Anne Ward states that a cross between spouses on a fifth century marriage ring in the British Museum “places this ring firmly in its religious context.”¹⁵⁸ The *chi-rho* and other early Christian symbols functioned “as a proclamation of non-pagan identity,” Jaś Elsner offers.¹⁵⁹ Most recently Sébastien Aubry writes that christograms, staurograms, and crosses on seals are “used to indicate that the bearer belongs to the Christian religion,” while they also play a role in creating visual symmetry and balance in inscriptions.¹⁶⁰ All these assessments are surely correct, but also seem incomplete, considering the role Christians were ascribing to Christ in marriage-related discourse, liturgy, and visual art.

The *chi-rho*, by definition an abbreviated reference to Christ, could have represented a visual alternative to a bust or standing figure of Christ, better suited for decorating the limited space on smaller objects like gems, seals, rings, gold glass medallions, or belt ornaments. Placed between spouses it could, like *Christus pronubus* images, represent the concept that the pair was joined by God/Christ and allude to the couple’s harmony. (In a similar way, christograms placed between Peter and Paul symbolized the *concordia apostolorum* that was so emphasized in the visual culture of late fourth-century Rome.¹⁶¹) The *chi-rho* could also have been seen, like the crown, as an allusion to an eternal victory. Though associated

¹⁵⁷ William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol. 1 (Hartford: J. B. Burr, 1880), 856.

¹⁵⁸ Ward, et al., *The Ring*, 47, pl. 100.

¹⁵⁹ Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100–450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 139.

¹⁶⁰ Aubry, “Inscriptions on Portrait Gems and Discs,” 242.

¹⁶¹ J. M. Huskinson, *Concordia Apostolorum: Christian Propaganda at Rome in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries: A Study in Early Christian Iconography and Iconology* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982); e.g., Jeffrey Spier, *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 246–247, nos. 68–69; Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 226–227, no. 263, also 234–235, no. 268, for a christogram placed between Ss. Lawrence and Cyprian.

with Constantine’s military victories in the early fourth century, in later decades the christogram became a religious symbol representing victory over death.¹⁶² Additionally, since Constantine had used the symbol in battle to defeat his enemies, it may have been selected by some patrons for its amuletic or apotropaic value, as a means of invoking divine protection upon the pictured couples.¹⁶³ Tertullian had written that Christ would be with harmonious Christian spouses, “And where He is, evil is not.”¹⁶⁴

In epigraphy the *chi-rho* could facilitate a concise expression “in Christ,” as on a humble grave-slab: *MAXIMINVS IN* ☩ (“Maximinus, [rest] in Christ”) (fig. 40). This usage was employed with sophistication in some marital contexts.¹⁶⁵ The seal mentioned above with the letters I and N to either side of a christogram makes explicit an intention to convey the notion “in Christ.” Appearing between the inscribed names of the spouses and above their portrait busts, the abbreviation ascribes the status “in Christ” to the spouses in a concise, compact way.¹⁶⁶ A christogram functions in a similar way on the late fourth-century sarcophagus of a 22-year-old woman named Bassa (fig. 41). The right half of the front panel bears an extended verse epitaph, arranged in two columns; the column on the viewer’s left begins with the name *Bassa*, while the column to the right starts with the name of her husband, *Gaudentius*. In an acrostic, each line begins with a letter spelling out *Bassa suae* (in the left column) and *Gaudentius* (in the right column), or “To his Bassa, Gaudentius.” This indicates that Gaudentius commissioned the sarcophagus for his wife’s burial, and presents him as the author of the verse epitaph.¹⁶⁷ The first line of the inscription ends with an oversized *chi-rho*, followed by an *O*, to indicate the ablative *Christo*, “in Christ,” so that the line commemorates Bassa as “living through the ages *in Christ*.”¹⁶⁸ But this christogram seems to function as more than mere epigraphic shorthand—by its large size it stands out

¹⁶² Jensen, “The Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography,” 153–171.

¹⁶³ Jensen, “Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography,” 161–162; see also Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium,” 65–86, for a discussion of comparable though later practices.

¹⁶⁴ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2.8.8; SC 273, 150: ubi et ipse, ibi et malus non est (my trans.).

¹⁶⁵ In addition to the examples given here, see the clever use of the christogram on the pendant of Maria celebrating her marriage to Honorius, c. 398 CE; discussed, e.g., in Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 57.

¹⁶⁶ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 22, no. 40, Pl. 7; Aubry, “Inscriptions on Portrait Gems and Discs,” 242; cf. Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler*, 130, no. 47, now lost, inscribed *TERENTIA FAVSTINA VIVATIS IN* ☩ (“Terentia and Faustina, may you [two] live in Christ”)—but since *Terentia* is feminine, this would not appear to refer to a married couple.

¹⁶⁷ Trout, “Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative,” 340.

¹⁶⁸ Trout, “Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative,” 341, emphasis added.

from the rest of the inscription, and its placement within the empty space between the two columns and at its top makes it a visual “link” between the wife’s and husband’s sides of the inscription, similar to the way christograms or crosses are placed between portraits of spouses on rings, gems, seals, and glasses, linking the pair. The inscription’s visual arrangement parallels that found in christogram-and-spouses portraits—even placing “Bassa” on the left and “Gaudentius” on the right—and represents an impressively clever verbal use of what had become a popular visual pattern.

By the late fourth century this spousal iconography could use the symbol of the cross, as observed on the rings and seals described above. When Paulinus of Nola told Julian and Titia, “Let the holy cross be the yoke that pairs you together,” it may be that he had in mind not only the notion of a Christian marriage but also an increasingly popular image.¹⁶⁹ Christians were seeking visual ways to express the concept that their marriages were “in Christ”—a concept articulated in one of the earliest New Testament texts (Paul wrote of marriage “only in the Lord,” μόνον ἐν Κυρίῳ, 1 Cor. 7:39) and given ritual form in the developing nuptial blessing (“May she marry in Christ as one faithful and chaste”).¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

Married Christians in fourth-century Rome creatively adapted the iconography of the *dextrarum iunctio* and the wedding scene by replacing the representation of traditional deities with a figure or symbol of Christ, and by importing the element of the victory crown used in imperial art. In so doing, they altered the meaning of the image that displayed civic-minded harmony within the household and society. The newly-created forms of self-representation conveyed distinctively Christian notions about the divine role in creating marital *concordia*, and displayed the citizenship and place of honor Christian couples sought in the kingdom of God. These visual developments found corresponding expression in the

¹⁶⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25, 192; CSEL 30, 244; “sit vobis crux veneranda iugum,” lit., “let the venerated cross be a yoke to you [two]”; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 38.

¹⁷⁰ *Sacramentarium Veronese* 1110, in Mohlberg, 140, line 22: Fidelis et casta nubat in Christo; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 43.

nuptial blessing, the veiling ceremony, and other marriage-related Christian texts. Thus, both rank and file believers and church authorities mutually participated in bringing about new ways of visualizing, forming, and conceptualizing Christian marriage in the fourth century. The evidence of the gold glasses suggests that the visual productions of married Christians might have formed the development's leading edge.

CHAPTER III

SPOUSAL PORTRAITS, PART II:

LEARNED FIGURES, *IMAGINES CLIPEATAE*, AND WORSHIPERS AT JESUS'S FEET

Continuing the examination of spousal portraiture used by Christians in third- and fourth-century Rome, this chapter focuses on three additional forms of self-representation. The first two types, learned figures and double-portraits in circular frames (*clipei*), were popular in Roman art and enjoyed continued use in Christian art with little alteration, though Christian patrons set them among other images with theological significance. A third form, the representation of Christian spouses as diminutive, adoring worshipers at Jesus's feet, drew on existing iconographic strategies but constituted the innovation of a distinctively Christian image.

Learned Figures

Intellectual-type Spousal Portraits in Roman Art

In her 2013 study of self-representation and commemoration on Roman sarcophagi, Stine Birk defines “learned figure” portraits as “individualised figure types from the intellectual sphere, i.e. Muses, philosophers, and men and women with scrolls or a musical instrument.”¹ These figures appear on sarcophagi from the beginning of Roman production, but became especially prevalent in the third century;

¹ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 73, note 299. Birk surveys past studies of these figures on sarcophagi, including Gerhart Rodenwaldt, “Zur Kunstgeschichte der Jahre 220 bis 270,” *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut* 51 (1936):82–113, who described “philosopher sarcophagi”; Henri-Irénée Marrou, *ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ: Étude sur les scènes de la vie intellectuelle figurant sur les monuments funéraires romains* (Grenoble: Didier et Richard, 1938), who categorized the various learned figures and characterized them as means of visually representing individuals as cultured; Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), who traced the image of the philosopher in Roman art from the late Republic to early Christianity; and Janet Huskinson, “Women and Learning: Gender and Identity in Scenes of Intellectual Life on Late Roman Sarcophagi,” in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. Miles (London: Routledge, 1999), 190–213; and “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi.”

“no other self-representative figure[s] gained such popularity in the history of sarcophagi.”² Their use reflected a broader revival of interest in classical Greek learning, rhetoric, oratory, and art among Roman elites of the early Empire. When the emperor Hadrian wore a beard in the style of the old philosophers (a style preserved in sculpture), iconographic references to learning and culture began appearing more often in portraiture throughout the Roman world.³ Learned figures constituted “a way to portray the deceased (whether pagan or Christian) in the flattering guise of the intellectual or scholar.”⁴

This led to new forms of representation for married couples. A “learned couple” could be depicted as “a woman with either a scroll or a musical instrument represented together with a man holding a scroll.”⁵ The man might be portrayed bearded and seated, like a philosopher, or engaged in philosophical discussion with his colleagues (fig. 42). The woman might stand in front of him, listening like a Muse or student in a Polyhymnia pose (fig. 43), or stand separately, playing a musical instrument or holding a scroll (fig. 44).⁶ A form of marital portraiture called the Lycian motif depicted the wife and husband seated at left and right ends of a relief, facing each other and holding attributes like scrolls or musical instruments (fig. 45).⁷

These styles of representation focus on a shared intellectual life in marriage, highlighting an ideal spousal parity in education and cultural literacy. Though scenes with learned figures are often gendered (the man reads or engages in philosophical discussion while the woman listens), they sometimes reduce gender distinctions and employ visual symmetry to imply a greater degree of equality, as when both wife and husband sit facing each other, or appear separately, each holding a scroll. Representations of learned spouses that employ gender distinctions suggest an ideal of complementarity rather than an equality based on identical roles. Regarding these portrayals Stine Birk observes, “In marriage, men and women [had] complementary roles, and the different attributes, scroll and lyre, reflect diverse qualities which help to

² Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 59.

³ Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, 198–266; cf. Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom*, 140.C.17, LCL 222, 311: “Kings fond of the arts make many persons incline to be artists, those fond of letters make many want to be scholars....”

⁴ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 44.

⁵ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 84.

⁶ An intriguing variation is a sarcophagus at Ostia Antica (Museo inv. 48277) depicting a female philosopher with a listening woman at center, and a learned woman in another panel; see Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 80–84, fig.42.

⁷ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 75.

fulfill the picture of the ‘ideal’ marriage.”⁸ Janet Huskinson states, “The whole image of learning ... altered the ways in which a marriage could be represented, and ... women were given a powerful role in this through identification with the Muses. ... Their virtues were defined now by attributes of learning rather than physical desirability and domestic skills as in the earlier empire.”⁹

One explanation for the rise of “learned couple” portraits posits a second- and third-century transformation in the concept of marriage from civic duty or dynastic to companionate.¹⁰ Evidence for this “new ideal of partnership” based on “philosophical advice, mutual affection, friendship and respect”¹¹ can be seen in Plutarch’s *Advice to Bride and Groom*, written from the position that “the pleasure in marriage stands especially in need of reason.”¹² Plutarch advised a groom to cultivate his character with the aid of philosophical discourse, seeking out teachers to instruct him so that he in turn could instruct his wife, who was to share with him in intellectual advancement.¹³ This shared life of the mind was a key characteristic of the ideally intimate union “of a couple in love with each other,” a bond that Plutarch differentiated from the inferior relationships “of those who marry for dowry or children” and “those who merely sleep in the same bed ... cohabiting, but not really living together.”¹⁴

With the rise of learned figure portraiture, the use of mythological figures to represent married couples declined. This development signaled a shift in attention away from the body, sensuality, emotionality, and visuality suggested in mythological programs. By contrast, imagery of the learned sphere—speakers, scrolls readers, listeners, and musical instruments—directed attention toward the mind, rationality, and aurality.¹⁵

⁸ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 152; spelling modified.

⁹ Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 25.

¹⁰ Brown, “Late Antiquity,” 248–249; Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 569; Huskinson, “Women and Learning,” 193; Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 19; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 84.

¹¹ Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 569.

¹² Plutarch, *Coniugalia Praecepta* 138, LCL 222, 301.

¹³ Plutarch, *Coniugalia Praecepta* 145.48, LCL 222, 337, 339.

¹⁴ Plutarch, *Coniugalia Praecepta* 142.34, LCL 222, 325.

¹⁵ Ewald, “Paradigms of Personhood and Regimes of Representation: Some Notes on the Transformation of Roman Sarcophagi,” *Res* 61/62 (2012): 57.

Intellectual-type Spousal Portraits in Christian Art

“Learned figure” portraits appear in some of the earliest Christian art. The sarcophagus from the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, dating to 250–275 CE, makes use of this portrait type to represent a married couple (fig. 46).¹⁶ Manuela Studer-Karlen calls this “the earliest preserved Christian representation of a deceased.”¹⁷ The pair prominently occupies the center of the decorated front of the tub-shaped sarcophagus. At left center the veiled woman stands posed as an *orant*, while at right center the pallium-clad, bearded man sits in profile on a *sella* and reads from a scroll. The couple echoes the Muse-and-philosopher compositions seen on non-Christian precedents. Depicted in larger scale than surrounding figures, and with unfinished faces, the man and woman were intended for individualized representation. Deichmann identifies each of them as “the deceased” without speculating on which was patron and which was commemorand, but Charles Morey thought the sculptor probably intended the female *orant* as the deceased occupant of the sarcophagus, and the seated man as her husband who commissioned the monument for her burial.¹⁸ These learned spouses appear at the center of a program that encompasses the front and both small sides of the curved, tub-shaped casket. The images of water, the Jordan River, Jonah’s ship, Jonah and the sea monster, the Good Shepherd, the baptism of Jesus, and fishermen casting their nets allude to themes of baptism and salvation, implying a claim or hope of salvation for the individuals represented, and identifying them with the Christian community whose discourse engaged these biblical subjects.¹⁹

Josef Wilpert published another sarcophagus that similarly features a large-scale, unfinished portrait of a centrally-placed philosopher, seated in profile and originally reading from a scroll (now

¹⁶ Rep. I, 306–307, no. 747, Taf. 117.

¹⁷ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 224.

¹⁸ Rep. I, 306, identifies the man and woman as *Verstorbener* and *Verstorbene*, respectively; Charles Rufus Morey, “The Christian Sarcophagus in S. Maria Antiqua,” *Supplementary Papers of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome* 1 (1905): 154. But see Johannes Deckers, “Constantine the Great and Early Christian Art,” in *Picturing the Bible*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 102, who identifies the deceased as the philosopher and the *orant* as his wife, though citing *Repertorium I* which identifies them both as the deceased. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 77, identifies the seated man as “The Teaching of the Law” rather than as a portrait, despite the unfinished features indicating an intention to represent an individual.

¹⁹ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 48–49 (figs. 13a–c), 84, 174; Deckers, “Constantine the Great,” 102–103: “With this combination of scenes, the deceased wished to indicate that they were baptized and hoped to escape death, as Jonah once had with the help of God. Christ is depicted only as a diminutive auxiliary figure in a narrative scene intended to articulate and justify the couple’s hope for eternal life after death”; on identification with the homiletic tradition in early Christianity, see Jensen, “Compiling Narratives,” 25.

broken), with a bundle of scrolls at his feet (fig. 47).²⁰ In this case, the seated man faces a listening woman who stands in the Polyhymnia pose, the two of them set apart from surrounding figures by a *parapetasma* in the background—a curtain, typically knotted at top left and right as if hung on a wall, perhaps bearing funerary connotations and alluding to an afterlife.²¹ Given this framing of the pair, it is possible that they, too, were intended to represent a married couple.²² Wilpert identified the listening figure as a married woman.²³ However, the woman is smaller in scale than the seated male, and her features are not particularly individualized. Therefore, the intention here might have been simply to depict an individual man as learned by presenting him in the company of a Muse or listening student.²⁴ The identity of the man as the deceased is hinted at by the Good Shepherd figure standing behind him and looking toward him, possibly alluding to the safe passage of his soul.

A similarly uncertain representation of a married couple appears on another late third-century sarcophagus whose central scene features the motif of a seated philosopher and a listening woman (fig. 48). Again, there do not seem to be sufficient individualizing details to identify the pair with certainty as a husband and wife, rather than a general allusion to the intellectual sphere.²⁵

Clearer evidence of spousal representation appears on the Via Salaria sarcophagus (or “Ram’s head sarcophagus”), another tub-shaped casket dating to the same quarter-century as the Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus. This monument features a man and woman seated and facing each other in a variation of the Lycian motif (fig. 49).²⁶ At left, the bearded man, bare-chested and wrapped in a cloak

²⁰ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, 8, Tav. II.2.

²¹ William Lameere, “Un symbole pythagoricien dans l’art funéraire de Rome,” *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 63.1 (1939): 43–85; Charles Piétri, *Roma Christiana* (Roma: Ecole Française de Rome, 1976), 1:283; McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 47; Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, 213, n. 54.

²² *Parapetasma* often frame married pairs in funerary art; see Marion Lawrence, “Season Sarcophagi of Architectural Type,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 62.3 (1958): 286–290.

²³ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, 1.8: “La discepola, una donna maritata, sta ascoltando con grande attenzione, appoggiata ad una colonna e con le gambe incrociate” (“The student, a married woman, is listening with great attention, leaning against a column and with legs crossed,” my trans.).

²⁴ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, 8, interpreted it as a scene of catechesis.

²⁵ Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, Vol. 5, *Sarcofagi ossia sculture cimiteriali* (Prato: Guasti, 1879), Taf. 370.4; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. I, 9, Tav. II.3; Rep. I, 416, no. 994, Taf. 159. Christian women do not appear to be depicted as Muses: Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 88; Robert Couzin, “Manuela Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, Turnhout (Brepols) 2012 [review],” *Klio* 98 (2016): 392.

²⁶ Rep. I, 62–63, no. 66; but see Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 152: “scenes of Muses and philosophers, and Lycian compositions, stand for the institution of marriage.”

without a tunic, reads from a scroll, flanked by two standing, bearded men also attired as philosophers. At right, the veiled woman holds a rolled scroll in her left hand and raises her right hand in a speaking gesture. Behind her stands a veiled female attendant. Between the seated man and woman two additional figures stand: at left center, a sheep-bearer with two sheep at his feet; and right of center, a veiled female *orant*.²⁷ The entire composition is framed between outward-facing rams' heads. The two seated individuals appear larger in scale than the other figures, and their heads are especially prominent. Based on this, past interpretations have identified the pair as the married grave owners represented in idealized portraits.²⁸ In such a view, the shepherd and *orant* between the pair might be seen as the virtues of *humanitas* and *pietas* attributed to the grave owners, allusions to the safe and peaceful state of their souls in the hereafter, or symbols of salvation through Christ the Good Shepherd and prayer. Alternatively, the shepherd and *orant* may represent the subject of discussion between the seated spouses and their attendants.²⁹ However, in a recent study Manuela Studer-Karlen has revealed that the facial features on the seated figures, the *orant*, and the female attendant have all been reworked in modern times, and originally bore individualizing features intended to represent actual persons. She proposes that the composition represents a family group, and suggests that the special placement of the *orant* figure beside the sheep-carrier, with whom she is locked in a shared gaze, implies that the *orant* represents the deceased, a young woman now carried to heaven in the Good Shepherd's care.³⁰ In this case, the seated figures likely represent the young woman's parents who commissioned the sarcophagus for her burial.

The spousal portraits on the Sta. Maria Antiqua and Via Salaria sarcophagi show a high degree of continuity with those found on other third-century "intellectual sphere" sarcophagi, but for the most part the philosopher-type did not endure as a prominent means of spousal representation among fourth-century

²⁷ The sheep-carrier and *orant* look at each other, but their faces have been reconstructed; see Rep. I, Taf. 21, nos. 66.1–2.

²⁸ Rep. I, 62: "Infolge der Isokephalie die sitzenden Hauptpersonen (Verstorbene) größer: Beide Figuren zeigen wohl das idealisierte Porträt der Grabinhaber" ("On the basis of the larger-scale heads of the seated principals [the deceased persons]: Both figures probably show the idealized portrait of the grave owners," my trans.); Morey, "Sarcophagus of S. Maria Antiqua," 152: "Here we see the deceased husband and wife, with attendants, seated facing one another"; Weitzman, *Age of Spirituality*, 518, no. 462: "The two seated figures most likely represent a deceased husband and wife, posed as two disputing intellectuals...."

²⁹ Suggested in "Early Christian Sarcophagus," Restoration Projects: Pio-Christian Department, 26–27; online, accessed Aug. 30, 2016: https://www.academia.edu/8732123/Early_Christian_Sarcophagus

³⁰ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 88.

Christians.³¹ Rather, the seated figure reading from a scroll began to appear more often as a reference to the church, its teachers, and its literary culture, while the image of the speaking philosopher, posed frontally, became a style for representing Christ as a teacher—the “true philosopher”—and for suggesting “Christianity’s ascendance over its religious competition.”³² The *orant* continued as a popular symbol and form of individual portraiture, while married couples opted for other types of representation, particularly the double-portrait framed in a *clipeus* or *parapetasma*.

Here an element of “intellectual sphere” iconography persisted in the attribute of the rolled scroll, by which “learning [was] shown to be a central part in the collective life and personal development of Christians.”³³ In double-portraits typically the husband held a scroll, but not both wife and husband in the same portrait.³⁴ Spouses depicted separately might each hold a scroll (see fig. 44, above), but this occurred relatively infrequently in Christian representations. For example, a wife and husband appear in separate *clipei* on the lid of a sarcophagus in Arles, made in Rome in the last third of the fourth century, but the husband at right holds a scroll, while the wife at left reaches her empty right hand toward a part of her cloak draped over her left arm (fig. 50).³⁵ Similarly, in the separate busts of a man and woman in *tondi* on the lid of an early fourth-century sarcophagus in Rome’s Museo Nazionale, the man at right holds a scroll while the woman at left is posed as an *orant*, hands raised in prayer.³⁶ These distinctions probably cannot be explained by interpreting the scroll as the marriage contract that the husband holds; as Janet Huskinson has discussed, by the mid-third century the image of the scroll had become too ubiquitous to carry such a specific meaning; it “probably simply functioned as a sign that its owner claimed some kind of learning and the social status to go with it, and it was probably gratuitously used.”³⁷ Thus depictions of

³¹ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 224: from c. 300 the philosopher image was no longer used for Christian portraiture.

³² André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), xlvii, 12; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 44–46; quotation: 46.

³³ Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 235.

³⁴ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 76.

³⁵ Rep. III, 35–36, no. 49, Taf. 17, discussion of *clipeus* busts on 36.

³⁶ Rep. I, 319–320, no. 772, Taf. 122. Cf. Rep. III, no. 62, for an example of separate *parapetasma*-portrait busts of a woman, Hydria Tertulla, and her daughter, Axia Aeliana, at right and left sides of the lid of a mid-fourth-century sarcophagus in Arles.

³⁷ Huskinson, “Women and Learning,” 199; contra the *tabulae nuptialis* interpretation of the scroll, e.g., in Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture*, 25.

husband and wife in which only the husband holds a scroll retain gendered distinctions in marital representation, even as visual symmetry may suggest a degree of parity between spouses.³⁸

A number of exceptions, however, point to early Christian valorization of the learned woman, which could be highlighted even when doing so broke visual conventions of marital portraiture. In double-portraits on the Projecta Casket and a gold glass medallion in the Vienna *Kunsthistorisches* Museum, a woman holds a scroll and her husband makes a speaking gesture (fig. 35, fig. 51). A fragment of an early fourth-century sarcophagus lid preserves busts of a woman and a man in front of two curtains held by *putti*, next to a Greek inscription (fig. 52).³⁹ The woman at right turns slightly toward the left as she holds a scroll in her left hand and makes a speaking gesture with her right. The man at left is posed as an *orant*, and turns slightly toward the woman at right. The Greek inscription to the right of the pair indicates that the sarcophagus was made for the woman's burial by her husband, who prays that God will remember his late wife, Eugenia, who died at the age of 57, having lived with her husband for 41 years from her virginity, leaving four children and nine grandchildren.⁴⁰ Garrucci thought the *orant* might represent the woman's child, but Wilpert pointed out that the man in the posture of prayer corresponds to the man's prayer for his wife expressed in the first words of the inscription, "God, remember Eugenia..." and identified the pair as husband and wife.⁴¹

Both wife and husband hold scrolls on the late fourth-century sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina in Tolentino, Italy (fig. 53). Commissioned by Severina for the burial of her husband and herself, this monument provides a rare opportunity to see a woman's selected self-representation. Acroteria on the sarcophagus lid contain individual busts of each spouse (in addition to the tondo portrait of the two of them together on the back panel, fig. 23).⁴² Catervius at left and Severina at right each hold a

³⁸ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 76: "When represented as a marital couple, only the man has a scroll, demonstrating his superior position in comparison with the woman."

³⁹ Rep. I, 84, no. 120, Taf. 30; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi* I, 75, Tav. LX.3.

⁴⁰ Rep. I, 84: *mnēsthē o theos Eugeniēs | teleuta etōn nz' desiou b' | oikēsasa meta tou sunbiou autēs partheneikou etē ma' kataleipousa tekna d' engona th'.*

⁴¹ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi* I, 75; however, Rep. I, 84 simply identifies them as a woman and a man: "Büste einer Frau ... Büste einer Mannes."

⁴² Rep. II, 52–54, no. 148.

scroll and turn slightly inward toward the other.⁴³ Directly beneath them, on the casket's first and fifth panels, the apostles Peter (at left) and Paul (right) also hold scrolls and stand with bundles of scrolls at their feet. The alignment and mirroring of the spouses and apostles suggests that Catervius and Severina are not only literate and educated, but are also individually and jointly possessors of the Christian *paideia*, the faith and knowledge taught by the apostles—a claim for couple's orthodoxy and religious harmony.⁴⁴

Other images on the sarcophagus reinforce this picture of the couple's shared commitment to Christian teaching, such as the motifs in the pediments on the lid. On the right side, two doves face a wreathed christogram (fig. 54); the companion scene on the left side contains two lambs facing a staurogram (fig. 55).⁴⁵ The viewer may have seen in the two doves and two lambs symbols of Catervius and Severina—doves because in death they are departed souls at peace, lambs because they were baptized into the fold of Christ. Facing the staurogram and the wreathed christogram, symbols of the crucifixion and resurrection, the lambs and doves may suggest the couple's shared faith in the saving effects of Christ's passion. This iconographic pairing corresponds to inscriptions on the sarcophagus stating that Catervius and Severina were *clarissimus* and *clarissima* (of senatorial rank), were both baptized by the *sacerdos* (priest/bishop) Probianus, and were joined in marriage “with equal merits” (*PARIBVS MERITIS*).⁴⁶ In this variety of ways, Severina emphasized the equality between herself and her late husband. This equality, as Severina visually represented it, included their shared religious knowledge, which constituted a part of their marital bond and to a great extent defined their relationship.

In the hands of Severina and Catervius, the symbol of the scroll alludes not (or not *only*) to the general intellectual values of the Roman upper classes, but specifically to Christian learning—an

⁴³ Cf. Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 336, who states that Catervius and Severina are “looking in towards the Good Shepherd” (depicted at center of the casket). While their torsos turn towards each other, Catervius's gaze might be seen as directed downwards to the Good Shepherd, but Severina's is directed outward toward the viewer—their gazes perhaps reflect that the sarcophagus was commissioned for Catervius's burial by Severina, who represents herself to the public as one who is fulfilling socially-expected duties of commemoration.

⁴⁴ Regarding scrolls as representations of literacy and culture, and marital unity expressed as shared worship of the same deity: Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 150, 210; Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 179–180. Regarding the scrolls as a symbol of acceptance of the Christian teaching, see Steen, “The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio,” 288.

⁴⁵ As if the lambs are kissing the staurogram: Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavivs Ivllivs Catervivs*, 88.

⁴⁶ CIL IX 5566 = ILS 1289 = CLE 1560a = ILCV 98b = ICI X 22b; Rep. II, 52–53; Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 165–166; Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavivs Ivllivs Catervivs*, 1–3, 89–91.

interpretation some historians have applied to scrolls and reading figures on other Christian artifacts. The Christian images on the sarcophagus of Sta. Maria Antiqua suggest, says Paul Zanker, that the seated man is “not studying the classics, but rather Scripture.”⁴⁷ To Fabrizio Bisconti, the philosopher image in early Christian art reflects how “the early concept of *paideia* ... was replaced by the new notion of catechesis.”⁴⁸

Learned Figures as Clues to the Priscilla Catacomb *Donna Velata* Fresco

The use of learned figures for the self-representation of early Christian spouses casts valuable light on the third-century “Donna Velata” fresco in the so-called *velatio* cubiculum of the Priscilla Catacomb in Rome. As Mary Charles-Murray remarks, this painting “has been variously but never satisfactorily interpreted.”⁴⁹ Considered in light of the third-century “intellectual sphere” portraits, the fresco may be seen as a depiction of a family group including one of the earliest representations of Christian spouses—but probably not in the way that historians have heretofore proposed.

The painting, measuring about 32 x 80 inches (81 x 203 cm), fills a lunette above a burial niche on the back wall of the cubiculum (fig. 56).⁵⁰ It thus represents the focal point of the small room’s visual program, the spot that would have captured the gaze of visitors as they entered the space, thus apt for commemorative portraits of persons interred in the chamber. It features three scenes. At center, a large portrait of a veiled lady dominates the panel, painted with rich colors against a white background. The woman is posed facing the viewer, but her wide eyes look upward and slightly to her right. Her disproportionately large hands extend upward in the posture of prayer; this, combined with the subtle tapering of her robe as it drapes to her feet, gives the impression of a view from slightly above, as if those who look upon her are being granted a little of the heavenly perspective of this woman. She is flanked by two smaller scenes. To the left, a diminutive female robed in gold stands reading from a scroll, while a

⁴⁷ Zanker, *Mask of Socrates*, 287.

⁴⁸ Fabrizio Bisconti, “Rome, the Spread of Christianity and Art,” in *Rome: From the Origins to Italy’s Capital*, ed. Giovanni Gentili (Milan: Cinisello Balsamo, 2011), 82.

⁴⁹ Charles-Murray, “The Emergence of Christian Art,” 52.

⁵⁰ Pierre du Bourguet, *Early Christian Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 69.

gray-haired, bearded man robed in white sits in a high-backed chair to the left, his right hand on or near her right shoulder, as a shorter male stands or sits behind her to the right.⁵¹ In the scene to the right, a woman sits in another high-backed chair, clothed in white, holding or nursing an infant child.

Other paintings accompany the lunette: on the ceiling, a centrally-placed Good Shepherd (is the praying woman looking at *him*?) stands surrounded by peacocks and birds, and above the entrance appears Jonah emerging from the *ketos* (fig. 57). The walls above burial niches to the left and right feature the sacrifice of Isaac and the three young men in the fiery furnace, respectively. These images on the ceiling and side walls evoke Christian themes of deliverance and afterlife, situating the praying woman and the vignettes beside her within the context of hope in the resurrection and salvation from death.⁵²

There is consensus that the central *orant* figure represents a deceased woman who was interred directly beneath the painting in the arcosolium.⁵³ She bears individualized features: large, dark eyes and eyebrows, a long, straight nose, and distinguishing clothing. Her veil, for example, is not a *palla* drawn over her head, as in many portraits of Roman women, nor a plain, nondescript piece of fabric, as seen on many female *orant* figures in the Christian catacombs, but a bright, white piece of fabric with two broad, dark stripes and fringed edges.⁵⁴ In a blend of convention and distinction, she exemplifies the modesty of the traditional veiled Roman woman, and illustrates the New Testament instruction to “pray, lifting up holy hands” (1 Tim 2:8), with the head covered as became Christian women (1 Cor 11:1–16), yet wearing

⁵¹ P. A. Février, “Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille: deux scènes relatives à la vie intellectuelle,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire* 71 (1959): 303, argues that the bearded man’s hand does not rest upon the young woman’s shoulder, but slightly above it, with index and middle fingers extended as if pointing. In either case the gesture seems to imply the man’s instruction or guidance given to the young woman as she reads.

⁵² On the associations of the Good Shepherd, peacocks, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the three youths with concepts of deliverance, salvation, and resurrection, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 37–41 (Good Shepherd), 79–84 (three youths in the fiery furnace), 143–148 (Abraham offering Isaac), 159 (peacock); cf. Vincenzo Ficocchi Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti, and Danilo Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009), 95, 97 (fig. 107).

⁵³ Claude Dagens, “A propos du cubiculum de la ‘velatio,’” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 47 (1971): 119–129, surveys the main interpretations that had been put forth to date, of which all agreed on this point, as does the more recent discussion in Denzey, *The Bone-Gatherers*, 84–87. Though some praying figures in earliest Christian art may function as generic symbols of *pietas* or the disembodied soul, the *orant* was a form of portraiture and was particularly popular in funerary art. For a critique of the “*orant* as sign” interpretation and an argument for identifying *orant* figures as portraits of early Christian women, see Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality,” 285–290; cf. Tulloch, “Art and Archaeology as a Historical Resource for the Study of Women in Early Christianity,” 277–304.

⁵⁴ Some have proposed that the style of the veil may be based on the Jewish prayer shawl (*tallit gadol*) or the Vestal virgins’ *suffibulum*, which was said to be short and white with a purple border. The *suffibulum*, however, was held in place with a *fibula*, not seen on the *Donna Velata*. The *tallit gadol* might not have developed into its familiar modern form by the third century CE, and in any case was not required of women according to the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Kiddushin* 29a.

a distinctive veil. She is not a mere symbol, but a representation of a particular woman, portrayed as an important lady of Christian piety who now, in death, resides in heavenly peace.⁵⁵

What more can be said about the portrait is a much-debated and as yet unresolved question, much of it hinging on the identification of the two side vignettes and their relationship to the central portrait. Since the *Donna Velata*'s facial characteristics are shared with the seated woman at right and (less clearly) the shorter female with the scroll at left, various proposals have interpreted one or both as representations of the same woman in different moments from her life. An excursus reviewing previously proposed interpretations will clarify how the fresco can be identified as a family group portrait containing a depiction of Christian spouses. The table below overviews the discussion to follow:

<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Left vignette</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>Right vignette</i>
Wilpert	Ceremonial veiling of a virgin	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Mary and infant Jesus
Mitius	Ceremonial nuptial veiling	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Deceased as mother with child
Février	Scene of education	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Deceased as mother with child
Dagens	Bishop's instruction before nuptial veiling	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Deceased as mother with child
Denzey	Deceased as reader	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Deceased as mother with child
Ellison	Deceased father/husband, daughter, and attendant in a teaching scene	Deceased as <i>orant</i>	Deceased mother/wife with child

Table 1. Interpretations of the *Donna Velata* fresco in the Priscilla catacomb.⁵⁶

A view proposed by Josef Wilpert and held for generations maintained that the scene on the left depicted the woman when young, on the occasion of her consecration and veiling as a virgin, a ceremony performed by a bishop (the seated man); the third figure (the shorter young man in the background) represented an attendant (perhaps a deacon) holding the white veil which would be given to the maiden as

⁵⁵ Flocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 106, 108 (fig. 123); Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" 120, states that even in the attitude of the *orant*, the individualization of the traits of the deceased marks the beginning of true Christian portraiture. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes du Ier au XIe siècles*, 122; Theodor Klauser argued that the *orant* symbolized *pietas*; Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 11–12, 75, observed that in Christian art the *orant* became a preferred means of portraying the deceased and could be individualized by such means as costume; A. M. Giuntella, "Orans," in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino, trans. Adrian Walford (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2:615: "When the artist endows the [*orant*] image with individual elements (name, facial characteristics, age, etc.), he fixes in the portrait of the deceased the general characteristics of the type," and the image therefore comes "to represent the deceased in heavenly peace."

⁵⁶ This table expands upon that in Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" 122.

part of the ceremony.⁵⁷ In this interpretation the large central portrait of the *Donna Velata* represents the adult, mature virgin, remembered by fellow Christians for her piety and life of devotion.

One of the problems with this view is that the maternal scene to the right would seem incongruous with the portrayal of a virgin. The explanation that the mother and child are the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, serving as a role model for the young virgin, has not been persuasive. The image lacks elements used in later Madonna images, such as the star, the magi, and a pointing prophet; it more plausibly represents the deceased in her role as a mother.⁵⁸ A greater problem is that a rite of consecrating virgins in a veiling ceremony performed by a bishop is not attested in the third century. Tertullian and Cyprian both wrote about the proper attire for virgins, Tertullian specifically discussing the veil as a marker of modesty, but neither mentioned a ceremonial veiling.⁵⁹ It is not until the time of Ambrose, a century after the Priscilla catacomb fresco, that there is textual reference to a rite of veiling virgins, and Ambrose himself “seems to have been a prime mover behind the practice.”⁶⁰ Ambrose described a ceremony that took place at an altar, with the imposition of the bishop’s right hand upon the virgin’s head in addition to the presentation of a consecrated veil.⁶¹ There is no altar in the supposed veiling scene in the Priscilla catacomb, and no imposition of hands on the female’s head. Furthermore, it is not clear that the smaller male in the background is, in fact, holding a veil. Wilpert’s 1903 watercolor turned the obscure swath of white to the right of the reading female into a clearly-defined veil, but A. P. Fevrier critiqued this as untrue, tendentious, and desperate; on close examination, Fevrier observed, the white blur appeared to be simply the young man’s tunic whose lower part could be seen to have the same curved shape as the tunic of the young woman in front of him. Moreover, if the white paint had been meant to

⁵⁷ Josef Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1903) I.203–209; du Bourguet, *Early Christian Painting*, 69; James Stevenson, *The Catacombs: Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), 88.

⁵⁸ See critiques in Dagens, “A propos du cubiculum de la ‘velatio,’” *passim*; Fevrier, “Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille,” 304–305.

⁵⁹ Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis*; Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*.

⁶⁰ Hunter, “Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy,” 461; Dagens, “A propos du cubiculum de la ‘velatio,’” 127; Fevrier, “Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille,” 304–305.

⁶¹ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, I.7.65.

represent a veil, this would mean that a principal element of the scene, the one that gives it meaning, was rendered vaguely, half-concealed, and in the background.⁶²

Another interpretation holds that the scene on the left depicts the woman's marriage. Otto Mitius enthusiastically dubbed it "the oldest wedding representation of Christian art."⁶³ The seated man is, again, an officiating bishop, while the young man in the background is the woman's betrothed husband, and the young woman reads from the *tabulae nuptiales* listing duties of the married, about to be veiled as part of a wedding ceremony.⁶⁴ The scene on the right shows the woman later, as a mother, holding her child. This "marriage and maternity" framing would present the *Donna Velata* at center as a pious and respected *matrona*.⁶⁵

The weakness of this interpretation lies in the implausibility that the left scene is a wedding. As discussed in Chapter 2, artists in the third century had clear, established visual vocabulary for representing marriage, posing husband and wife standing in the *dextrarum iunctio* or as frontal portrait busts in which the wife appears behind the husband's right shoulder.⁶⁶ The husband, not the wife, typically held the scroll, which was rolled. An officiator, if present, would stand between the bride and groom, rather than off to one side. If this vignette was a marriage scene, it is unclear, in light of established conventions, why the "husband" would be behind and smaller than the "wife," why the "wife" would be holding and reading an unfurled scroll, and why the "bishop" would place his hand on the wife's shoulder.⁶⁷ In Roman custom, the groom was typically ten to fifteen years older than the bride, who was usually in her mid or early teens; wedding scenes often portray a groom bearded and slightly

⁶² Février, "Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille," 303–304; Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, Taf. 79. The dark paint to the right of the white swath seems like it could be the edge of another high-backed chair; the male figure might be seated.

⁶³ Otto Mitius, *Ein Familienbild aus der Priscillakatakombe mit der ältesten Hochzeitsdarstellung der christlichen Kunst* (Freiburg and Leipzig: Mohr, 1895) (my trans.); Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" agreed with Mitius's interpretation.

⁶⁴ Mitius, *Ein Familienbild aus der Priscillakatakombe*; Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" 119–129; Flocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 106; see also Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 16, regarding veiling as "one of the most basic elements of a Roman wedding."

⁶⁵ Flocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 106.

⁶⁶ Seen also in *clipeus* portraits on sarcophagi: Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 153.

⁶⁷ See a similar argument in Denzey, *The Bone-Gatherers*, 78–79.

taller than the bride, not young, shorter, and in the background (fig. 15, fig. 58).⁶⁸ The interpretation of the scene as a nuptial veiling, like Wilpert's "veiling of a virgin" hypothesis, suffers from the obscure and partially concealed rendering of the blur he identified as a veil—the element most crucial to the scene's recognizability. And once again, the earliest unambiguous evidence for a nuptial blessing or veiling performed by a bishop dates no earlier than the fourth century. It is not at all certain, therefore, that wedding ceremonies at which a bishop presided would have been familiar sights to Roman Christians living at the time the *velatio* fresco was painted, or that this iconography would have communicated "marriage" to the third-century viewer.⁶⁹

On the basis of comparative iconography, P. A. Février interpreted the left vignette as a teaching scene alluding to the intellectual life, but did not identify the bearded teacher or sufficiently discuss the scene's relationship to the other two scenes. Claude Dagens was sufficiently persuaded by Février's "intellectual life" argument that he modified Mitius's interpretation of the scene as a nuptial veiling, instead identifying it as *instruction given immediately before* the nuptial veiling. He critiqued Février's neglect of the overall program, however, and consequently Février's insights on the left vignette have not received the consideration they merit.⁷⁰

More recently, though, Nicola Denzey proposed an interpretation that viewed the vignette to the left as a reading scene rather than a wedding scene. Denzey argues for seeing the *Donna Velata* in terms

⁶⁸ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 399–400.

⁶⁹ Beverly Berg, "Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of via Latina," *Vigiliae Christianae* 48.3 (1994), 233, note 20, agrees with the interpretation of the left scene as the woman's wedding, while admitting that the scene "is not modeled on the *dextrarum iunctio* prototype." She does not explain how a viewer could have identified the scene as a wedding. Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" argued for Mitius's *velatio nuptialis* interpretation, and Fiocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 106, n. 160, cites Dagens as the main source on the fresco. Dagens's argument, however, contains numerous fallacies and weaknesses. Against the objection that the scene at left does not use the iconography of marriage, Dagens protests that this ignores the artist's originality (p. 126)—a fallacy of begging the question (and circular reasoning): he proposes that the scene is the first and only early Christian representation of a nuptial veiling, and then points to the artist's originality as evidence. The argument for innovation of a new iconography of nuptial veiling also fails to account for how the viewer was to recognize this significance in the scene; as Février noted, the white blur Wilpert identified as a "veil," ostensibly the image that would give the scene its meaning, is rendered so vaguely and so far in the background as to make this interpretation implausible: Février, "Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille," 304–305. On the lack of third-century evidence of nuptial veiling ceremonies, Dagens states that the artist "preceded, unconsciously, the eventual development of the Christian liturgy of marriage" (p. 126, my trans.). The scene, he claims, "reflects the life of the Christian community as it was practiced, before any legal codification or any liturgical formulation" (p. 127, my trans.) — again begging the question, proposing that the art reflects practice that predated texts and liturgies, then using the art as evidence of practice that predated texts and liturgies.

⁷⁰ Février, "Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille: deux scènes relatives à la vie intellectuelle," 306, "scène d'enseignement"; Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" 128–129.

of her activity rather than her male-defined roles. The three scenes “feature her in three different life moments, or as three significant personae.” To the right, the *Donna Velata* as a mother, with no husband present, “is a clue that her *maternal* status was valued more highly than her *uxorial* status.” The scene to the left “depicts her as the sole woman in the company of two men, where she is the center of the action.” It may represent her catechetical instruction, telling the viewer “not that she is married, but that *she can read*, and that her act of public reading was even endorsed by a bishop at a moment in her life she found significant enough to record on the walls of her grave.”⁷¹ Unlike the woman on the sarcophagus of Sta. Maria Antiqua, who prays while her husband-philosopher reads from a scroll, the *Donna Velata* exemplifies both activities herself. She is a portrait of an intellectual Christian *matrona* who may be seen within the tradition of other notable, educated Christian women like Melania the elder and Jerome’s companions Paula and her daughter Eustochium.

None of the foregoing interpretations deal with some further details that seem significant. There are key similarities between the seated man on the left and the seated woman on the right that suggest a relationship between the two. Both figures sit in identical high-backed chairs turned toward the viewer’s right. The woman at right, however, turns her gaze to the left, as if looking back toward the man. There is arguably a visual connection between the two. Both wear a white *palla* decorated with two vertical stripes down the front.⁷² Interpreters have assumed that the man must be a bishop, but what if we are seeing the representation of a husband according to the bearded philosopher-type popular in the third century? Could the seated man and woman be husband and wife, portrayed in scenes of their domestic life?⁷³ Could their age difference reflect Roman practice and iconographic convention? Could their visual similarities suggest the idealized marital parity often seen in Roman funerary art and inscriptions?⁷⁴

⁷¹ Denzey, *The Bone-Gatherers*, 87, 84–85.

⁷² Likely typical of garments worn by upper class Romans in the late third century; this type of dalmatic can be seen, for example, in funerary portraits of women from Roman Egypt: Susan Walker, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Routledge, 2000), 25, 36.

⁷³ I am indebted to Professor Robin M. Jensen for first suggesting to me that the fresco might portray a family. The rest of the argument is mine.

⁷⁴ In addition to the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina discussed above, there is, for example, the epitaph of the freedwoman Furia Spes for her husband Sempronius Firmus: “as a boy and girl we were joined equally in love,” CIL 6.18817; and the epitaph

Re-imagining the two seated figures in this way, one may identify the fresco's form as a variation of the Lycian motif in which a wife and a bearded husband sit at right and left sides of a scene (figs. 45, 49). As discussed above, this motif was attractive to the owners of the Via Salaria sarcophagus, who seem to have employed it in a portrait of their family, and who were contemporaries of those who commissioned the *Donna Velata* cubiculum fresco. The painting would also represent the continuation of a tradition seen in earlier biographical sarcophagi, such as the Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, in which a wife and husband are shown seated at either side of a relief, engaged in the tasks of their respective spheres of activity, including family life (fig. 59).⁷⁵

In the *Donna Velata* fresco's left vignette, the right hand of the seated man rests on or near the right shoulder of the female who is reading from the scroll. She resembles the seated woman at right, but is more diminutive. Is she their daughter, and is the shorter male behind her a younger brother or perhaps a slave, attendant, or fellow student? If so, the girl's act of reading in the presence of her father would seem to be a scene of instruction within the household context. The man, bearded and seated like a philosopher, is a father shown in the act of teaching; his daughter is learning to read.

Several comparable images support this interpretation, foremost among them the strikingly similar reading scene that Février pointed to on an early third-century child's sarcophagus in the Museo delle Terme in Rome (fig. 60).⁷⁶ Here a child reads from an open scroll as he stands in front of a bearded, seated man, who rests his right hand on the child's shoulder in a gesture implying guidance. Another figure stands in the background, perhaps signifying an attendant, fellow student, or other onlooker. The scene also bears some notable similarities to the reading scene in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii (fig. 61). Once more one sees an adult (a woman in this case) seated behind a child who stands and reads from an unfurled scroll, while the adult's right hand rests upon the child's right shoulder, again

of S. Petronius Probus mentioning that his wife, Proba, has solace "that the urn unites them as equals" and that she is "worthy of the same tomb," CIL 6.1756.

⁷⁵ See further discussion of this relief in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁷⁶ Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 535; Rita Amedick, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben: Vita Privata, Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs I, 4* (Berlin: Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut, 1991), 150, no. 177, Pl. 74.3; discussed as comparandum with the Priscilla catacomb fresco in Février, "Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille," 305.

suggesting assistance and help from an older, wiser authority figure.⁷⁷ A reading scene on the lid of the Portonaccio battle sarcophagus similarly depicts a standing child (a girl in this case) who is reading with Muse-like adult attendants beside and behind her (fig. 62). The most prominent adult figure, to the girl's right, is a seated woman who leans forward, resting her elbow on the girl's shoulder, and looking over the girl's shoulder to follow the reading and provide help as needed. Janet Huskinson interprets this reading scene as a depiction of "the girlhood of the woman who is represented as both wife and mother elsewhere on this lid."⁷⁸ However, it is possible that the scene depicts the instruction of the woman's daughter, taking place at home and thus under the woman's direction, within her domestic domain as represented on the left side of the lid.⁷⁹

The high-backed chairs in the Priscilla catacomb fresco are also elements found in scenes of teaching, learning, and reading in Roman relief sculpture. For example, a late second/early third-century funerary relief in the Capitoline Museum in Rome depicts a bearded, robed man sitting in a high-backed chair teaching two young men, who read from scrolls as they sit in similar chairs to either side of their teacher (fig. 63).⁸⁰

It seems doubtful that the *Donna Velata* fresco's reading scene could be an illustration of catechetical instruction by a bishop. The best literary source for catechesis in third-century Rome, the *Apostolic Tradition* attributed to Hippolytus, provides some basis for evaluating that interpretation.⁸¹

While the section of this text describing preparations for baptism (16–20) does indicate that the catechumenate was "a well-developed institution at Rome in the early third century," its description of

⁷⁷ Linda Fierz-David and Nor Hall, *Dreaming in Red: The Women's Dionysian Initiation Chamber in Pompeii* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2005), 40–42: the scene is understood by many as the beginning of an initiation into a Dionysian mystery; the naked boy, representing Dionysus as a child, reads from the myth with the guidance of a priestess; cf. Elaine K. Gazda, ed., *The Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii: Ancient Ritual, Modern Muse* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology and the University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2000), 1.

⁷⁸ Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 17.

⁷⁹ See discussion in Chapter 4.

⁸⁰ In the fourth century, high-backed chairs would be used in sarcophagus reliefs depicting esteemed figures like Mary holding the Christ child, or of God the Father; e.g., on the Arles "trinity" sarcophagus, Rep. III, no. 38.

⁸¹ Here I disagree with Dagens, "A propos du cubiculum de la 'velatio,'" 125, who suggests that one could appeal to the *Apostolic Tradition* to support the interpretation of the scene as catechesis by a bishop, "provided one does not look too precisely for the exact moment of the ceremony that the artist wanted to suggest" (my trans.). Dagens himself acknowledges the weakness of this approach a few lines later in noting that supporting evidence from the *Apostolic Tradition* would not be clear, and that if the artist had wanted to allude to baptismal catechesis there was already baptismal iconography in use. I propose that the description of catechesis in the *Apostolic Tradition* can actually be used as evidence *against* an interpretation of the scene as pre-/post-baptismal instruction.

catechesis does not harmonize well with the painting in the *Donna Velata* cubiculum.⁸² It instructs women to cover their heads with a *pallium*, specifying that women are not to use a separate piece of linen, which is not a proper veil.⁸³ It describes catechumens hearing the word, yet does not mention them reading the word; rather, when reading is mentioned, it is the bishop and those assisting him who are to read and give instructions to soon-to-be initiates during the all-night baptismal vigil.⁸⁴ Before the final stages of baptismal preparation, instruction and imposition of hands could be performed by a layperson as well as by clergy; other preparatory activities include catechumens praying by themselves, being questioned and examined regarding their lives, daily exorcisms by laying on hands, and a final exorcism by the bishop.⁸⁵ There is no reference to catechumens reading, or the bishop imposing hands during a reading. As Everett Ferguson notes, “Doctrinal instruction in this period took the form of delivering the creed to the new convert, who memorized it and repeated it before baptism.”⁸⁶ One gets the impression of a process of oral instruction and memorization, but not necessarily catechumens performing public readings from texts.⁸⁷

It seems that third-century Roman viewers of the *Donna Velata* fresco’s reading scene would have been less likely to identify it as instruction by a bishop than as a familiar scene of a father teaching his child—for such images were well-known, and were often part of compositions in which the father and the mother appeared opposite each other, engaged in their respective activities of child-rearing. Many biographical scenes in Roman art, as Janet Huskinson observes, “represent the parents’ relationship with their child in terms of a balanced contribution.... Their imagery can show mother and father playing different but complementary roles in the social development of their child.”⁸⁸ Huskinson presents the example of the mid-second-century sarcophagus of a young boy, Marcus Cornelius Statius, in the Louvre

⁸² Everett Ferguson, “Catechesis, Catechuminate,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 224.

⁸³ Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica* 18.5.

⁸⁴ Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica* 16.1, 2, 4; 17.1; 20.9.

⁸⁵ Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica* 19.1; 18–20.

⁸⁶ Ferguson, “Catechesis,” 224.

⁸⁷ A later passage encourages Christians to read from a holy book at home, but the passage is addressed not to catechumens but to mature, instructed, and literate Christians; *Traditio apostolica* 41:4.

⁸⁸ Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 17–18.

(fig. 64).⁸⁹ Framing the relief at left and right are depictions of the boy's mother and bearded father seated, facing inward, in high-backed chairs. At far left the mother sits in one such chair nursing her son as an infant while the father stands watching. Just to the right of this scene, the father is shown again holding his young son in his arms. At center, the boy, as a youth, rides in a toy chariot drawn by a goat. To the right of this, the boy stands, holding a scroll and making a speaking gesture as he practices oratory in front of his seated father. "The clear implication," Huskinson states, "is that each parent has a crucial part in the child's formation. The mother nurtures him with her own milk, while the father presides over key moments in his education." This "highly idealizing image ... repeats many of the themes articulated in contemporary written texts about parents with their respective but complementary roles, described by Seneca *On Providence* 2.5 in terms of the father's firm hand and the mother's soft cuddles."⁹⁰ The Statius sarcophagus bears remarkable commonalities with the *Donna Velata* fresco: a nursing mother and a bearded, teaching father seated at either side of a composition depicting activities of family life, which include a child holding a scroll.

Taken together in their third-century context, the three scenes in the *Donna Velata* fresco appear to represent a family group. The portraits of other family members in addition to the veiled woman—the father and the daughter (or children)—likely memorialize individuals also buried within the cubiculum (in the niches to the left and right). Such rooms were typically used for burials of well-to-do families. In this respect the fresco anticipates later family portraits like the painting of the Teotecnus family in the catacomb of San Gennaro in Naples: a veiled woman, a bearded man, and their daughter between them are depicted as *orant* figures beneath a floating crown (fig. 65).⁹¹ Here again the viewer encounters the

⁸⁹ Janet Huskinson, *Roman Children's Sarcophagi: Their Decoration and its Social Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 22, no. 1.23, Plate II.1.

⁹⁰ Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 18; cf. Ausonius, *Parentalia* 5.9–10, who described his early childhood spent at "the cradle and my mother's soft breasts"; cited in Evans-Grubbs, "Marriage and Family Relationships in the Late Roman West," 203.

⁹¹ Umberto M. Fasola, *Le catacombe di S. Gennaro a Capodimonte* (Rome: Editalia, 1975), 73–74: "Arcosolio della famiglia di Teotecno, dopo il recente restauro... tutta la famigliola, riunita nella vita eterna" (Arcosolium of Teotecnus family, after the recent restoration... the whole little family, reunited in eternal life [my translation]); 96: dated to the late fifth/early sixth century. Inscriptions identify the woman at left as Hilaritas, the man at right as Teotecnus, and their daughter between them as Nonnosia. The fresco is included as a *comparandum* to gold glass family portraits in Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 130, pl. 109, though it is misidentified as 3rd century; Mark Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared

representation of a family group, with the symmetry of the wife/mother and husband/father at either side, posed beneath symbolic reference to a blessed afterlife.

If this interpretation of the Priscilla catacomb fresco is correct, then the large, central portrait of the *Donna Velata* gives special honor to the *mater familias*, inviting the viewer to wonder about the important role she was remembered to have held within her household. Perhaps she was widowed, led the family in piety in the years that followed, and was memorialized by her children, other relatives, or members of the community.⁹² Or perhaps she died before her husband, who commissioned the painting to remember her greatness as an individual and within their household. Whatever the case, one may see her portrait presenting her, even in death, reaching toward heaven, praying over her family.

Her family's portrait, in turn, takes a form characteristic of third-century spousal representation, in which married couples depicted themselves in scenes of family life, making use of figure types drawn from the intellectual sphere. If the seated woman and man do represent the *Donna Velata* and her husband, then the composition as a whole commemorates a family group in which the wife and husband valued literacy, piety, and parental roles, and wished to be remembered in association with those ideas.

An Ascetic Form of Marriage?

Philosopher-type spousal portraits raise the question of whether, or to what extent, this style of representation signaled an ascetic form of marriage. In the Greek and Roman world, philosophy was “not simply the pursuit of wisdom and the development of various intellectual notions about reality,” but “also a way of life, a manner of living that was characterized by the pursuit of truth..., and a mode of thinking and acting in accordance with certain convictions about cosmic and human nature.”⁹³ The Greek word

Tombs?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.1 (1997): 37–59, clarifies that the catacomb of San Gennaro began as a 3rd century hypogeum that was later expanded into a Christian catacomb.

⁹² Widows comprised an order of women in church life by the third century, had to be well-regarded for good deeds such as having raised their children well, and one of their main activities was to pray for the church: 1 Timothy 5:9–16; *Traditio apostolica* 10, 23; *Didascalia Apostolorum* 15; A. Hamman, “Widows,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Cambridge and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2:877.

⁹³ John T. Fitzgerald, “Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools,” in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 137; cf. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 25.

haeresis was used in a non-pejorative sense to designate a sect or philosophical “school.” Josephus and the New Testament book of Acts use the term to refer to Jewish sects like the Pharisees and Sadducees, and Acts indicates that outsiders also applied it to Christians.⁹⁴ *Haeresis* derived from the verb *haireomai*, “to choose,” and “thus called attention to the choice that people voluntarily made in regard to which of the competing principles and doctrines (*dogmata*) they preferred and which of the distinctive ways of life they elected to lead.”⁹⁵ Practices of various philosophical schools included forms of ascetic behavior; the Pythagoreans, for example, did not eat meat.⁹⁶ The philosopher was typically a figure “who denied himself the ties of matrimony and procreation,”⁹⁷ though first-century Stoic Musonius Rufus taught that marriage was compatible with philosophy.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Musonius, like his fellow Stoic Epictetus, advocated forms of *askēsis*, Musonius teaching that sexual intercourse was proper only in marriage and only for the procreation of children.⁹⁹ This philosophically motivated sexual restraint in marriage was also a common theme in Hellenistic Jewish literature,¹⁰⁰ and among early Christian writers from the second century forward, including Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Minucius Felix, and Augustine.¹⁰¹ In the fourth century, Christians like Basil of Caesarea understood the “philosophical life” as “a disciplined way of life in accordance with the gospel that involved some degree of renunciation of sex, family, homeland, and social status in order to cultivate wholehearted devotion to Christ. Philosophy meant a lifelong search for God, a continual ongoing struggle and ‘training’ (*askēsis* in Greek, whence ‘asceticism’).”¹⁰²

The possibility of a philosophical asceticism in marriage is intriguing to consider in light of the contrast between the amorous forms of spousal representation on second- and third-century mythological

⁹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.169; *J.W.* 2.119; Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5; applied to Christians: Acts 24:5, 14; 28:2; discussed in Fitzgerald, “Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools,” 138–139.

⁹⁵ Fitzgerald, “Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools,” 138.

⁹⁶ Fitzgerald, “Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools,” 137.

⁹⁷ Edwards, “Early Christianity and Philosophy,” 38.

⁹⁸ Musonius Rufus, “Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?” Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” 90–97.

⁹⁹ Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 14, 17.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Tobit 8:7 “I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity”; Philo and Josephus on the Therapeutae and the Essenes discussed in Brown, *Body and Society*, 38–39.

¹⁰¹ Ignatius, *Epistula ad Polycarpum*, 5; Justin Martyr, *Apologia I* 29; Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis* 33; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10.91, 95–96; *Stromata* 3.7.58; 3.12.79; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 31.5; Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1.5.4; 1.16.14; 1.17.15.

¹⁰² Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 25.

sarcophagi, or the relatively modest but affectionate pose of spouses typical of *clipeus* portraits, and the much more restrained and “apathetic” learned figures of the mid-third century and later.¹⁰³ Stine Birk infers, “Scenes of Muses and philosophers, and Lycian compositions, stand for the institution of marriage and a relatively asexual relationship.”¹⁰⁴ Björn Ewald, too, proposes that philosophical themes in portraiture are linked to *enkrateia*, or self-control, and indicate a “valued control of the emotions and mastery of death.” The philosophical theme reflects “an aristocratic ideal of self-control, encompassing all aspects of life (from public performance to dietetics and sexual behaviour), and revealing a deep need for orientation and spiritual guidance.”¹⁰⁵ Images of learned spouses indicate “a de-sensualization and de-eroticization, a beginning problematization of the body, a redefinition of the relationship with one’s spouse, and a reduction of the range of emotional expression.”¹⁰⁶

One question arising from this is whether intellectual-type spousal portraits might represent continent marriages. Sexual abstinence within marriage is attested in early Christianity as early as the first century in Paul’s Corinthian correspondence, though the apostle’s instructions are ambiguous. In response to an inquiry about practicing sexual renunciation, Paul initially counsels against withholding conjugal rights in marriage except for temporary, mutually agreed-upon periods of prayer (1 Cor 7:1–5). However, he goes on to advise the unmarried and widows to remain celibate, discusses the advantages of the single state given the brief time left before the world’s end, and instructs, “let even those who have wives be as though they had none” (1 Cor 7:28). For later writers like Tatian, Tertullian, and Origen, Paul’s “suggestion in 1 Corinthians 7:5 that temporary sexual abstinence should be allowed for prayer was taken as a *demand* for temporary abstinence in order to make prayer possible.”¹⁰⁷

In the second and third centuries, as some Christian groups advocated complete celibacy and sexual renunciation (for example, in the Apocryphal Acts), forms of continent marriage were commended in a number of traditionally orthodox sources, including the so-called *Sentences of Sextus*, the *Shepherd*

¹⁰³ Ewald, “Paradigms of Personhood,” 62.

¹⁰⁴ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 152.

¹⁰⁵ Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 568.

¹⁰⁶ Ewald, “Paradigms of Personhood,” 58.

¹⁰⁷ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 126.

of Hermas (who was told by an angel to treat his wife as a “sister”), Clement of Alexandria (who praised continent marriage as the earthly realization of the angelic, resurrected state), the *Symposium* of Methodius, and Pseudo-Cyprian’s *The Hundredfold, Sixtyfold, and Thirtyfold Reward*.¹⁰⁸ The late fourth century brought forth illustrious examples of continent marriages, including that of Gorgonia, hailed in a funerary oration by her brother Gregory of Nazianzus for combining celibacy and marriage, Melania the Younger and her husband Pinian, Lucinius and his wife Theodora who received a letter of praise from Jerome, and Paulinus and his wife Therasia, who famously renounced their wealth and conjugal rights to pursue an ascetic and philanthropic lifestyle at Nola.¹⁰⁹ In the context of these developments, married Christians seeking a form of self-representation that would reflect their ascetic commitments might have opted for philosopher-type forms of portraiture.

Alternatively, “learned figure” spousal portraits may represent an application of *selected* ascetic values to marriage, without necessarily implying a practice of full sexual renunciation. As discussed above, Stoics and early Christian writers advocated sexual restraint in marriage, and many other Christian practices also resonated with the philosophical aspirations of self-control and learning—prayer, fasting, catechesis, study, worship, obedience to biblical commandments. Christian spouses might have seen intellectual-type representation simply as a way to characterize themselves as individuals who lived in harmony with such philosophical ideals. Portraying themselves as learned figures also allowed them to present their marriages as harmonious relationships defined by a shared knowledge and discipline. This alternative better accords with the evidence of the Via Salaria sarcophagus and the Priscilla catacomb

¹⁰⁸ *Sententiae Sexti*, 230a, in Henry Chadwick, ed. and trans., *The Sentences of Sextus* (Cambridge, 1959); Hermas, *Hermae Pastor*, vis. 2.2.3, LCL 2, 18–19; Jean Paul Broudhoux, *Mariage et famille chez Clément d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970), 105–106, 109; Methodius, *Symposium e peri hagneias* 9.4; all these cited in Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 40; *De centesima, sexagesima, tricesima*, ed. Adalbert-Gautier Hamman, *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Garnier, 1958), 53–67; discussed in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 114–115.

¹⁰⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem sororis suae Gorgoniae, Orationes* 8, c. 8, PG 35, 798; Jerome, *Epistulae* 75; Bertrand Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 313–604*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 122–125; Geoffrey S. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 91–97; Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 37, 51–52; Brown, *Body and Society*, 403; Evans-Grubbs, “Marriage and Family Relationships in the Late Roman West,” 206–213, surveys the range of “alternative households” formed by late antique Christians in the pursuit of asceticism.

Donna Velata fresco, which arguably depict married couples as part of family groups including their children.

Learned spouses in family groups may even represent a form of visual rhetoric *against* ascetic extremes—a way for educated, well-to-do, married Christians to announce, “We can be philosophical and also be married; the religious life is not incompatible with family life.” Such messaging would have followed in the tradition of Musonius, who wrote that marriage was not an impediment to philosophy, but was actually “in accord with nature” and thus completely in harmony with philosophical pursuits, for “the philosopher is indeed the teacher and leader of men in all the things which are appropriate for men according to nature.”¹¹⁰ While the Christian “philosophical” way of life meant, for one like Basil of Caesarea, the renunciation of sex, marriage, and family, the use of philosophical types to portray married men and women suggests that other Christians believed intellectual values could be held without complete renunciation of sexuality, marriage, family, or wealth. There was a spectrum of renunciation in the pursuit of Christian “philosophy.”

Without inscriptions or literary evidence to clarify the intentions of those who produced depictions of learned spouses, the question of whether those representations imply ascetic forms of marriage must remain open. More certain is the inference that such portrayals emphasize learning, and characterize marriage more in terms of shared intellectual life and with greater spousal parity than the *dextrarum iunctio* and *clipeus* portraits.

Double Portraits in *Clipei*

***Clipeus* Double Portraits in Roman Art**

As mythological portraiture declined in the late second/early third century, other forms of representation rose in popularity, particularly the older custom of placing portrait busts within a circular

¹¹⁰ Musonius Rufus, frag. 14, trans. Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” 93; see also the discussion in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 28–29.

frame (*clipeus*). As used here, *clipeus* refers generically to “anything round with one or more images,” including both the simple, circular tondo and the more elaborate seashell frame, though some art historians distinguish between these two types.¹¹¹ These portraits are “the least-discussed category of portraits on sarcophagi in the scholarly literature,” Jaś Elsner has recently commented.¹¹² Paul Zanker and Björn Ewald interpret the rise of *clipeus* portraiture on sarcophagi as a “return to status-linked portraits” signaling that “the ‘private’ sphere—a harmonious household, piety, and intellectual pretensions—now had a decisive part in the praise of the dead.” The trend, they argue, might have been driven by a wish to be seen as upper class, by a need for identifiable, self-contained tombs as sarcophagi were placed in larger chambers rather than in family *hypogea*, or, more likely, by a desire to return to older means of remembering the dead through portraits—a memorialization that did not necessarily require exact likenesses of the portrayed individuals.¹¹³ Verity Platt argues that *clipeus* portraits drew attention to self-representation to a greater degree than smaller-scale figures; *clipei* and architectural frames were strategic means of “signposting the sarcophagus’s representational potential.”¹¹⁴ If Ian Archibald Richmond was correct in observing that “the abstraction of the *imago* and its concentration into a *tondo* or mirror-like form, is in effect a method of reflecting the individual soul,” then possibly the *clipeus* portrait in funerary art expressed, better than other forms of representation, an interest in the endurance of the soul in an afterlife (see Chapter 5).¹¹⁵ On this subject, Janet H. Tulloch remarks, “The *imago clipeata* was used almost exclusively for the dead in Roman funerary monuments as it was associated with the Greek idea of apotheosis (the attainment of deification) upon the death of a hero.”¹¹⁶

The depiction of married couples in *clipei* followed a conventional type: the wife appeared on the left, behind the husband at right; the wife’s right hand rested on her husband’s right arm or chest, and her

¹¹¹ Rudolf Winkes, “Clipeata imago: Eine Bemerkung zu Kopf und Büste,” in *Antike Porträts: Zum Gedächtnis von Helga von Heintze*, ed. Hans von Steuben (Möhnese: Bibliopolis, 1999), 91; cited in Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 233; for an example of distinguishing between the two types: the iconographic index in Rep. III, 299, which contains separate entries for *Bildnisclipeus*, *Grabinhaber im Bildnisclipeus* and *Bildnismuschel*, *Grabinhaber in der Bildnismuschel*.

¹¹² Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 322.

¹¹³ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 252–254.

¹¹⁴ Verity Platt, “Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi,” *Res* 61/62 (2012): 224.

¹¹⁵ Ian Archibald Richmond, *Archaeology and the After-life in Pagan and Christian Imagery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 40.

¹¹⁶ Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality,” 546.

left arm lay upon her husband's shoulders, often with her left hand visible on his left shoulder; the husband held a scroll in his left hand and made a speaking gesture with his right (fig. 66).¹¹⁷ The arrangement, Birk notes, "portray[ed] women as the supportive figure to their husbands."¹¹⁸ Reflecting a companionate model of marriage (rather than a "civic duty" or "dynastic" model), it emphasized the virtues of *affectio maritalis* and *concordia*.

At the same time, the *clipeus* portrait reached back to early imperial tradition and could represent "old aristocratic virtues."¹¹⁹ The term *clipeus*, meaning shield or disk, alludes to the portrait's circular frame as well as the historical origins of Roman portraits on actual shields—special honors awarded in triumphs of the Republic to celebrate military victories and victors.¹²⁰ An example of this type is the first century BCE shield portrait of Augustus in the Toledo Museum of Art (fig. 67). The *clipeus* portrait carried associations with courage, heroism, and victory, both in the public sphere and later when it began to be used in private contexts.¹²¹ In the first century BCE *clipei* began appearing in funerary art, and in the first century CE Pliny the Elder described the *clipeata imago* as a type of portrait displayed in atria of private homes.¹²² By the late second century CE tondo portraits were common on sarcophagi, and, Jane Fejfer notes, "remained an important portrait format with heroic associations, for both emperors and private people, well into Late Antiquity."¹²³ Regarding the use of these portraits in funerary art, Barbara E. Borg observes:

When used on tombs and sarcophagi, the *clipei* transfer these ideas of *dignitas* and glory in to the funerary realm. ... Victories, putti, and sea centaurs, the figures most frequently used to present the tondi, also have their firm place in the iconography of victory. As honorific devices with triumphant overtones, *clipei* thus constitute a visual equivalent to a *laudatio* of the deceased.¹²⁴

Shell portraits of couples conveyed somewhat different connotations. The scallop shell's very form included "harmonious qualities"—symmetry, radiating ridges, converging lines—that suited it to the

¹¹⁷ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 152–153.

¹¹⁸ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 152.

¹¹⁹ Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 134.

¹²⁰ Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 233; Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 210; Hugo Brandenburg, "Meerwesensarkophage und Clipeus-Motiv," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 82 (1967): 227–233.

¹²¹ Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 233.

¹²² Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 35, 4–14; Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 233, 235.

¹²³ Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 129, 235.

¹²⁴ Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 210.

depiction of a couple in a pose of marital *concordia*.¹²⁵ This type of frame also dates to the early empire.

A modest first-century CE shell portrait of a couple appears on a cinerary urn in the Carlos Museum in Atlanta (fig. 68), while an example of a larger and higher-relief double-portrait (faces unfinished) is seen on an early third-century sarcophagus, with ichthyocentaurs and Nereids holding up the shell (fig. 69).¹²⁶

The shell portrait (*Bildnismuschel*) derives from the iconographic repertoire of the marine *thiasos*, and as Stine Birk notes “connotes the merry world of sea-monsters and nymphs.”¹²⁷ The shell’s association with the myth of the birth of Aphrodite (Venus) might have given it special attraction as a motif for marital iconography. Janet Huskinson notes that when “the shell in which Venus often appears in Roman art” was used to frame portraits of spouses on sarcophagi, it emphasized the idea of “the continuation of their love.”¹²⁸ On the use of this imagery and the shell for the representation of couples, Zanker and Ewald state:

We are dealing with visions of a world of bliss, where what the sculptors most want to stress is that the couples are in love. The sea with its gods is portrayed as a place of timeless enjoyment. . . . When women were shown in a double portrait, embracing their husband, the parallel to the embracing sea-creatures was certainly deliberate. But this does not exclude the possibility that the viewer’s thoughts could go beyond such specific comparisons and that he could understand the entire image as depicting a symbolic state of bliss, which could be related to the deceased either retrospectively as the image of a life fulfilled, or prospectively, as an expression of hope for a happy existence in the afterlife.¹²⁹

The sea could also connote the realm of death, a place where humans cannot live, where sea monsters carrying Nereids on their backs over the waves might have suggested to viewers “the passage of

¹²⁵ Ingrid Thomas, *The Shell: A World of Decoration and Ornament* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 164.

¹²⁶ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 122, fig. 111; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 283, cat. no. 464. For another example, see Deutsches Archäologisches Institut photo archive image Bestand-Microfiche-D-DAI-ROM-0585_B01.jpg.

¹²⁷ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 70.

¹²⁸ Huskinson, “Reading Identity on Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi,” 90; see three examples catalogued in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 283, cat. nos. 463–465. On the subject of the shell’s gynecological connotations (the Greek word *kteis* had a range of semantic meanings including comb, bivalve scallop shell, and *pudenda muliebria*), Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 9.30; 32.5; thus Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (London: Harvill Press, 1961), 131, noted the shell’s potential “symbolism of birth and of regeneration” when used in funerary art; Erwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Vol. 8 (New York Pantheon Books, 1958), 96–97, 100, similarly saw the shell representing “sexuality and birth” and “a coming into new life,” even “an abbreviated representation of the journey to the other side,” in the latter instance quoting Amelung.

¹²⁹ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 122; see also Fejfer, *Roman Portraits in Context*, 134: shell portraits “evoke the desire for a happy afterlife.” Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 283, catalogues three sarcophagi with couple portraits framed by sea monsters and nymphs, two of the portraits in a shell: nos. 463–465.

the dead over the sea to the West.”¹³⁰ Shells, as containers of life in this realm of death, might have been chosen as portrait frames for more than merely their decorative or classicizing potential.¹³¹ Particularly among Christians, for whom the marine symbolism of the Jonah cycle was so popular (with the sea monster, and the sea itself, representing death, and Jonah’s deliverance prefiguring resurrection), there was potential for patrons and viewers to discern symbolic value in the shell.¹³² For visitors at the tomb, the shell could have hinted that the portrayed couple was still living in a sense, though elsewhere, preserved in the realm of the dead just as the shell holds life inside it beneath the waters. The shell’s hardness and function as a “container” could have suggested a parallel to the marble sarcophagus temporarily housing the deceased’s body until the day when it would rise.

***Clipeus* Double Portraits in Christian Art: “An Emphatic Display of Conjugal Fidelity”**

The circular-framed double-portrait is the most frequently attested form of spousal representation in early Christian art. It was more popular than *dextrarum iunctio* portraits, and rose in use as the *dextrarum iunctio* disappeared from Christian sarcophagi in the early fourth century (before reappearing later in the century), perhaps because it could display marital *concordia* like *dextrarum iunctio* portraits, while simultaneously magnifying personal representation.¹³³ In contrast to a few philosopher-type spousal portraits and about eleven surviving depictions of couples worshipping at Jesus’s feet, the three current volumes of the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* include 43 examples of spousal *clipeus*

¹³⁰ Katharine Shepard, *The Fish-Tailed Monster in Greek and Etruscan Art* (New York: Privately Printed [George Banta Pub. Co.], 1940), 3; see also Thomas, *The Shell*, 165.

¹³¹ David Fontana, *The Secret Language of Symbols: A Visual Key to Symbols and their Meanings* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994), 88, 103: Outwardly, the shell can symbolize the protective and nurturing principle, and inwardly, the “life-force slumbering within the Earth.” Thomas, *The Shell*, 164–165: “The symbolic context of [the scallop shell’s] earliest depictions suggests that at least for the first millennium of its appearance, it retained a meaning related to its mythical connections”; *contra* Sir Mortimer Wheeler, “A Symbol in Ancient Times,” in *The Scallop: Studies of a Shell and its Influence on Humankind*, by Ian Cox (London: “Shell” Transport and Trading Co., 1957), 33–48; Wheeler questions how conscious ancient artists and patrons would have been of a symbolic purpose to the shell, and raises the possibility that after an original symbolic period, the shell evolved to an amuletic device, and finally, in late Roman art, became merely a conventional ornament.

¹³² Everett Ferguson, “Jonah in Early Christian Art: Death, Resurrection, and Immortality,” in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Alious Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 342–353.

¹³³ Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1908; Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 223.

portraits.¹³⁴ In addition, pairs of spousal portrait busts appear on rings, gems, and gold glasses, where gold bands often encircle couples (figs. 25–26). On fourth- and early fifth-century rings (figs. 30–31), busts of husband and wife “formally complement one another within the compositional field they share,” and “should be understood as complementing one another spiritually in the life they share.”¹³⁵

The double-portraits on Christian sarcophagi exhibit a high degree of continuity with the form of their precedents. Husband and wife appear in the same highly idealized pose, emphasizing gendered distinctions in combination with concepts of *affectio* and marital harmony. One difference is that in Christian portraits the wife usually does not reveal a bare shoulder, as seen on some non-Christian sarcophagi (figs. 66, 69). More importantly, images of deceased couples appear more often on Christian sarcophagi than on non-Christian pieces, they are frequently larger in size than their Roman precedents, and they are placed among Christian symbols and Old and New Testament scenes typologically alluding to salvation, divine deliverance, and afterlife.¹³⁶

The relatively large size of Christian *clipeus* portraits can be seen on numerous double-frieze sarcophagi dating to the first third of the fourth century. Often the tondo or shell overflows the top register and intrudes into the lower register (sometimes nearly halfway); the portrayed spouses, by far the largest figures on the panel, command the viewer’s attention (fig. 70).¹³⁷ On the late fourth-century sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, the couple’s tondo portrait fills the entire vertical height of the back panel (fig. 23). Double-portraits on non-Christian sarcophagi, by contrast, are sometimes much less prominent; for example, on a second/third-century relief at Ostia, as well as on the fourth-century seasons

¹³⁴ Not counting every figure holding a scroll as a “philosopher”-type portrait; spousal portraits in *clipei* on sarcophagi: Rep. I, nos. 34, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 87, 112, 187, 188, 239, 244, 385, 435, 625, 650, 681, 689, 778, 782, 812, 962, 1010; Rep. II, nos. 12, 20, 23, 24, 25, 102, 103, 104, 108, 148, 150; Rep. III, nos. 38, 40, 41, 83, 87, 203, 211, 268, 453; additionally, Rep. II no. 229 and Rep. III no. 576 are fragments whose originals might have contained double-portraits. Note: *Repertorium* vols. 4–5 are forthcoming. For couples worshipping at Jesus’s feet, see below.

¹³⁵ Vikan, “Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium,” 148.

¹³⁶ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 223; Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, 55; but cf. Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 108.

¹³⁷ E.g., Rep. I, nos. 39, 40, 42, 43, 44; Rep. II, no. 20.

sarcophagus at Dumbarton Oaks (c. 330–335 CE), portrait busts in the *clipeus* are dwarfed by the surrounding figures of seasonal *genii* (figs. 66, 71).¹³⁸

Despite the size and popularity of double-portraits on Christian sarcophagi, they have often been passed over in sarcophagus scholarship. Catalogs tend to identify the portrayed simply as “the deceased” and describe conventions of dress and hairstyle; closer examinations of sarcophagi have usually focused on the surrounding biblical motifs, even when the couple portraits are the largest, most prominent images in the reliefs. The social and religious significance of this self-representation is only recently beginning to receive serious attention.¹³⁹

Historians have put forth various explanations for the increased size and popularity of tondo portraits in fourth-century Christian art, but the phenomenon is still under discussion. Robert Milburn proposed an aesthetic motivation on the part of sculptors, who “came to realize that a jumbled frieze, however rich in symbolic value, might become obscure and tedious to look at. They therefore emphasized the central tondo ... to such an extent that the busts of the departed, much larger in scale than the other figures, dominate the whole.”¹⁴⁰ But this does not account for why purchasers of sarcophagi (rather than their creators) came to prefer large tondo portraits, nor explain how the tightly-packed reliefs on double-frieze sarcophagi with central portraits were any less “jumbled” than earlier single-frieze monuments.

George M. A. Hanfmann suggested that the large double-portraits might reflect a patron intention to convey certain notions about marriage; they “present an emphatic display of conjugal fidelity” and “may well be a reflection of the concern with stability of marriage and modesty of matrons (*matronalis*

¹³⁸ Re. the season sarcophagus at Dumbarton Oaks: Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*; note also the large representation of Terra/Tellus beneath the *clipeus* on the Ostia sarcophagus; re. its identification, cf. McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 94–106, esp. 97, 100, fig. 118.

¹³⁹ Two recent forays on the subject are Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 316–349 (esp. 322, 333–347); and Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 226–237. For an example of interpreting a Christian sarcophagus while ignoring the context of spousal commemoration, see Jonathan Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 375. This tendency to give attention to other motifs on front panels of sarcophagi, to the exclusion of couple portraits, is seen also in websites that identify biblical vignettes while skipping over the *clipeus*; for example: http://www.rome101.com/Topics/Christian/Magician/pages/Vat31427_0000_Key.htm, Accessed Jan 14, 2016 (Rep. I no. 43); http://www.rome101.com/Topics/Christian/Magician/pages/Vat31535_0000_Skey.htm, Accessed Jan 14, 2016 (Rep. I, no. 44; Rep. II, no. 20); <http://www.christianiconography.info/sicily/sarcAdelphia.html>, Accessed Jan 14, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 70.

pudor) which figures so prominently in Constantine's legislation."¹⁴¹ Hanfmann's proposed explanation reflects a dated view of Constantine's marriage laws; more recent research by Judith Evans-Grubbs has demonstrated that the legislation is better understood as the implementation of existing Roman views that did not radically alter social practice.¹⁴² Nevertheless, Hanfmann's observation of the double-portraits' "emphatic display of conjugal fidelity" is valid. In a recent study, Janet Huskinson draws attention to "the prominence of the married couple" in Christian sarcophagus reliefs, and proposes that these portrayals "attest the enduring importance of commemorating central social relationships" of patrons who were "active and prosperous participants in Roman society." Many of the portraits, she notices, "have an air of confidence."¹⁴³

Guntram Koch observes that one can detect, in the emergence of eye-catching representations of married Christians, the passing of an earlier reluctance to emphasize portrait figures too much in comparison with the biblical narratives in the surrounding frieze.¹⁴⁴ The placement of portraits amid biblical allusions to salvation and deliverance suggests the hopes of the deceased for a blessed afterlife, but personal representation has now assumed a higher priority in the program, with biblical images serving as backdrop.¹⁴⁵ On some double-register sarcophagi the shell framing the couple literally protrudes from the front of the panel, giving the impression that the couple's images have been superimposed upon or suspended above the underlying program of biblical figures (fig. 72).¹⁴⁶

Such arresting prominence would seem to weigh against interpreting the reliefs simply as a marker of Christian identity, a visual statement affiliating the portrayed with the religious community whose biblical tradition is pictured all around the portrait. Thus, while Jaś Elsner has asserted that Christian portraits surrounded by biblical vignettes are "not eulogistic but identity-forming: an assertion

¹⁴¹ Hanfmann, *The Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, 55.

¹⁴² Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*; e.g., though the legislation made divorce somewhat more difficult it did not prevent divorce or adultery from happening. For a discussion of Evans-Grubbs' contribution, see Dixon, "From Ceremonial to Sexualities," 259.

¹⁴³ Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 227.

¹⁴⁴ Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 108: "...scheint, wie man an den erhaltenen Beispielen sehen kann, eine Scheu davor bestanden zu haben, Porträtfiguren innerhalb der Friese zu sehr zu betonen und sie damit gegenüber den biblischen Erzählungen hervorzuheben." Cf. Brown, *Body and Society*, 440: compared to the Christian funerary monuments produced after 500 CE, the great fourth-century marble sarcophagi with their large double-portraits clearly belong to "an earlier, more demonstrative age."

¹⁴⁵ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 10–11; Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 223.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Rep. I, no. 44.

of belief and not praise for the deceased,” there seems to be no compelling not to regard them as both.¹⁴⁷ Why not see the bold double-portraits as the visual laudation of self-assured, elite Roman Christians, for whom marriage was such an integral part of aristocratic identity? The “air of confidence” one sees in these portraits certainly stands in contrast to the way marriage is often portrayed in early Christian literature; patristic writings so valorize celibacy, Carol Harrison remarks, that the subject of marriage and family life “lurks, rather apologetically and shamefacedly, the result of weakness and compromise, in the dark shadow cast by the rather glorious ideal of virginity.”¹⁴⁸ This is hardly the picture one gets from the married Christians themselves.

In addition to announcing Christian identity, visually eulogizing the deceased, and emphatically displaying the merits of harmonious marriage, two additional purposes of encircled double-portraits have been proposed: the possibility that the *clipeus*-type portrait represented women’s perspectives, and the possibility that it represented notions about the afterlife.

A “Woman’s Theme”?

Jutta Dresken-Weiland has argued, based on inscriptions, that sarcophagi bearing portraits of a man and a woman were often meant for the burial of a woman. “This image can be interpreted as a ‘woman[?]s] theme.’ The representation of a couple mirrors the great importance of marriage for women in late antiquity.”¹⁴⁹ In its favor, this interpretation does account for the status concerns of elite Roman women. Michele Renee Salzman observes, “Aristocratic women were as deeply embedded in the status culture as the men. As members of aristocratic families, women were part of an aristocratic man’s social identity; they were ennobled with their husbands, a clear indication of how intimately associated female status was to that of their men.”¹⁵⁰ Thus the emphatic display of marriage in Christian portraiture may represent the perspectives, values, and status-claims of aristocratic Christian women.

¹⁴⁷ Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 341.

¹⁴⁸ Harrison, “The Silent Majority,” 87.

¹⁴⁹ Dresken-Weiland, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.–6. Jahrhunderts*, 211–212; cf. discussion in Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality,” 551; Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 224.

¹⁵⁰ Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 56.

This view also finds some support in the literary evidence of the mid-fourth-century Virgilian cento *De Laudibus Christi* written by the poet Faltonia Betitia Proba (or perhaps her granddaughter Anicia Faltonia Proba).¹⁵¹ Proba, an adult convert to Christianity, extracted lines of verse from Virgil's *Aeneid*, *Georgics*, and *Eclogues*, and rearranged them (with slight modifications) to retell biblical narratives from the Old and New Testaments. Though Proba stands out as one of the rare female authors of late antiquity, she may be fairly representative of the values of educated, aristocratic Romans who converted to Christianity in increasing numbers over the course of the fourth century, and who sought ways to express their new faith while also upholding some traditional institutions. Marriage was one such institution.¹⁵² Two of Proba's translators, Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane F. Hatch, detect a traditionalist theme running throughout the poem:

When we compare Proba's values with those of the fourth-century ascetics . . . , we find an interesting contrast. Far from exalting the ascetic life, there is not a single verse in the 694 lines of Proba's *Cento* which as much as hints that she believed asceticism to be the superior mode of Christian living. Nowhere does she present either Jesus or Mary as a model for the Christian celibate; it is rather Mary's maternity she stresses. In addition, her guarded injunctions concerning wealth . . . distort the words of Jesus to the rich young man so that he is no longer commanded to sell his goods and give the proceeds to the poor. Proba, we think, was merging the value systems of two different worlds: that which upheld the classical Roman virtues of filial devotion, domestic harmony, and family reputation, and that of her newly adopted religion, which counseled more rigorous self-denial. . . . Domestic themes fill her mind. . . : she emphasizes the "marriage" of Adam and Eve and the bliss they enjoyed before their Fall.¹⁵³

In the large and numerous double-portraits of Christian spouses, it may be that one sees visual expressions of the traditional values that infuse Proba's *Cento*, and a degree of resistance to the ascetic ideal.

¹⁵¹ A helpful summary of the authorship issue is included in Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet: The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 20–23; Schottenius Cullhed takes the position that since the evidence against Isidore of Seville's statement of authorship is not conclusive, she refers to the author as Faltonia Betitia Proba for the purposes of discussion, while bearing in mind that "the identification of Proba has been a variable rather than a constant," 23. Cf. discussion of the authorship in Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Asceticism*, 68–69; and in Cooper, *Fall of the Roman Household*, 67–68.

¹⁵² Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 56–57; Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 88–104.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane F. Hatch, *The Golden Bough, the Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 111; see also the similar discussion in Cooper, *Fall of the Roman Household*, 66–67; Cooper, *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), 143–145.

In that light, the shell portrait's popularity on fourth-century Christian sarcophagi may signal more than mere convention, aesthetics, or classicizing.¹⁵⁴ The shell's associations with Venus (and perhaps with amorous love) would seem to stand in some tension with ascetic values—though it must be remembered that the figures in Christian double-portraits are relatively modest and proper in comparison to the portraits that were worked into the earlier mythological sarcophagi.

The Projecta Casket stands in this tradition of spousal representation with Venus imagery, and provides a rare glimpse at the nuptial iconography that might appear on a personal item owned by a Christian woman, and belonging to a domestic context rather than a funerary context. A piece from the Esquiline Treasure, a hoard of silver objects discovered in 1793 on the Esquiline hill in Rome, the Projecta Casket is a silver chest with top and bottom pieces shaped as truncated pyramids, hinged together on one long side. Made around 380 CE, the chest is decorated with *repoussé* reliefs on all its upper surfaces. The top panel features a wreathed tondo portrait held by winged, nude Erotes, depicting a married couple, the husband on the right making a speaking gesture and the wife on the left holding a scroll (fig. 35). The top-facing front rim of the chest bears the inscription *SECVNDE ET PROIECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO* (“Secundus and Projecta, may you [two] live in Christ!”), and is preceded by a *tau-rho* cross from whose arms hang an *alpha* and *omega* (fig. 73). If the inscription is original, it identifies the pair portrayed in the tondo portrait and suggests that the chest might have been a wedding present.¹⁵⁵ Aside from the reference to Christ in the inscription, there is no imagery on the chest that would suggest the Christian identity of its owners.¹⁵⁶ Three of the four trapezoidal panels below the tondo portrait feature mythological marine imagery. On the front, Venus sits in a half-shell held by sea centaurs, while attendant Erotes hold a beauty box and a basket for her as she looks at herself in a large mirror (fig.

¹⁵⁴ Of the 43 spousal *clipeus* portraits found on Christian sarcophagi in the three-volume *Repertorium*, about 40% are shell portraits: Rep. I, nos. 34, 40, 42, 44, 187, 188, 239, 244, 385; Rep. II, nos. 20, 23, 24, 25; Rep. III, nos. 38, 40, 203, 453, and possibly 576 (hypothesized).

¹⁵⁵ Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure*, 32–33, 69; Elsner, “Visualising Women in Late Antique Rome,” 22–36, notes that the inscription might not be original.

¹⁵⁶ Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure*, 69, proposes that Secundus, a member of the pagan *Turcia* gens, had converted to Christianity; Alan Cameron, “The Date and Owners of the Esquiline Treasure,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 89.1 (1985): 135–145 (esp. 143–144) discusses the possibility that Projecta and her family were Christian, while Secundus and his family were still pagan, and the casket, presented to the two of them but meant primarily for Projecta's use, expressed by its inscription a hope for Secundus' eventual conversion.

73). This scene is extended in the lid's two side panels, which feature Nereids riding a *ketos* (left) and hippocamp (right) as they attend to the goddess (figs. 74). The back panel depicts two groups of women approaching Roman baths, the tall woman in the group on the left apparently representing the casket's owner, and the casket itself (or one like it) being carried in the group on the right (fig. 75).

On the lower half of the casket, the front panel directly beneath the image of Venus depicts "Projecta" again, seated and posed like Venus above, and like the goddess flanked by attendants bringing her a beauty box and a mirror (fig. 76). The side and back panels of the base depict additional attendants in procession. The iconographic program focuses on the beautification of "Projecta," through toilette and bathing rituals, in preparation for her wedding to "Secundus," and in imitation of Venus. However, there are also visual contrasts between Venus and "Projecta." The bride is not depicted with a bare shoulder, a subtle allusion to Venus employed in the portraits of some wives (figs. 66, 69); rather, she is completely clothed in the embroidered, full-length drapery of a Roman *matrona*. A modesty and decorum prevails, even if the bath scene, as Elsner argues, alludes to nudity.¹⁵⁷ Visual parallels between the front panels of the lid and base establish a degree of analogy between Venus and "Projecta," but it is measured.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, an additional level of parallels exists between the Venus panel and the double-portrait of Projecta and Secundus on the lid. Each surface is dominated by a circular frame (shell and wreath) held by classical figures connoting amorous bliss (sea centaurs and *erotes*). The portrait of Projecta and Secundus belongs to the broader category of double-portraits that appear in the context of Venus and marine imagery. Additionally, the parallels between "Projecta" and Venus stand within a tradition in which elite Roman women were represented as goddesses, which, as Huskinson states, could "suggest something about the ideals of Roman womanhood, with Venus being the most popular choice of model."¹⁵⁹ With its Christian inscription, underscored by the monogram cross, the Projecta Casket reflects the blending of Christian and elite Roman identity, and like Proba's *cento* indicates the merging of the

¹⁵⁷ Huskinson, "Representing Roman Women on Sarcophagi," 29; Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 200–223.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Elsner, "Visualising Women in Late Antique Rome," 31–32; Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 40–41, fig. 17; Elsner, "Framing the Objects We Study: Three Boxes from Late Roman Italy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 71 (2008): 21–38.

¹⁵⁹ Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 12.

value systems of two different worlds. It reveals the ability of a wealthy, socially-implicated client, and the woman who received this client's gift, to conceive of a marriage "in Christ" that could simultaneously be depicted in terms of the beauty, sexuality, and classical tradition associated with Venus.

***Clipeus* Portraits and the Afterlife**

The hypothesis that portraits of married couples reflect a "woman's theme" meets with two main problems: first, the overall scarcity of inscriptions indicating the sex of the deceased; and second, the contrary evidence of some sarcophagi with spousal portraits that were made for men.¹⁶⁰ Though the importance of marriage to elite Roman Christian women may partially explain the popularity and size of encircled double-portraits, another important consideration is the way these portraits could represent beliefs about the afterlife.

Manuela Studer-Karlen, noting the prevalence of Christian portraits and the visual context in which they appear, identified a desire of patrons to establish a close connection between the commemorated individuals and the biblical themes by "the proximity of the deceased with the protagonists of a scene." On Christian sarcophagi one observes "the desire of the close relations of the deceased, or the client placing the order, to represent the deceased in a context expressing the firm belief in a life after death."¹⁶¹

As noted above, a person's image carved in the mirror-like *tondo* was a method of "reflecting the individual soul," expressing its endurance in an afterlife, and in some cases alluding to the deceased's deification.¹⁶² The rise of these *clipeus* double-portraits in Christian art corresponds to a rise in Christian discourse about the endurance of marital bonds after death. This development, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, might explain better than any other factor the increased prominence of spousal portraits in fourth-century Christian funerary art.

¹⁶⁰ E.g., Rep. I, no. 678 (the sarcophagus of Petronius Probus); Rep. II, nos. 148, 149 (the sarcophagus of Catervius, the sarcophagus of Gorgonius).

¹⁶¹ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenen Darstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 223.

¹⁶² Richmond, *Archaeology and the After-life in Pagan and Christian Imagery*, 40; Tulloch, "Devotional Visuality," 546.

Worshippers at Jesus's Feet

In the fourth century a new variety of spousal representation emerged in Rome in the form of diminutive figures shown kneeling or bowing at the feet of Jesus. Typically Jesus is depicted at the center of the scene as a teacher or deliverer of the law, seated or standing, often upon the mount of Paradise, accompanied by two or more apostles. The husband and wife are placed at Jesus's feet to the viewer's left and right, respectively (fig. 77). In two instances, however, the kneeling figures at Jesus's feet are both men, so the scene was not always intended for the representation of a husband and wife.¹⁶³

Precedents and Descendants

This new form of spousal self-representation was one of the iconographic contributions of an innovative, upper-class, married clientele of early Christian sarcophagi.¹⁶⁴ It drew in part upon strategies used in imperial art to depict relationships of hierarchy and benefaction. In *liberalitas* and *congiarium* scenes, the seated emperor is depicted larger in scale than the recipients of his largesse at his feet, as can be seen on both Antonine and Constantinian reliefs on the Arch of Constantine (fig. 78). Images of a ruler's display of *clementia* portrayed defeated barbarians as war captives throwing themselves at the feet of a seated general, weeping or kissing the general's hand, as seen on the lid of the Portonaccio sarcophagus made for the burial of a military commander (fig. 79). Another source for this new portrait-type was the kneeling figures in illustrations of biblical miracles like the raising of Lazarus, the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter, and the healing of the hemorrhagic woman (fig. 80). These figures evoke scriptural narratives in which supplicants plead at Jesus's feet, or recipients of his teaching and miracles express gratitude and adoration by bowing down at his feet, kneeling at his feet, taking hold of his feet, or bathing his feet with their tears.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Rep. II, no. 10 (uncertain, left figure damaged); Rep. III, no. 32; cf. Peter and Paul as diminutive figures at Jesus's feet: Rep. I, no. 58; lone woman: Rep. II, no. 151; Rep. III, no. 160.

¹⁶⁴ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 223.

¹⁶⁵ Supplication: Matt 5:22–23; 15:30; Mark 7:25–26; Luke 8:41; gratitude and adoration: Matt 28:9; Luke 7:38; 17:15–16; John 11:32; 12:3; Phil 2:10–11; Rev 19:10; 22:8; listening to teaching: Luke 8:35; 10:39; cf. subjection: Heb 2:8; Rev 3:9.

For fourth-century viewers, there was potential to discern multiple nuances in portrayals of married sarcophagus owners at Jesus's feet. The representation of Jesus as a teacher rather than an emperor or military conqueror would seem to subvert Roman imperial notions of power. The small figures portrayed at Jesus's feet would have been seen not as subjugated enemies, but as supplicants, hearers, and worshipers in the tradition of biblical figures whose lives were affected by Jesus. Yet they might also be seen as subjects and beneficiaries of a benevolent heavenly sovereign, with ultimate allegiance to the kingdom of God even as they participated in the culture of the Roman Empire on earth.

The figures of worshiping spouses antedate the convention of "donor" portraits in medieval art, which similarly place an adoring figure or figures at Jesus's feet. On a 16th-century icon from Candia (Crete), for example, miniature figures of the two donors of the icon—a bearded man robed in black and a young boy in red—kneel and worship at the feet of an enthroned Christ, who holds an opened book in the pose of the great hierophant (fig. 81). Scenes of worshiping spouses also predate the clerical donor portraits that appeared in church apses in late antiquity, often with the same symmetry. In the basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian, built in Rome by Pope Felix in 527, Christ stands elevated among the clouds at the center, while to either side the apostles Peter and Paul introduce the patron saints Cosmas and Damian to Christ (fig. 82). Further to the left and right stand the figures of Pope Felix presenting the church building to Christ (fig. 83), and Saint Theodorus presenting a jeweled crown. This scene hierarchically and symmetrically depicts clerical patrons in poses of devotion and proximity to Christ, even accompanied by Peter and Paul, as seen in fourth-century portraits of spouses at Jesus's feet—but the latter appear first in Christian iconography. Clerical donor portraits represent a later stage of the iconography that emphasizes what the patron *gives*, while fourth-century spouses at Jesus's feet tend to connote adoration and gratitude for what the patron has *received*, or supplication for what the patron hopes to receive (salvation and a blessed afterlife). The married clientele who developed this form of spousal representation played an innovative, active, and influential role in the development of early Christian visual culture.

Survey of Representations of Spouses at Jesus's Feet

Possibly the earliest surviving example of an image of spouses at Jesus's feet appears in the top center panel of a strigillated sarcophagus (dated 300–330 CE) from the Albani hypogeum at St. Sebastian (fig. 84).¹⁶⁶ Christ sits enthroned on a raised platform, holding a scroll in his left hand and making a speaking gesture with his right, flanked by two men who stand looking at him. Beneath the men appear unfinished portrait busts of two individuals who may be kneeling to either side of Christ, but their lower bodies are obscured by two smaller kneeling figures who reach out to Jesus's feet. On the lid above, a married couple is depicted in unfinished portrait busts in front of a *parapetasma*, in the affectionate pose typically seen in *clipeus* portraits: the man on the right holding a scroll, the woman on the left embracing him from the side. Evidently the unfinished portraits in the scene below were meant as a second representation of the spouses. The small kneeling figures may represent the pair yet again, the man on the left (Jesus's right), and the woman on the right. Kneeling figures of spouses on other fourth-century sarcophagi consistently place the man and woman at left and right in this way.¹⁶⁷ Here, however, the head of the kneeling figure on the right is not veiled, and the condition of the figures makes it difficult to identify them certainly as male and female. Since two other early fourth-century sarcophagi depict two male kneeling figures at Jesus's feet, and two others depict a lone woman kneeling, it is clear that this type of scene could be used for the representation of individuals besides married couples.¹⁶⁸ Thus Deichmann identified the blank faces as representations of “the deceased,” and cautiously called the figures beneath them “two smaller kneeling figures.”¹⁶⁹ Jutta Dresken-Weiland identifies the image as “a representative homage scene beneath the inclusion of the deceased.”¹⁷⁰ The small kneeling figure at right

¹⁶⁶ Rep. I, 139–141, no. 241, Taf. 54; Koch, *Früchristliche Sarkophage*, no. 54; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. I, 49–50, Tav. XL. A lidless frieze sarcophagus in Florence may be an earlier example of kneeling figures at the feet of Christ, but the kneeling figure on the right is male, and the one on the left is damaged and may also be male: Rep. II, no. 10; cf. a similar sarcophagus with two male kneeling figures Rep. III, no. 32.

¹⁶⁷ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 212.

¹⁶⁸ Two men: Rep. II, no. 10 (uncertain, left figure damaged); Rep. III, no. 32; cf. Peter and Paul as diminutive figures at Jesus's feet: Rep. I, no. 58; lone woman: Rep. II, no. 151; Rep. III, no. 160.

¹⁶⁹ Rep. I, 140: “Vor ihnen übereinander gestaffelt je zwei kleinere kniende Gestalten in Tunica, die hinteren, größeren mit bossiertem Kopf (Verstorbene), die vorderen mit ausgestreckten Händen die Füße Christi berührend.”

¹⁷⁰ Jutta Dresken-Weiland, personal correspondence, Jan. 14, 2016: “repräsentative Huldigungsszene unter Einschluss Verstorbenen” (my trans.). She also notes that the sarcophagus was meant for the burial of a woman. Garrucci unpersuasively suggested that the kneeling, bowing, and standing figures represented three grades of penitence; Wilpert rejected this, identifying

bears hints of a short, defined hairstyle resembling that of the woman on the lid, and her clothing seems to extend the length of her leg, as with female kneeling figures on other sarcophagi. Additionally, the location of the man and woman to either side of Christ parallels the locations of Adam, Eve, and Christ in the panel directly below, with arguably deliberate symmetry (discussed further in Chapter 4). If this sarcophagus does present three different representations of a couple, perhaps each visually eulogizes a different one of the pair's virtues, such as *concordia*, *pietas*, and *humilitas*.

There is much more certainty in the identification of kneeling spouses on ten other sarcophagi dating to the last third of the fourth century.¹⁷¹ These figures appear on a variety of sarcophagus types—strigillated, columnar, and city-gate.¹⁷² The group is consistent in its placement of a diminutive husband and wife to the left and right of Jesus's feet, respectively, though no two scenes or sarcophagi are exactly alike. Images of Christ teaching or giving the law to his apostles appear on other sarcophagi without small, worshiping figures, suggesting that the married patrons of the sarcophagi with kneeling couples asked for their own images to be inserted into the conventional scenes.¹⁷³ Therefore, each work can be regarded as representing at least some particular requests and ideas of the individual(s) who purchased it.¹⁷⁴

Two quite similar strigillated sarcophagi made in Rome and now housed at the *Musée de l'Arles antique* feature a five-panel program with spouses at the feet of Jesus in the center panel (figs. 85–87).¹⁷⁵ Jesus stands holding a jeweled, elongated cross in his right hand and a scroll in his left hand, fields of strigillation flank this center scene, and bearded male figures (apostles) stand in the corner panels. The two pieces feature a few differences. On one (fig. 85), the spouses both kneel and worship with their hands on the mount of Paradise (a rock from which four rivers flow) where Christ stands, as the apostles

the standing figures as apostles (as in many other *traditio legis* scenes), and citing E. Le Blant's interpretation of the other figures as Christians in prayer: Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. I, 50.

¹⁷¹ Rep. I, nos. 217 (uncertain because fragmented and damaged), 675, 679; Rep. II, nos. 149, 150; Rep. III, nos. 25, 80, 81, 291, 428. See also the fragment of possibly another example in Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi* I, 184, Tav. CLIV no. 1.

¹⁷² Discussed in Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 205–212, 255.

¹⁷³ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 208, 225.

¹⁷⁴ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 209: "Diese kleinen Gestalten müssen ... als ein von den Auftraggebern bewusst gewünschter Zusatz verstanden werden. ... jedes Werk den jeweiligen Vorstellungen und Wünsche der Auftraggeber gerecht werden konnte."

¹⁷⁵ Rep. III, 58–59, nos. 80–81 (fig. 85 = no. 80; figs. 86–87 = no. 81).

gesture toward Christ and the spouses at the center (presumably both apostles gestured, though the one at right is now damaged). On the other (fig. 86), the apostles (clearly Peter and Paul in this case) hold out wreath-crowns toward Christ and the spouses, and the woman kneels at Christ's feet while her husband stands with veiled hands as he strides toward Christ. The man and woman come to the same height and are thus disproportionate (fig. 87). Studer-Karlen notes that if the kneeling woman were to stand she would be much taller than the man, but this does not indicate the representation of a mother and son, but rather a married couple that wished to depict the man standing while retaining a visual symmetry between the spouses.¹⁷⁶

The center scene of a five-niche columnar sarcophagus at St. Peter's portrays a diminutive man and woman standing and bowing slightly at Christ's feet as he stands on the rock of Paradise and gives the scroll of the law to Peter (fig. 88).¹⁷⁷ Possibly the pair were depicted standing rather than kneeling due to the constraints of space between the columns, but on a similar columnar sarcophagus at Saint-Victor in Marseilles, spouses kneel at Christ's feet (fig. 89).¹⁷⁸ It therefore seems likely that the depiction of figures standing or kneeling reflects customer preference.

Kneeling spouses appear more often on city-gate sarcophagi, so called due to the reliefs of architectural features like arched gateways and city walls that form a backdrop for biblical figures. A city-gate sarcophagus at Aix-en-Provence depicts twelve apostles, six on each side, processing toward the taller figure of Christ at the center and making gestures of acclamation (fig. 90).¹⁷⁹ The apostles nearest Christ are Peter, at right, holding an elongated jeweled cross, and Paul at left. Christ hands an unfurled scroll to Peter (*traditio legis*). Beneath Peter and Paul, and even closer to Christ, diminutive figures of a wife and husband kneel at his feet. A variation of this program appears on another sarcophagus now built

¹⁷⁶ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 208: "Obwohl die Frau kniet und der Mann steht, reichen die Köpfe der beiden Gestalten bis knapp zu den Oberschenkeln von Christus. Würde die Frau auch aufstehen, wäre sie also um einiges grösser als der Mann. Daraus kann jedoch keinesfalls resultieren, hier Mutter und Sohn anstatt eines Ehepaars zu erkennen. Vielmehr ergab sich diese Lösung, weil der Mann zwar stehen wollte, die Symmetrie jedoch gewahrt werden sollte."

¹⁷⁷ Rep. I, 278–279, no. 679, Taf. 107; Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, vol. 5, *Sarcofagi ossia sculture cimiteriali*, 62, Taf. 335.4; Marion Lawrence, "Columnar Sarcophagi in the Latin West: Ateliers, Chronology, Style," *The Art Bulletin* 14.2 (1932): 107, fig. 2, 109.

¹⁷⁸ Rep. III, 143–144, no. 291, Taf. 73.

¹⁷⁹ Rep. III, 11–12, no. 25, Taf. 8.1; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi* vol. I, 183, Tav. CL no. 1; the lid with which the sarcophagus is now displayed is not its original.

into an altar in the Colonna Chapel of St. Peter's basilica: in this case, only five apostles process toward Christ from left and right (fig. 91).¹⁸⁰ Marion Lawrence explained the depiction of just ten apostles as a case of the scene having been "condensed" in order to avoid "the problem of crowding" seen on earlier sarcophagi made by the same workshop.¹⁸¹ Another possibility is that the reduction permitted seeing the married grave owners, in their own small way, as individuals to be included among the apostles, bringing the number of adoring figures to twelve. This suggestion is underscored by the depiction of twelve lambs along the base of the scene, one directly beneath each apostle or spouse, with a thirteenth lamb, larger than the rest, placed at the center, directly beneath Christ, the "Lamb of God." Though on one level the apostles appear much more important than the small, ordinary spouses at Jesus's feet, on another level they are alike as sheep belonging to Christ's fold.

The sarcophagus of Titus Flavius Gorgonius at Ancona also features just ten apostles to either side of married grave owners kneeling at Jesus's feet (fig. 77).¹⁸² A second representation of the spouses appears on the back, in a *dextrarum iunctio* portrait framed within an aedicule (fig. 16). The repeated representation of married grave owners is a distinctive characteristic of a number of city-gate sarcophagi that seem to have been made in the same Roman workshop as Gorgonius's monument. One of these pieces is now housed in the church of Sant' Ambrogio in Milan (fig. 92).¹⁸³ On the front, at the center of the lid, the spouses appear in a *clipeus* (a shell hinge at its base) held by winged *putti* (fig. 34). Directly below, the pair kneels at the feet of a youthful Jesus (fig. 93), who sits on a mount teaching, attended by his twelve apostles, six to either side. The back of the sarcophagus features another scene of the apostles and Christ, here bearded and standing, handing a scroll of the law to Peter (fig. 94). Again the married grave owners are represented bowing at Jesus's feet, and as on the sarcophagus at St. Peter's, twelve

¹⁸⁰ Rep. I, 272–273, no. 675, Taf. 103; Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, vol. 5, *Sarcophagi ossia sculture cimiteriali*, 50, Taf. 327, 2/4; Marion Lawrence, "City-Gate Sarcophagi," *The Art Bulletin* 10.1 (1927): 6, 12, 15, 18; figs. 15–18; cf. Wilpert, *I Sarcophagi Cristiani Antichi* I, 184, Tav. CLIV no. 1.

¹⁸¹ Lawrence, "City-Gate Sarcophagi," 11, 12, 15.

¹⁸² Rep. II, 54–56, no. 149, Taf. 58.1–5, 59.1–2; Marion Lawrence, "City-Gate Sarcophagi," 8, 11–12, figs. 9–12.

¹⁸³ Rep. III, 56–58, no. 150, Taf. 59.3–8, 60.1–2, 61.1–2; Lawrence, "City-Gate Sarcophagi," 6–8; Steen, "The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio."

lambs and a central *Agnus Dei* line the bottom of the scene.¹⁸⁴ At Tolentino, the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, which might have been based on the Ancona sarcophagus, also contains multiple visual references to the spouses in images and inscriptions, though no kneeling figures.¹⁸⁵ Another city-gate sarcophagus in the Louvre very similar to the pieces at Ancona and Milan features kneeling figures at Jesus's feet, and might have had a double-portrait of spouses on the now-lost lid (fig. 95). Originally the kneeling figures were husband and wife, but the woman at right was later reworked and given a man's features.¹⁸⁶ These additions have now been removed, and the sarcophagus is displayed with headless kneeling figures.

Implications of Spousal Self-Representation as Worshipping Figures

In these latter examples of city-gate sarcophagi, not only do grave owners “appear several times in a conspicuous way,” as Studer-Karlen notes, but they do so in ways that give particular emphasis to marital status, harmony, and shared piety.¹⁸⁷ The sarcophagus of Gorgonius at Ancona (like the sarcophagi of Catervius at Tolentino and Petronius Probus at St. Peter's) was made for a man's burial, showing that the presentation of marriage was not exclusively a “woman's theme.” These emphatic marital displays appear at the very time when Ambrosiaster, Helvidius, and Jovinian and those who rallied behind them were voicing objection to ascetic discourse that seemed to devalue marriage. The patrons of these sarcophagi are likely representative of the population that would have found the teachings of Ambrosiaster, Helvidius, and Jovinian agreeable. One may read the visual programs on these monuments as indications of a Christian piety in which marriage played a valued role.

¹⁸⁴ The head of the kneeling figure on the left (the husband) is missing; the spouses are misidentified as kneeling women anointing Jesus's feet in Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 158–159, fig. 106.

¹⁸⁵ Lawrence, “City-Gate Sarcophagi,” 11–12.

¹⁸⁶ Rep. III, 199–201, no. 428, Taf. 103.1–3; Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, Vol. 5, *Sarcofagi ossia sculture cimiteriali*, 47, Taf. 324,1–4; Lawrence, “City-Gate Sarcophagi,” 3, 7–8, fig. 1; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi* Vol. 1, Tav. LXXXII.1, 182: “la donna adorante Nostra Signore fu cambiata in uomo” = “the woman adoring our Lord was changed into a man” (my trans.). Additionally, seven fragments of another late fourth-century city-gate sarcophagus also appear to have portrayed small kneeling figures, but it is impossible to say whether they were a married pair and whether the original piece also contained other spousal portraits: Rep. I, 130–131, no. 217, Taf.49.

¹⁸⁷ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 225.

Through scenes of worshipers at Jesus's feet, grave owners represented themselves in terms simultaneously humble and laudatory. The small size of the worshiping figures, their posture either kneeling or bowing, with details like veiled hands and faces that do not deign to look up, all present an image of humble piety. "The deceased stoop before the philosopher who has taught them the true philosophy."¹⁸⁸ Patrons claim only a lowly position in the hierarchy suggested by the proportions and relative positions of the various figures in the scene.¹⁸⁹ Christ, the largest and central figure, holds the highest position in the hierarchy; his apostles, depicted slightly smaller and to either side of him, look to him as subordinates; and beneath them all appear the small sarcophagus patrons. Olaf Steen notes that Christ is emphasized as the superior of the apostles, but does not discuss the figures of the spouses in the hierarchy.¹⁹⁰ These patrons, though much smaller in scale, nevertheless claim a place among Christ and the apostles, and their larger portraits elsewhere on a number of the sarcophagi, sometimes accompanied by inscriptions, announce that they are worthy of remembrance and honor as ones devoted to the Son of God and the church's apostolic tradition.

However, it is difficult to regard these images as "far removed from the temporal need for personal commemoration that had been ... strongly felt in earlier sarcophagus portraits," as Janet Huskinson has recently argued, when it is remembered that sarcophagi with small kneeling figures sometimes also contain other, larger portraits of the spouses.¹⁹¹ Such is the case with the Milan sarcophagus, which bears a *clipeus* double-portrait on its lid, and the Ancona sarcophagus, with its *dextrarum iunctio* portrait of Gorgonius and his wife on the back panel, plus a commemorative inscription on the front of the lid. Additional portraits and inscriptions may have appeared on the now-lost lids of other sarcophagi with representations of kneeling spouses. An alternative explanation for this form of

¹⁸⁸ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 12.

¹⁸⁹ Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), identifies visual strategies for representing a hierarchy of authority in portrayals of Christ, saints, emperors, bishops, and holy men; we may see some anticipation of those strategies here in these late fourth-century sarcophagi. For example, in her analysis of the 6th-century apse mosaic at St. Catherine's, Marsengill argues that the portraits of Longinus and John do not simply identify the mosaic donors, but incorporate them into the scene and cast them as virtual participants in the Transfiguration; cf. Robin Cormack, "Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art, by Katherine Marsengill [review]," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 66.1 (2015):168. This is comparable to the small figures of spouses at Jesus's feet on these sarcophagi.

¹⁹⁰ Steen, "The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio," 286, 288.

¹⁹¹ Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 236.

representation might look not to what it *fails* to accomplish (in the form of personalized portraiture), but rather to what it *succeeds* in doing.

The iconographic elements of an exalted, authoritative Christ and figures worshipping at his feet, often set before city gates, arguably allude to the afterlife and a final judgment in heaven. The heavenly setting described in the New Testament book of Revelation includes the images of “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” individuals falling to worship at the throne, judgment, and the gates of the heavenly city of Jerusalem (Rev 4:1–11; 20:12–13; 21:10–22:5). Nevertheless, Jutta Dresken-Weiland states that the city gates on early Christian sarcophagi probably do not symbolize the heavenly Jerusalem, but more likely “were meant as a decorative element or a sumptuous background and do not have any deeper sense.”¹⁹² Though it is true that city-gate reliefs do not illustrate every detail of the extravagant imagery with which John’s *Apocalypse* describes the heavenly Jerusalem, most early Christian iconographic references to biblical texts are visual shorthand, identifiable by means of a few, select details. The cityscape in the apse mosaic of Santa Pudenziana in Rome, dated to within a few years of the city-gate sarcophagi, does not illustrate certain details in Revelation 21, such as twelve gates or twelve jeweled foundations of an enormous cube-shaped city, yet it is understood as at least a potential reference to the heavenly Jerusalem, depicted aloft and among the clouds (fig. 96).¹⁹³

Texts dealing with the heavenly city suggest that it was a subject on the minds of Christians in the late fourth century (at the height of city-gate sarcophagus production) and early fifth century. Victorinus of Pettau (d. 304) authored a Latin *Commentary on the Apocalypse* that discussed the heavenly city, and

¹⁹² Jutta Dresken-Weiland, “Christian Sarcophagi from Rome,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, ed. Robin M. Jensen and Mark D. Ellison (London: Routledge, forthcoming). In support Dresken-Weiland mentions, “H. von Schoenebeck has argued against interpreting this decoration as a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem”; cf. Hanns Ulrich von Schoenebeck, *Der Mailänder Sarkophag und seine Nachfolge* (Città del Vaticano, Roma: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1935), 4–10. But Schoenebeck merely states that the Apocalypse of John cannot be used without difficulty as a complete explanation of the city-gate motif (that wraps completely around the Milan sarcophagus): “Auch die Vision des Johannes vom himmlischen Jerusalem kann nicht ohne Schwierigkeit zur Erklärung herangezogen werden,” 10. Elsewhere he acknowledges that the scene of Christ and his apostles can be seen as a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem: “Von diesen Einzelheiten abgesehen, stimmen die literarische Bildüberlieferung und die erhaltenen Reste mit der zweiten Langseite des Mailänder Sarkophags überein, wo Christus inmitten der Apostel vor den Mauern des himmlischen Jerusalem (s. u.) sitzt.” = “Apart from these details, the literary imagery and the remnants preserved coincide with the second long side of the Milan sarcophagus, where Christ sits in the midst of the Apostles outside the walls of heavenly Jerusalem (see below),” 5.

¹⁹³ E.g., Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 232, fig. 157; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 108–109, fig. 35; Herb Kessler, “Bright Gardens of Paradise,” in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 111–113, fig. 81. For a city-gate image with twelve gates, probably alluding to the heavenly Jerusalem, see the miniature of Prudentius in Schoenebeck, *Der Mailänder Sarkophag*, 6, Abb. 1.

Jerome revised this work early in his career.¹⁹⁴ The Latin version of the *Apocalypse of Paul* or *Visio Pauli*, which emerged in the late fourth century and was very popular in the West, used imagery from the Revelation of John as it described the souls of the faithful dead escorted by angels through the gates of the heavenly city to the throne of God, where they “fell and worshipped the footstool of his feet and his gates.”¹⁹⁵ In the early fifth century, Jerome responded to the sack of Rome in his commentary on Ezekiel by discussing the prophet’s vision of the heavenly city, and of course Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* made use of this same literary motif at the same time of crisis. In light of this milieu, and given the funerary context of sarcophagi, it is not unreasonable to interpret the city-gate motif as an image with potential reference to afterlife in the heavenly city. Gates and doorways, after all, are natural symbols of departure in death and arrival in afterlife, and the death-door motif had been used on earlier Roman sarcophagi with reference to the threshold of the grave.

Steen interprets the city-gate decoration on the Milan sarcophagus as a representation of “the Heavenly Church.”¹⁹⁶ Studer-Karlen similarly identifies the city gates as the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, noting that the figure of the enthroned Christ accentuates the statement of a representation related to the hereafter (*jenseitsbezogenen Darstellung*) in which Christ is the judge and the grave owner hopes for a mild fate at the final judgment.¹⁹⁷ The scenes with small figures at the feet of Christ relate to

¹⁹⁴ Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentarius in Apocalypsim*, CSEL 49; Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 608.

¹⁹⁵ *Visio Pauli* 14.5; Quem cum audissent Michahel et omnis exercitus angelorum, statim et ipsi procidentes adorauerunt scabellum pedum eius et ostenderunt [ostia eius sunt] animae dicentes; Theodore Silverstein and Anthony Hilhorst, eds., *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1997), 92; trans. M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses, with Other Narratives and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 531–532; cf. 525; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 624. Augustine referred to the Apocalypse of Paul: *On the Gospel of St. John*, tractate 98.8, NPNF I, 7:380. The Greek version was probably written in the mid-third century, as Origen referred to it: Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 616; and Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make it into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 288. Theodore Silverstein and Anthony Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul: A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1997), argue for a fifth-century date rather than a late fourth-century date for the Latin version. The section quoted, *Visio Pauli* 14, appears to belong to the oldest part of the book: Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 288. The *Visio Pauli* also shares with city-gate sarcophagi an interest in the four rivers of Eden: J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, “The Four Rivers of Eden in the Apocalypse of Paul (*Visio Pauli*): The Intertextual Relationship of Genesis 2.10–4 and the Apocalypse of Paul 23,” in *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 50–76.

¹⁹⁶ Steen, “The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio,” 286.

¹⁹⁷ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenen Darstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 209: “Die Tore Jerusalems im Hintergrund sowie der thronende Christus akzentuieren die Aussage der jenseitsbezogenen Darstellung: Die sich Christus mit einem Bittgestus zuwendende Grabinhaberin erhofft sich ein mildes Schicksal beim Jüngsten Gericht.”

the next life and “express the desire to be in communion with God.”¹⁹⁸ One might go further and say that the scenes claim the status of those in communion with God already, by representing patrons as worthy (like individuals in the book of Revelation and the *Apocalypse of Paul*) to pass through the gates, approach the throne, and fall at the Lord’s feet.

The image differs markedly from the threefold “hierarchy of ascetic merit” that had become a feature of ascetic Christian literature in the third century, in which even chaste married couples were expected to receive a lesser reward than virgins and widows.¹⁹⁹ By contrast, in the images surveyed here, the hierarchy in which married Christians located themselves was one focused on Christ and his apostles, and their own relation to deity, without reference to ascetic elites. It was a hierarchy in which they claimed a place close to Christ. Again, one can see in these images indicators of a population that would have been receptive to Jovinian’s teaching of an equal reward for all the faithful based on their baptism, rather than on the degree of their sexual renunciation.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

In this survey of three forms of spousal portraiture, one observes that early, third-century styles of intellectual sphere representation declined as the image of the philosopher came to be associated more with depictions of Christ and the apostles. In the place of “philosopher and Muse” or “philosopher and *orant*” representations, varieties of *clipeus* double portraits grew in popularity beginning around 300. *Clipeus* portraits augmented personal representation, highlighted marital *concordia* and *affectio*, and when placed among biblical images of salvation, created visual connections between the portrayed and their desired salvation. In these representations an element of the earlier philosophical iconography was retained in the attribute of the scroll. Late fourth-century images of adoring patrons at Jesus’s feet showed

¹⁹⁸ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 225.

¹⁹⁹ Sellw, “The Hundredfold Reward for Martyrs and Ascetics,” 94–98 (esp. 94); Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 114–129; “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 596.

²⁰⁰ The inscription on the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina mentions their baptism by the priest/bishop Probianus: *QVOS DEI SACERDVS PROBIANVS LAVIT ET VNxit* (“Whom Probianus, the priest/bishop of God, baptized [washed] and anointed”); CIL IX 5566 = ILS 1289 = CLE 1560a = ILCV 98b = ICI X 22b; Rep. II, 52–53.

an interest in combining spousal representation with the depiction of Christ as true philosopher, and enabled patrons to make religious claims over against their non-Christian neighbors. In addition to announcing religious loyalties and identity in this life, this new form also implied a blessed status hereafter. When spouses represented themselves at the feet of their divine teacher, they broke conventions of self-aggrandizing representation and claimed a different kind of honor, a relatively humble place in the heavenly hierarchy of Jesus and the apostles—but a place of honor nonetheless.²⁰¹

The variety of styles in this chapter also suggests a range of marital paradigms with which early Christians identified, located at various points along the spectrum of responses to the ascetic ideal. Some patrons selected images with greater connotations of ascetic values. These included portrait styles associated with the learned sphere, which emphasized rationality and shared intellectual life over emotions and sensuality. A majority opted for more traditional forms that suggested a somewhat greater distance from the ascetic ideal. These included busts of husband and wife posed affectionately and supportively with the wife's arm behind her husband, and the two of them enclosed within a tondo or shell.

²⁰¹ Cf. Ewald, "Paradigms of Personhood," 59: "...Christian sarcophagi in which the role of the seated philosopher shown frontally is taken over by Christ himself. If the sarcophagus patrons appear at all within the same image, it is in smaller format, kneeling at the feet of Christ as his servants and worshipers. It is only in the Christian understanding of the world that man is essentially fallen, and that he himself is denied access to the role of the sage and spiritual master. The sarcophagus patron himself can no longer assume a position of superiority toward his surroundings and the world in general; rather, his subordination to the one on whom he now relies for salvation becomes the object of funerary representation."

CHAPTER IV

ADAM AND EVE AS ROLE MODELS

Adam and Eve and Married Christians

This chapter examines images of Adam and Eve in early Christian art and the range of symbolic meanings they could convey, including notions about marriage. It explores instances when the figures of Adam and Eve appear in contexts commemorating a married couple, and the diverse ways the biblical first parents served the self-representation of married Christians.

Using images of Adam and Eve in commemorations represents a case of transition in Roman art from the depiction of mythological figures to the use of images drawn from the “whole new sacred mythology” of biblical narratives.¹ Prior to the emergence of Christian art, depictions of mythical male-female pairs could memorialize various aspects of the character, virtues, circumstances, or relationship of married patrons. In a similar way, the use of Adam and Eve in visual art permitted the communication of a range of theological concepts and often applied them to Christian couples.

The biblical first couple was especially well suited for such a task, having served from the beginnings of Christian discourse as a means of conceptualizing marriage and its divine institution. This association was particularly present in fourth-century Rome, where Christians developed a nuptial blessing drawn from the words spoken to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 (“be fruitful and multiply”). In this formula and other developing nuptial rites marrying Christians were encouraged to think of themselves as successors of Adam and Eve, in the sense of being heirs to the same divine blessing.²

Since the second century the creation story had also been a fixture in Christian debates about the relative merits of marriage and celibacy. This dispute reflected the tension between two biblical

¹ Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 8; cf. Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 249–287.

² Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 5; discussed further below.

teachings: on one hand, the goodness of creation and the divine institution of marriage (Gen 1–2; Matt 19:3–6; Mark 10:6–9); on the other hand, the apocalyptically-charged renunciation of the structures of this world, including familial structures, and a consequent preference for virginity (1 Cor 7; Matt 19:10–12; 22:30). Fourth-century figures such as Ambrosiaster and Jerome took different sides on whether the blessing “be fruitful and multiply” still signaled divine approval of marriage and reproduction, or was superseded in an age characterized by virginity and realization of an angelic life even on earth.³ Married Christians who used images of Adam and Eve as part of their own self-representation constitute additional voices in this late antique conversation; through visual means, they made statements about creation, marriage, the divine plan, and their own place within it.

Roman Precedents and Christian Reception

Mythological Male-Female Pairs

The use of mythological male-female pairs in Roman art represents a functional precedent to the use of images of Adam and Eve to suggest ideas about marriage or married Christians. Mythical couples appear in free-standing sculpture, wall paintings, tomb reliefs, and particularly the mythological sarcophagi that flourished in the second century and beginning of the third. On these, the protagonists of myth were sometimes given portrait features, and the myth (or its visual reworking) became a means of expressing certain ideas about the commemorated individuals. In other cases the protagonists were not used as portraits, but the myth served to reflect something of the life, death, or character of the deceased. In such connection by “association” rather than by “assimilation,” mythical figures projected their

³ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 127.12–13, 17–18; Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium* 20; *Adversus Jovinianum* 1; *Epistulae* 22.19, 49.2, 52.10; discussed in Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 244, n. 72–73.

symbolic values onto the individuals being commemorated; “the virtues represented through the figures were transferred to the identity of the deceased.”⁴

Mythical figures could also serve as cautionary tales to viewers. For example, the depictions of Helen, Phaedra, and Medea in the House of Jason at Pompeii were, as Janet Huskinson observes, “powerful *exempla* of the power of passion to destroy families,” and “[upheld] Roman family values by reminding the viewer of the devastating consequences for the family when they are subverted.”⁵ In such cases mythological figures likely were not meant to be identified with patrons, but invited reflection on how the myth might apply to them. Mythological sarcophagi, Michael Koortbojian explains, “present analogies, not identifications: they do not merely equate the lives of those commemorated with the ancient stories but compel us to contemplate those lives in terms of the fundamental truths the myths reveal.”⁶ These factors are important when one comes to the consideration of spousal portraits alongside portrayals of Adam and Eve, who could be seen as flawed characters as well as role models.

As for the Greco-Roman mythical couples and the symbolic valences they might transmit to commemorated spouses, the range was wide and varied. It is not necessary or possible here to provide an exhaustive treatment of this subject, but a brief survey will give a sense of the selections that were available to patrons and the symbolic complexity of these types.

Alcestis, who volunteered to die and go to the Underworld in place of her husband Admetus, was a popular role model who could represent a wife’s virtue, male expectations of uxorial devotion, or marital concord surpassing death.⁷ The depiction of Hercules bringing Alcestis back to Admetus could express “the overcoming of death” and hope “for a reunion in a life after death.”⁸

⁴ Janet Huskinson, “Picturing the Roman Family,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 528; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 44, see also 70 regarding the juxtaposition of couple portraits with “other types of ideal figures” and how this can ascribe virtues to the deceased.

⁵ Huskinson, “Picturing the Roman Family,” 530; cf. Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 20, 23, regarding Venus and Mars, Phaedra, and Medea as “‘negative’ figures” whose actions bring tragic results.

⁶ Michael Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 9.

⁷ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 307, 393; Kleiner and Matheson, *I, Claudia*, 190; Denzey, *The Bone-Gatherers*, 62.

⁸ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 275; Wood, “Alcestis on Roman Sarcophagi,” 499. Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 87, argue that Alcestis could emphasize separation in death over return. To be discussed further in Chapter 5.

In contrast to the relatively one-sided devotion of the wife in the Alcestis myth, the less commonly depicted figures Protesilaus and Laodamia might convey the mutual love and devotion of both husband and wife, and could reflect grief in separation, the longing of the surviving spouse to see one's partner again, or a hope for a future reunion.⁹ Since this myth does not end happily (the pair is allowed to reunite for only three hours, after which Laodamia, overwhelmed by grief, takes her own life), Paul Zanker and Björn C. Ewald maintain that its use on a sarcophagus highlights the pain of bereavement with no confident expectation of afterlife reunion, but Verity Platt argues that the visual program gives central emphasis to the reunion scene, reworking the myth so that it upholds the idea of a "permanent union."¹⁰ These concepts will be discussed further in Chapter 5, but here it may be noted that the notions conveyed by mythical male-female pairs could be altered by their visual representation to serve the needs of funerary commemoration, and were not entirely limited by narrative traditions.

A couple depicted as Selene and Endymion could be a way for the wife who commissioned the portraits to say, "I loved my husband, and I miss him the way Selene missed Endymion."¹¹ Or, rather than "love and partnership," this myth could represent "sleep-like death in the presence of a caring divinity," and like the Alcestis myth it could express "the longing of the lovers who find each other again."¹²

Dionysos and Ariadne could work retrospectively or prospectively, alluding to the memory of a couple's happy life together, or the wish for the deceased to enjoy happiness in the hereafter.¹³ Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus and sleeping when found by Dionysos, might lead a viewer to think of abandonment, bereavement, passing to a better life, or even combinations of these (fig. 36).¹⁴

Venus and Mars conveyed the idea of love, and even though myth portrayed them rather notoriously as *not* married, they became popular subjects in funerary and domestic art where they were

⁹ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 94, 393–394.

¹⁰ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 396; Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi," 226.

¹¹ Zanker "Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi," 168–169; Ewald, "Paradigms of Personhood," 46: Selene and Endymion were particularly popular mythological couples in sarcophagus decoration, with over 100 surviving examples.

¹² Zanker, "Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi," 169 ("love and partnership"); Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 168 ("sleep-like death in the presence of a caring divinity"); Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 166 ("the longing of lovers...").

¹³ Zanker, "Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi," 176; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 53.

¹⁴ Zanker, "Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi," 173–174; Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 102–103.

made to represent “the model couple for marital *concordia*.”¹⁵ On a modest strigillated sarcophagus, for example, Venus and Mars personify a “division of roles” and serve to extol “the deceased couple’s love and its reciprocal bonds.”¹⁶

Cupid and Psyche could represent particularly abstract and metaphysical concepts. Since *psyche* meant “soul,” the figural representation of Psyche could be a personification of the deceased’s soul that “through love attains immortality and eternal life with her beloved Eros,” whose role was *psychophoros*, “conductor of the soul to the other world.” Cupid and Psyche, depicted together (fig. 97), could symbolize “the divine love to which the soul can be elevated with the help of the gods.”¹⁷ They often appear on sarcophagi of married couples, where they may indicate “fulfillment in a union with divine love,” “yearning and desire,” or “unfulfilled longing for a deceased partner.”¹⁸ Koortbojian points out that the myths of Cupid and Psyche, and Selene and Endymion, both address the question of what it means to be loved by gods, and could represent the conquest of death, the triumph of love over Fate, or a married couple’s hopes for *perpetuae nuptiae*, “an endless marriage.”¹⁹

Achilles and Penthesileia could bear the portrait features of married sarcophagus owners (fig. 98), representing “the beauty, *virtus*, love, and care of the deceased couple,” and “strikingly ignoring the fact that it was Achilles who killed the woman.”²⁰ Though it required “a significant re-narration of the myth,” couples chose Achilles and Penthesileia for their self-representation due to “its capacity for expressing love and marital piety in the face of death.”²¹ Myth-refocusing also occurs in depictions of Pelops and Hippodameia. Rather than representing only the victory of Pelops and the death of Oinomaos in the chariot race, some sarcophagi add the embrace of Pelops and Hippodameia (fig. 99) or portray the pair in

¹⁵ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 50, 195; see also Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 284–287. An example of a man and woman portrayed in a late second/early third century marble relief as Mars and Venus appears in Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 186, fig. 125.

¹⁶ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 195.

¹⁷ McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 121.

¹⁸ McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 121; Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 341; see 340–344.

¹⁹ Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*, 75–78; see also Jean Sorabella, “A Roman Sarcophagus and its Patron,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 36 (2001): 67–81.

²⁰ Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 170.

²¹ Ewald, “Sarcophagi and Senators,” 571.

a *dextrarum iunctio* scene to highlight the notion of conjugal harmony and a couple's "politically sanctioned and amicable marriage."²²

The list goes on: patrons seeking mythical male-female pairs as a form of self-representation could select Meleager and Atalanta, Venus and Adonis, Mars and Rhea Silvia, Phaedra and Hippolytos.... "Love, and not death, was the main theme in most of these images" as they appeared on Roman sarcophagi, Zanker observes.²³ And it should be noted that these male-female pairs were not always used to refer to married couples. In one case, Theseus and Ariadne memorialize a mother-son relationship, and in another, Selene and Endymion decorate a sarcophagus commissioned by a daughter for her mother.²⁴

Mythological Pairs in Christian Art

Roman art in the third century was characterized by a process of demythologization, and particularly over the second half of the century the production of mythological sarcophagi sharply declined. There is no consensus on the exact reasons for this transition in Roman sarcophagus decoration.²⁵ The relative lack of mythical male-female pairs in Christian art, therefore, is characteristic of the time. Christians apparently were not significantly different from their fellow Romans in this respect.

The embracing Cupid and Psyche appear to be the only mythical male-female pair chosen for use on Christian sarcophagi, and there are only a few examples of this.²⁶ On one of these, the early fourth-century "pronuba" sarcophagus from the Villa Ludovisi (discussed in Chapter 2), the pair, carved in diminutive scale, stands in a wedding scene portraying a full-scale wife and husband clasping right hands

²² Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 171–172.

²³ Zanker, "Reading Images without Texts on Roman Sarcophagi," 169; for discussion of Venus and Adonis as "a message about the power of love to heal and revive," see Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 24.

²⁴ Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 169; Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 343 (discussed 340–344). However, the Selene-Endymion sarcophagus in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, commissioned by the freedwoman Aninia Hilara for her "incomparable mother" Claudia Arria, might not allude to the mother-daughter relationship as Zanker and Ewald argue. Zanker and Ewald themselves mention a potential alternative: "If it was clear that a person had not had a happy life, or if he had died in unfortunate circumstances, his relatives could hope he might enjoy in the next world those things which he was not lucky enough to enjoy in this one," 170. The mother, likely a slave, could have borne a child by her master or by a man with whom she was not legally married. Her daughter, wishing to honor her "incomparable mother," may have chosen an iconographic program that would represent a longing her mother had for an enduring marriage. Elsewhere Zanker and Ewald describe the Selene-Endymion myth as a "metaphor of the longing of the lovers who find each other again," 166.

²⁵ Discussed in Mont Allen, "The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014).

²⁶ Rep. I, nos. 86, 381, 985. Lange, *Ikonoographisches Register*, 8, also lists no. 29, but this appears to be an error, as the sarcophagus bears figures of Cupid/winged putti, but not an embrace with Psyche.

in front of Concordia; Psyche stands by the bride, and Cupid (now missing) stood facing Psyche in front of the husband (fig. 18). The visual alignment of bride and groom with the mythical lovers would seem, in this case, to represent an allusion, made via traditional iconography, to the couple's enduring devotion and perhaps hopes for a shared afterlife.²⁷ Predominantly, however, Christian couples sought distinctively Christian ways of expressing their hopes for the hereafter (explored in Chapter 5), and did not make use of mythical male-female pairs in their visual art. They were not averse to all mythological figures; as indicated already, portraits of married Christians were sometimes accompanied by such traditional figures as cupids or putti, Venus, Concordia, the Dioscuri, Sol and Luna, or Bellerophon. More often, however, Christian patrons opted for new images drawn from biblical tradition.

Adam and Eve: A New Mythological Couple

A Variety of Images

Early Christian interest in the biblical figures of Adam and Eve was a part of a broader trend. After the opening chapters of Genesis, Old Testament authors hardly refer to Adam and Eve.²⁸ This apparent lack of interest changed during the intertestamental period and into late antiquity, a period which saw a flourishing of writing, speculation, and debate on the first parents and the creation story. In this era of Jewish and Christian dispersion, the archetypal first man and woman proved useful for thinking in universal terms about anthropology, theology, sin, salvation, gender roles, marriage, and matters of religious practice.²⁹

²⁷ Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*, 75–78; Sorabella, “A Roman Sarcophagus and its Patron,” 67–81.

²⁸ The only unambiguous reference to Adam after Gen 1–5 is 1 Chron 1:1; other possible allusions to Adam appear in Deut 32:8; Job 31:33; Ps 8:4–8; Eccl 7:29; Hos 6:7; a possible allusion to Eve occurs in Mal 2:15.

²⁹ This paragraph draws upon Mark D. Ellison, “Adam in the New Testament”, cited 13 May 2016, online: <http://www.bibleodyssey.com/people/related-articles/adam-in-the-new-testament>. Examinations of the intertestamental and late antique literature on Adam and Eve include Elizabeth A. Clark, “Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Genesis 1–3 in the Later Latin Fathers,” in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1986), 353–385; Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*; Gregory Allen Robbins, ed., *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Kristen E. Kvam, Linda S. Schearing, and Valarie H. Ziegler, eds., *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999);

Representations of Adam and Eve in early Christian art constitute means of participating in this late antique discourse through visual exegesis and messaging. The variety of images developed and their use in diverse media and contexts—wall paintings, sarcophagi, gold glass medallions, gems, rings—suggest an interest in utilizing the creation story for a range of purposes.

The earliest and most numerous images of Adam and Eve are of the “Fall” type, depicting the man and woman standing to either side of a tree covering their nakedness with fig leaves, sometimes simultaneously reaching for fruit from the tree, as a serpent coils around the tree’s trunk or crawls along the ground in front of it. Iconographic precedents of this image include Hercules stealing the apples of Hesperides, Prometheus sarcophagi featuring pairs of people with a snake, and *Venus pudica*.³⁰ The earliest surviving examples of the “Fall” are found in wall paintings at Cimitile and nearby Naples, and date to the first half of the third century.³¹ Other surviving third-century examples appear on the lunette of the Dura-Europos baptistery, dating to the 240s (fig. 100),³² the entrance to cubiculum 14 in the catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus at Rome, dated to the second half of the third century (fig. 101),³³ and possibly the Mas d’Aire sarcophagus, dated to the late third/early fourth century (fig. 102).³⁴

Scenes of the creation of Adam and Eve (or sometimes just Eve) depict the man and woman in diminutive scale, nude, standing (or Adam reclining in sleep as Eve stands, newly-created from his side) before one or more full-scale male figures representing Christ-*Logos*, God, or the Trinity (fig. 103). These creation scenes take their iconography from images of Prometheus forming human beings, and appear on

Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*; Vita Daphna Arbel, *Forming Femininity in Antiquity: Eve, Gender, and Ideologies in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁰ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 281, fig. 78; Rep. II, 83; Luigi Todisco, “Modelli classici per le prime espressioni figurative del peccato originale,” *Annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia* 23 (1980): 163–186.

³¹ Todisco, “Modelli classici per le prime espressioni figurative del peccato originale,” 165–166.

³² Kraeling, *The Christian Building*, pl. 17, 31; Adam and Eve to either side of the tree appear at lower left in the lunette above the Dura-Europos baptismal font, dated to 240s–256.

³³ Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (Freiburg: Herder, 1903), 270, Taf. 101; cf. Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab und Wort*, 278; Norbert Zimmermann, “Catacombs and the Beginnings of Christian Tomb Decoration,” in *A Companion to Roman Art*, ed. Barbara E. Borg (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 460; Flocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 123; Spier, *Picturing the Bible*, 180, 188.

³⁴ Rep. III, 6–8, no. 18, Taf. 4.1–4, 5.1–4; Christern-Briesenick dates this sarcophagus to the beginning of the 4th century; Isabel Speyart Van Woerden, “The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Abraham,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 15.4 (1961), 223, 243, dates it to the 3rd century; Theodor Klauser et al., *Frühchristliche Sarkophage in Bild und Wort* (Olten, Switzerland: Urs Graf-Verlag, 1966), 24, dates it to the end of the 3rd century, as does Franz Nikolasch, “Zur Ikonographie des Widders von Gen 22,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 23.3 (1969), 204; Lucien de Bruyne, “L’imposition des mains dans l’art chrétien ancien: Contribution iconologique à l’histoire du geste,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 20 (1943), 236, 238f., dates it to the late 3rd/early 4th century; cf. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 82–83.

a number of fourth-century sarcophagi and a now-lost third-century painting from the hypogeum of the Aurelii.³⁵

A unique image of Adam and Eve appears on a funerary plaque at Velletri, dated to c. 300 CE.³⁶ Here the first parents are shown standing nude and clasping right hands in the *dextrarum iunctio* (fig. 104), portraying them as models of a harmonious marriage.³⁷ This artifact will be discussed further below.

A scene art historians have called the Allocation of Labors appears in about 30 fourth-century sarcophagus reliefs.³⁸ Typically Adam and Eve hold fig leaves to cover their nakedness and stand to either side of Christ-*Logos*, who hands a sheaf of grain to Adam at his right and a sheep to Eve at his left (fig. 105).³⁹ Sometimes the symbols of labor are inserted into the more common Fall scene; for example, on the famous sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, a sheaf of wheat and a lamb appear in lower relief at the feet of Adam and Eve by the tree (fig. 106).⁴⁰ In another variation on the theme, a side panel of a sarcophagus in Verona depicts Adam and Eve standing on either side of the tree, with baskets full of fruit standing on the ground beside them (fig. 107).⁴¹ Additionally, a few depictions of the first parents' expulsion from Eden date to the fourth century. These Expulsion images are rare and do not have a fixed iconography in the fourth century.⁴²

In a number of instances more than one Adam and Eve scene appears in the same context. Both the Fall and the Allocation appear on the mid-fourth century sarcophagus of Adelfia in Syracuse, Sicily—the Fall in the lower frieze just right of the portraits of Adelfia and her husband, and the Allocation in the

³⁵ Robin M. Jensen, "The Economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.4 (1999), 542; Daniela Calcagnini, "Adam and Eve. II. Iconography," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 1:35; Rep. I, nos. 43, 86; Rep. II, no. 101; Rep. III, nos. 38, 228.

³⁶ Rep. II, no. 242.

³⁷ Jensen, "The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve," 47–52.

³⁸ Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. 2, *Testo*, 228, "Consegna dei simboli del lavoro"; Lange, *Ikonoographisches Register*, 3, 6, "Adam und Eva Arbeitszuweisung"; Manuel Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España: Estudio Iconográfico* (Granada: Facultad de Teología, 1975), 159, "'Reparto del trabajo' a Adán y Eva."

³⁹ In a few cases Eve receives an underfinished lamb resembling a hare: Rep. I, 40, 354, nos. 43, 840 (each identified as a sheep); but cf. Jensen, "The Economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve," 533, for an identification of a hare. In one case Adam receives a shepherd's staff, though this is a modern restoration and the original likely featured the usual bundle of wheat: Rep. I, 18, no. 21, Taf. 7; cf. Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana*, vol. 5, *Sarcofagi ossia sculture cimiteriali*, 26.

⁴⁰ Rep. I, 279–283, no. 680, Taf. 104–105.

⁴¹ Rep. II, 60–62, no. 152, Taf. 64.2; Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. 2, Tav. 190.7.

⁴² Rep. I, 116–119, no. 188, the so-called Sarcophagus of Lot, is the only certain instance on a Roman sarcophagus; Rep. I, 20–21, no. 23, is another possibility; *contra* Calcagnini, "Adam and Eve. II. Iconography," 36, who states that the image "follows a schema very faithful to the biblical passage"—with so few examples it is hard to speak of an established "schema" in the early period.

upper frieze, at the far left (fig. 108).⁴³ The Arles “Trinity” sarcophagus features a Fall scene (with symbols of labor) on the lid, and a Creation scene on the casket to the left of the portraits of the married sarcophagus owners (fig. 109).⁴⁴ The comparable “Dogmatic” sarcophagus in the Vatican juxtaposes a Creation scene and an Allocation of Labors, with both scenes immediately left of the central *clipeus* portrait of a married couple (fig. 110).⁴⁵ In all these instances the scenes are combined according to no standard schema (*contra* Daniela Calcagnini-Carletti, who refers to a “cycle” of images), but they do allude to different points in the biblical narrative and indicate a desire to portray a developed, complex story.⁴⁶

Despite the variety of Adam and Eve images, the diverse media and contexts in which they appeared, and the idiosyncratic ways they might be combined in visual compositions, there has been a tendency to reduce their symbolic value to a narrow cluster of ideas revolving around sin, shame, and the Fall. Joëlle Beaucamp states that under the influence of early Christian asceticism, “paleo-Christian iconography eliminated conjugal representation,” with the exception of Adam and Eve, who simply “represented sin.”⁴⁷ She does not explain why the many third- and fourth-century portraits of Christian spouses do not constitute “conjugal representation.” Regarding the image of Adam and Eve clasping right hands on the Velletri plaque, Erich Dinkler, writing for the landmark catalogue *Age of Spirituality*, identified the scene as “the Fall of Man” and a symbol of “man’s guilt,” despite its obvious iconographic distinctiveness from conventional “Fall” images.⁴⁸ More recently Jutta Dresken-Weiland labeled the Velletri scene *Sündenfall* (“the fall of man”), even while describing its atypical features.⁴⁹ Similar reductionism has been applied to the Allocation of Labors (which was even called “the condemnation of

⁴³ Rep. II, 8–10, no. 20, Taf. 9–10.

⁴⁴ Rep. III, no. 38.

⁴⁵ Rep. I, no. 43.

⁴⁶ Calcagnini, “Adam and Eve. II. Iconography,” 35–36.

⁴⁷ Joëlle Beaucamp, “Family,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowerstock et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), 445.

⁴⁸ Erich Dinkler, “Plaque with Biblical Scenes,” in *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), 413–414.

⁴⁹ Rep. II, 38.

Adam and Eve” in one early study).⁵⁰ Calcagnini-Carletti provided a representative explanation in the 1992 *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*: “The corn, representing cultivation, and the sheep, representing weaving (the principal occupations of life in early times), show clearly the consequences of sin, the work that man is condemned to carry out in order to survive. ... The Giving of the symbols of work and the Expulsion ... demonstrate the consequences of sin.”⁵¹ In 2014 the expanded and updated *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* reiterated this interpretation with no substantial revisions, though it did add that the variety of Adam and Eve images “evokes the cause and origin of redemption, reaffirms the immortality of the human soul and exhorts the faithful to observance of divine law.” Yet this step towards a broader range of symbolic values is followed by another step back; the Allocation and Expulsion encourage obedience and highlight simply “the effects of sin.”⁵²

In 2004 Robin M. Jensen called attention to this problem of reductive interpretation of the first parents in visual art:

Labeling or identifying most of these catacomb frescoes or relief carvings of Adam and Eve scenes simply as presentations of ‘the fall’ reduces them to a single idea and suggests that they refer only to the story of sin and punishment. Such reduction misses much of the point as well as the richness of the symbolism implied by the image, especially considering the particular physical context of the artwork. A visual metaphor for failure and condemnation (to death) superficially seems inappropriate for tomb decoration. One wants, rather, to find some other meaning, perhaps a message of hope, in the iconography. If the imagery pointed to some aspect of the deceased’s life, suggested something about the meaning of death, or pointed to expectation for the afterlife, viewers would have a different reaction to the artwork. For instance, Adam and Eve do not always look ashamed of their act. One might suspect that the two appear as a kind of standard ‘sign,’ indicating some meaning other than fall or failure.⁵³

Jensen points to the placement of Adam and Eve scenes among other images representing healing, salvation, or resurrection, and observes, “Death and sin are only the very first part of the iconographic message. The overcoming of sin and death is its conclusion.”⁵⁴ From this Jensen goes on to identify and discuss three broad, interwoven themes: the first parents as a symbol of humanity’s creation in the image

⁵⁰ C. L. Meader, “Symmetry in Early Christian Relief Sculpture,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 4.1 (1900): 133.

⁵¹ Daniela Calcagnini-Carletti, “Adam and Eve, Iconography,” in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:10. Cf. Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani*, vol. 2, *Testo*, 228–229; Josi, “The Museo Pio Cristiano,” 228; Stephen Lamia, “Labor / Trades / Occupations,” in *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, vol. 1, ed. Helene E. Roberts (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), 479–480; Beaucamp, “Family,” 445.

⁵² Calcagnini, “Adam and Eve. II. Iconography,” 35–36.

⁵³ Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 37; see also Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 178–180.

⁵⁴ Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 38.

of God, as pre-figurations of Christ and the Virgin (and thus a key part of the biblical story of salvation), and as figures of a harmonious and devoted married couple.

Without excluding theological, salvation history readings of Adam and Eve, the remainder of this chapter explores interpretive possibilities that look particularly to the first parents' associations with marriage and married Christians. In so doing it considers more fully the intentions of patrons who selected images of Adam and Eve to accompany the visual display of their own married status, and the potential for patrons and viewers to see in the archetypal first couple facets of the marital vocation with which many patrons identified.

Images of Adam and Eve as Marital Iconography

A viewer may consider images of Adam and Eve as marital iconography in two main respects. First, some depictions of Adam and Eve use iconographic elements of images in which spouses wed, offer sacrifice, bid farewell, or reunite, thus calling to mind marital and social roles. This is particularly true of the *dextrarum iunctio* image of Adam and Eve on the Velletri plaque, and it is also the case with the Allocation of Labors to Adam and Eve (to be discussed below).

Second, images of the first parents may acquire particular marital significance when they appear in a context with some form of spousal representation. For example, an Adam and Eve scene may appear on a gold glass medallion beside a portrait bust of a married couple (fig. 111), or on a sarcophagus featuring a *clipeus* portrait of the married grave owners (figs. 108–110). Epitaphs, too, may signal a marital context. The first parents and their symbols of labor decorate the side of a late fourth-century sarcophagus whose lid bears an inscription announcing that it was made by a husband, Crescentianus, for the burial of his “dearest wife, Agapene” with whom he had lived for over 55 years.⁵⁵ In such instances, the marital context would have influenced what viewers saw in the image of Adam and Eve; the archetypal first couple could reflect upon the commemorated spouses, and make certain claims for them.

⁵⁵ Rep. I, 50–52, no. 52, Taf. 17, 52.3; Josi, “The Museo Pio Cristiano,” 228. Cf. Rep. III, 68–69, no. 107, Taf. 15.1; Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 416–418, no. 374.

These instances represent continuity with the earlier use of mythical pairs to advance a self-representation by association.

In many cases it is not possible to ascertain whether an image of Adam and Eve originally appeared in a marital context. With sarcophagi in particular, many of the surviving pieces are broken fragments, lids without caskets, caskets without lids, or caskets and lids that did not originally belong together. In these instances, the absence of a spousal portrait or inscription is inconclusive. Of 104 sarcophagus reliefs of Adam and Eve, 36 are sufficiently intact to determine whether there was originally a context of spousal commemoration, and of these, 25 (~70%) do have a marital context (see Appendix B). One may surmise (though there is no way to be sure) that with many fragments and partial sarcophagi, Adam and Eve originally appeared in a marital context, since sarcophagus patrons were typically of the deceased's family—often the spouse, but not infrequently a child or parent.⁵⁶ In any event, a context of marriage is present in most of the verifiable cases.

Adam and Eve as Marital Role Models in Literature and Liturgy

In addition to a context of spousal commemoration or representation, the associations of Adam and Eve with marriage in Christian scripture, homilies, treatises, and rites would have influenced viewers' perceptions.

As already discussed, Christian literature from the first century appealed to the biblical creation story as a way of conceptualizing marriage (as did Jewish sources, such as the deuterocanonical book of Tobit; Tob 8:6–7). In answer to a question about permissible reasons for divorce, Jesus cited two passages in Genesis as basis for his position:

He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female" [Gen 1:27], and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" [Gen 2:24]? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' (Mt 19:4–6)

⁵⁶ Stine Birk, "Sarcophagi, Self-Representation, and Patronage in Rome and Tyre," in *Patrons and Viewers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stine Birk and Birte Poulsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2012), 10.

Here the biblical first parents serve as figures of an ideal unity and permanence of marriage.⁵⁷

The author of the epistle to the Ephesians also cited Genesis 2:24 as a model of the ideal unity between Christian spouses, and on a higher level (as “a great mystery”), the relationship of Christ and the church (Eph 5:21–33, especially 31–32).

In the second-century apologetic work *To Autolycus* (c. 180), Theophilus of Antioch also cited Genesis 2:24 and pointed to the practice of marriage among Christians as its fulfillment:

Adam said to Eve, ‘This is now bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh,’ and in addition he prophesied, saying, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.’ This is actually fulfilled among us. For what man who marries lawfully does not disregard his mother and father and his whole family and all his relatives, while he cleaves to his own wife and unites with her, loving her more than them? For this reason husbands have often suffered even death for the sake of their wives.⁵⁸

This conscious sense that married Christians were successors of the biblical first parents (“this is actually fulfilled among us”) is particularly evident in fourth-century Rome, where there is the earliest unambiguous evidence of a formal nuptial blessing. The practice involved a priest blessing the spouses using the formula from Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply.”⁵⁹ Around the year 405 Paulinus of Nola’s hymn celebrating the wedding of Julian and Titia pointed to Adam and Eve as “the original model for the holy alliance now being sealed,” and exhorted the newlyweds to imitate the first parents.⁶⁰ (In referring to Adam and Eve Paulinus seems to have Christianized a poetic convention; the fourth century author called “Menander Rhetor” instructed would-be authors of epithalamia to set forth “the proposition

⁵⁷ This paragraph draws from Mark D. Ellison, “Adam in the New Testament”, accessed 13 May 2016,

<http://www.bibleodyssey.com/people/related-articles/adam-in-the-new-testament>.

⁵⁸ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum* 2.28, SC 20, 166–169: Πρὸς μὲν οὖν τὴν Εὐᾶν ὁ Ἀδάμ εἰπὼν· “Τοῦτο νῦν ὁστοῦν ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου”, ἔτι καὶ ἐπροφήτευσεν λέγων· “Τοῦτου ἕνεκεν καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν”· ὁ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ δείκνυται τελειούμενον ἐν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς. τίς γὰρ ὁ νομίμως γαμῶν οὐ καταφρονεῖ μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς καὶ πάσης συγγενείας καὶ πάντων τῶν οἰκείων, προσκολλώμενος καὶ ἐνούμενος τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γυναικί, εὐνοῶν μᾶλλον αὐτῆ; διὸ καὶ μέχρι θανάτου πολλακίς ὑπεύθυνοι γίνονται τινες διὰ τὰς ἑαυτῶν γαμετάς; trans. Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 70–73; cf. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 99–100; Hunter observes that this passage constitutes “perhaps the most positive presentation of Christian marriage by an apologist,” and that Theophilus “stressed the goodness of marriage and conjugal union more than the rigours of marital morality,” 99–100.

⁵⁹ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 127.2–3; Filastrius of Brescia, *Diversarum haereson liber* 120.6–7; Pope Innocent I, *Epistula* 4.6.9. Cf. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes*, 222–266; Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 284–288; Hunter, “Sexuality, Marriage, and the Family,” 590–592. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 31–21, sees earlier evidence for nuptial blessings in Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian; Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes*, 104–121, discusses problems with interpreting the passages in Clement and Tertullian as evidence of a late-second/early third-century nuptial blessing.

⁶⁰ Paulinus, *Carmen* 25.27, 101–105, CSEL 30, 239, 241; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 32.

that marriage is a good thing” by referring to its origins at the beginning of the world: “You should begin far back, telling how Marriage was created by Nature immediately after the dispersal of Chaos.”⁶¹) Similar connections between the first parents and marrying Christians appear in the earliest text of nuptial prayers, the *Sacramentarium Veronense* (compiled in the early sixth century but preserving earlier traditions); the wedded couple, succeeding the first parents, is to “increase and multiply.”⁶² These words, David G. Hunter observes, “not only alluded to the original blessing in Genesis, but the ritual itself also initiated the married couple into the world of the biblical text. In other words, by reenacting the biblical blessing of the first human couple, the liturgical blessing extended the original blessing given at creation into the present life of the couple being blessed.”⁶³

These literary and liturgical associations could have prompted married patrons seeking means of self-representation to select images of Adam and Eve. These notions also would have predisposed viewers of those images to consider ways they made statements about the identity, values, and beliefs of married patrons. The remainder of this chapter will examine some of the interpretive possibilities in this regard.

Selected Artifacts with Adam and Eve as Marital Role Models

Adam and Eve on the Velletri Plaque

An early fourth-century loculus plaque or sarcophagus panel at Velletri bears a relief of Adam and Eve standing in the *dextrarum iunctio* pose, while Adam (at left) rests his left arm on Eve’s shoulders (fig. 104).⁶⁴ Both figures are posed frontally but their heads are turned towards each other and they gaze

⁶¹ Menander Rhetor, *Treatise II* [VI] in D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 136–139; as cited in Evans-Grubbs, “‘Pagan’ and ‘Christian’ Marriage,” 377.

⁶² Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 42–43.

⁶³ Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 5.

⁶⁴ Rep. II, 83–84, no. 242, Taf. 80.2. Dresken-Weiland identifies it as a panel of a sarcophagus or loculus plaque (*Sarkophag-oder Loculusplatte*), 83; also Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab und Wort*, 278. Calcagnini-Carletti, “Adam and Eve. II. Iconography,” 10, identifies it as a sarcophagus, and gives its date as “the early 3rd century,” evidently a typographical error, corrected to “the early Constantine period” in Calcagnini, “Adam and Eve. II. Iconography,” 35; for reasons not given, Calcagnini in this updated work questions the identification of the scene: “*dextrarum iunctio*?” The possibility that the joined

at one another. Eve covers her nakedness with her left hand (like *Venus Pudica*), but neither she nor Adam wears a fig leaf; rather, they are depicted nude as in scenes of the creation (fig. 103)—newly made, before the Fall. Yet the scene foreshadows the Fall with a miniature tree and a snake placed to the left, behind Adam.

As outlined above, the “Fall of man” iconography predates the Velletri image; third-century examples demonstrate that a fairly standard composition of the man and woman standing to either side of the tree had already developed and proliferated (as far away as Dura-Europos in Syria) over the half-century or more before the early fourth-century Velletri plaque was made. The Velletri scene represents a deliberate revision of an already-popular image.⁶⁵ Its addition of the handclasp portrays the first parents as a symbol of marriage and marital harmony.⁶⁶ In this respect the image corresponds to the textual and liturgical traditions surveyed above that associated Adam and Eve with marriage. In other words, the Velletri image constitutes a visual manifestation of a longer tradition in which the biblical first parents served as paradigmatic figures of marriage.

The alterations made to the “Fall” scene to create the Velletri image invite the viewer to contemplate the first parents’ marriage at an earlier moment in the biblical narrative, before the Fall. The image seems to highlight the original goodness of creation, and perhaps alludes to the marital blessing to “be fruitful and multiply,” since that appears in the Genesis narrative prior to the events of the Fall and Expulsion. Though it is difficult to ascertain how much theological intention underlies the Velletri scene, one may at least note that its iconography emphasizes conjugal harmony and affection over sin or shame, and that the nudity of the figures is apparently deliberate (the fig leaves of earlier “Fall” images having been removed) and unproblematic. In these respects the image resonates with third- and fourth-century

hands represents the handing over of the fruit is discouraged by the placement of Adam’s left arm on Eve’s shoulders, a gesture of affection that often accompanies the *dextrarum iunctio*.

⁶⁵ *Contra* Dinkler, “Plaque with Biblical Scenes,” 413–414, who posits that the irregularities of this image and the multiplication scene “confirm the observation that in this period the iconography of biblical scenes was not yet fixed.” In a way Dinkler is correct in that the iconography is never “fixed,” in the sense “no longer expanding”; scenes of the Creation, the Allocation of Labors, and the Expulsion were developed after the Fall, and new ways of portraying Adam and Eve have continued to be developed throughout the history of Christian art, up to the present. But an established “Fall” image was clearly in place and had been broadly propagated before the Velletri image was created. There is cause to consider the distinctive features of the Velletri image as deliberate.

⁶⁶ Discussed in Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 47–52.

texts that discuss the goodness of creation, physical bodies, marriage, and sexuality.⁶⁷ The image also seems to anticipate aspects of Augustine’s later thoughts on shame-free prelapsarian sexuality.⁶⁸

Though the Velletri image is the only surviving late antique representation of Adam and Eve in this pose, it has a remarkable textual counterpart in the *cento De Laudibus Christi* written by the poet Proba.⁶⁹ In her retelling of Genesis, Proba describes the creation of Eve and Eve’s marriage to Adam with joyful, conjugal imagery, and uses the symbol of the *dextrarum iunctio* to portray the union as if it were a Roman marriage:⁷⁰

The Almighty Sire laid the ribs and entrails bare.
One of these ribs he plucked apart from
The well-knit joints of youthful Adam’s side,
And suddenly arose a wondrous gift—
Imposing proof—and shone in brilliant light:
Woman, a virgin she, unparalleled
In figure and in comely breasts, now ready
For a husband, ready now for wedlock.
For him, a boundless quaking breaks his sleep;
He calls his bones and limbs his wedded wife.
Dazed by the Will divine he took and clasped
Her hand in his, folded his arms around her.⁷¹

⁶⁷ E.g., Methodius, *Symposion e peri hagneias* 2; Lactantius *Divinae institutiones* 6.23; Epiphanius *Panarion (Adversus haereses)* 64.31.2–4; Ephrem, *In Genesim commentarius* 2.30, CSC 152:43, 153:33; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Fragmenta in Genesim*, PG 66, 641–642; Ambrosiaster, *Questiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 127.10, CSEL 50, 402–403; see also the survey of early Christian commentary on Gen. 1:28 in Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 221–270.

⁶⁸ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.26; CSEL 40; CCSL 47, 449–450; Augustine reasons that in theory, sexuality before the Fall would have been obedient to will rather than subject to lust, and procreation unproblematic. Jovinian might also have taught something like this: Clark, “Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve,” 361; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 283.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Body and Society*, 401, mistakenly states that Adam and Eve “frequently” appeared on Roman sarcophagi in the *dextrarum iunctio* pose (perhaps meaning that Adam and Eve frequently appear); this error is noted in Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 50 n. 47. See also Rep. I, 116–118, no. 188, Taf. 45: Adam and Eve do hold hands on the so-called Sarcophagus of Lot, but it is their left hands that are joined in what has been identified as an Expulsion scene—Adam at the right, his back turned to Eve, begins walking away toward the right, while Eve on the left turns her head toward the left to listen to Christ-Logos, who is making a speaking gesture. See the discussion of the *Centio* and its authorship in Chapter 3.

⁷⁰ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 70. Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, “Patterning Past and Future: Virgil in Proba’s Biblical Cento,” in *Classics Renewed: Reception and Innovation in the Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott McGill and Joseph Pucci (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2016), 103–104, discusses prefiguration of the Fall implied by the original context of the Virgilian lines Proba used here, and argues that they “negate any notion of romantic happiness” in the description of Adam and Eve. While I agree that readers familiar with the original Virgilian context could have sensed the ominous foreshadowing, I disagree that absolutely every hint of blissful, romantic love would thereby have been excluded from the moment of Adam and Eve’s “marriage.” As Cullhed herself points out (p. 98), the cento’s value consisted not primarily in its source material, but in “the coherence and integrity of the new textual fabric.”

⁷¹ Proba, *De Laudibus Christi*, 127–135; *omnipotens genitor costas et uiscera nudat. / harum unam iuueni laterum conpagibus artis / eripuit subitoque oritur mirabile donum — / argumentum ingens – claraque in luce refulsit / insignis facie et pulchro pectore uirgo, / iam matura uiro, iam plenis nubilis annis. / olli somnum ingens rumpit pauor: ossaque et artus / coniugium uocat ac stupefactus numine pressit / exceptique manu dextramque amplexus inhaesit*; trans. Clark and Hatch, *The Golden Bough, the Oaken Cross*, 28–29.

The parallels between the “marriage” in the final lines of this text and the image on the Velletri plaque are striking: Adam and Eve, right hands joined (the Latin specifies *dextram*), Adam’s arm around Eve.⁷² This latter detail is atypical; usually the wife’s arm around is around the husband’s shoulders, or her hand rests upon his shoulder. The similarities between Proba’s description and the Velletri Adam and Eve raise the possibility that the Velletri image was not one of a kind, and other depictions of the first parents in this particular handclasp pose existed on works of art that are now lost but were known to Proba and her readers.⁷³ Regardless, Proba’s portrayal of the first couple, like the Velletri image, presents them as exemplars of marital harmony. What is more, by describing the divinely created pair using the familiar gesture of Roman marriage ceremonies and iconography, Proba implicitly claimed “divine sanction for the Roman institution of marriage,” as David Hunter observes.⁷⁴

The patron of the Velletri plaque seems to have been a well-to-do Christian (sufficiently affluent to afford a customized grave relief) who like Proba imagined the biblical first couple in a way that expressed a combination of Roman aristocratic values and Christian beliefs. The image of Adam and Eve appeared as one vignette among other biblical and pastoral scenes on the plaque, arranged in the “staccato” style of the late third and early fourth century (fig. 112). At center is a veiled female *orant*, standing and filling the vertical space, in this case evidently a representation of the deceased as a woman of piety.⁷⁵ Immediately to either side are smaller images, the Adam and Eve scene to the right, and at left a seated figure reading from a scroll, with a box of scrolls before him. These two vignettes perhaps represent aspects of life important to the deceased—a harmonious marriage in the pattern of the

⁷² Adam’s embrace of Eve is one way of translating the last two words, *amplexus inhaesit*, “embracing, he held [her],” taking *coniugium* from the previous line as the object. An alternative would be to take *dextram* as the object and translate *amplexus inhaesit* as “clasping, he held [her hand].” This is the rendering used by Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed: “he approached her, | stretched out his hand, grabbed hers and held it,” in *Proba the Prophet*, 143, 200–201. She also describes this as “one of the few romantic descriptions of Adam and Eve, since the act of joining hands formed part of the Roman marriage ritual,” 143.

⁷³ Couzin, in the most recent and thorough study of the Christian sarcophagus population at Rome, estimates that the sarcophagi manufactured in antiquity, including the rare *faux* sarcophagus slabs used as loculus plates (like the Velletri plaque appears to be), have survived to the present at a rate of between 10–20%; “The Christian Sarcophagus Population of Rome,” 283, 298.

⁷⁴ Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 70.

⁷⁵ Rep. II, 83, notes distinct features of age on the face and a *Scheitelzopf* hairstyle that is partially visible despite the damage to the plaque; Dinkler, “Plaque with Biblical Scenes,” 413, observes that the *orant* “has the individual features of an elderly woman.” Cf. Manuela Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 224–225; Bisconti, “Rome, the Spread of Christianity and Art,” 82: the *orans* came to represent “the redeemed deceased.” See also the discussion of the various possible interpretations of *orant* figures in Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 35–37.

archetypal first couple, and the value of learning (both classical *paideia* and Christian instruction).⁷⁶ The references to the learned sphere and marriage suggest the commemoration of a woman whose values were shared by Christian aristocrats like Proba a generation later. Further removed from the central *orant*, yet surrounding her, are small vignettes of Noah in the ark and the multiplication miracle (in the right field), and Daniel between the lions and the Jonah cycle (in the left field). Daniel and Noah, hands raised in prayer, create a symmetrical parallel to either side of the deceased, inviting the viewer to see the woman in terms of the prayers and divine deliverance associated with these two biblical heroes. Framing the entire composition at each end are large shepherd figures, a sheep-carrier standing at the left edge, and a reclining herdsman beneath a tree at the right edge. The mixture of these biblical and bucolic images may represent messages about the deceased's afterlife, including the peaceful state of the departed soul, the promise of eternal life in the "bread of life," and the future deliverance from death in resurrection.⁷⁷ Together with the first parents and the scroll-reader, the composition reflects the deceased's values and hopes related both to this life and the next.

Adam and Eve with Spousal Portraits: Claiming a Place in Salvation History

On artifacts where spousal portraits appear in proximity to an image of Adam and Eve, the two representations often imply a connection between the spouses and the first parents, and the images may work together to claim a place for the spouses in salvation history. A noteworthy example of this is a gold glass medallion in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 111).⁷⁸ The spouses' portrait busts appear at center, posed frontally. Five biblical or apocryphal vignettes radiate from the central portrait, clockwise from top: the paralytic with Christ extending his wand-like staff (*virga*); Lazarus being raised by Christ with his staff; Adam and Eve to either side of the tree, taking the fruit and covering themselves (the "Fall" scene),

⁷⁶ Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, 287.

⁷⁷ For early Christian reading of Jonah and Daniel as antetypes of the resurrection, see *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 5.7; discussed in Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 171–176.

⁷⁸ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 62, Pl. 31, no. 366; Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro*, 1–3, Tav. 1.3; Walker, "The Wilshire Collection of Late Roman Gold-Glass at the Ashmolean Museum," 69, 71, fig. 8.8; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 93–94, pl. 64.

with the figure of Christ to the right of Eve, extending his staff toward the pair; Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac; and the water miracle of Moses or Peter.

The very placement of Adam and Eve next to this spousal portrait could have invited viewers to consider an association between the two pairs, but further encouraging this connection is the resemblance between the woman and Eve—as Charles Morey noticed, Eve has a “coiffure similar to that of [the] wife.”⁷⁹ Another medallion in Morey’s catalogue similarly features portrait busts of a man and woman beside a scene of the Fall in which Eve’s distinctive hairstyle matches that of the woman.⁸⁰

A unique feature of the Ashmolean medallion is the presence of Christ as miracle-worker with Adam and Eve. The figure of Christ or the preincarnate *Logos* sometimes appears in scenes of Adam and Eve on sarcophagi, but (so far as this author has found) the Ashmolean glass is the only instance in which Christ extends the wand-like staff toward the first parents. Daniel Howells argues for a second instance in the form of two separate medallions on a late fourth-century glass bowl (the “St. Severin bowl”) in the British Museum (fig. 113).⁸¹ Here a medallion of Christ holding out the staff appears to the left of a separate roundel of Adam and Eve. Howells believed a companion “Christ miracle worker” medallion originally appeared to the right of Adam and Eve, too, on a portion of the bowl now broken and lost.⁸² He proposed that the two surviving medallions “present Christ visibly as the redeemer of Adam’s sin.”⁸³ Though this interpretation would make an attractive analogue to the Ashmolean glass, it seems doubtful: the existence of a second “Christ miracle worker” image is purely speculative; the extant “Christ miracle worker” medallion is not in close proximity to the Adam and Eve roundel (four others—three Jonah cycle vignettes and a floral motif—are closer); and the male figure with the staff faces *away from* Adam and Eve. The viewer’s eye is not drawn to connect the miracle-worker especially with the Fall, as is unmistakable on the Ashmolean glass.

⁷⁹ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 62; cf. Zimmermann, “Catacombs and the Beginnings of Christian Tomb Decoration,” 461–462: in Christian funerary art, giving biblical figures contemporary hairstyles and clothing “immediately suggested that the deceased was participating in these salvific events.”

⁸⁰ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, 68, Pl. 33, no. 420.

⁸¹ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 90–101, esp. 93–94, no. 16, pl. 57, 62, 63.

⁸² Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 93.

⁸³ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 94.

The figure of Christ with the miracle-working staff appears most often in scenes of raising the dead or certain kinds of wonders (such as the multiplication of loaves and changing water to wine), but less often for healing miracles (performed by touch or speech).⁸⁴ The staff, evocative of the rod of Moses, was an iconographic element depicting Jesus as the new Moses and symbolizing the extension of his divine power to work transforming and restorative miracles.⁸⁵ The Ashmolean medallion applies this divine transformation and restoration to the first parents. Its selection of images suggests that as Christ restored wholeness to the paralytic, and life to Lazarus, he also restores Adam and Eve (“humanity”?) and redeems them from the Fall—a redemption foreshadowed by the sacrifice of Isaac and received in the transforming waters of baptism (to which the water miracle alluded). This visual exegesis connecting Christ to Adam and Eve seems to reflect Paul’s typology of Christ as the “second Adam” who overcomes the death and sin that Adam brought upon humanity (Rom 5:14–21; 1 Cor 15: 21–22, 45–49). To an extent it anticipates Augustine’s discussions of Christ as a physician who heals humanity of the pride it has manifest since Adam.⁸⁶ The portrayal of Adam and Eve on the Ashmolean glass, however, does not emphasize their pride or cast them in a negative light; they are included side by side with other beneficiaries of Christ’s miracles. This more positive treatment of the first parents is important in light of the apparent intention to suggest a connection between them and the spouses portrayed at the center. That link makes the Fall scene not just about Adam and Eve, nor simply about humanity in general, but specifically about the spouses who were the owners of the glass vessel; Christ’s redemption is something that comes to *this* couple, as it did to their first parents. They locate themselves among the recipients of divine favor.

Noticeable visual connections between spousal portraits and images of Adam and Eve also appear on sarcophagi. The “Trinity” sarcophagus in the Musée de l’Arles antique is a particularly clear example

⁸⁴ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 120–124; Lee M. Jefferson, *Christ the Miracle Worker in Early Christian Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 13–14, 145–175 (esp. 153–154, note 26).

⁸⁵ Jefferson, *Christ the Miracle Worker*, 145–175; cf. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 54–91.

⁸⁶ E.g., Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 35.17; discussed in Jefferson, *Christ the Miracle Worker*, 72.

of this.⁸⁷ This large, double-register monument features a prominent shell-portrait of spouses at the center of the upper register directly beneath a scene of Adam and Eve on the lid (fig. 109). Eve is to the left of the tree, Adam to the right, corresponding to the placement of wife and husband at left and right in the portrait below. A male figure stands behind each of the first parents, resting his hand on their shoulder and speaking to them; Eve and Adam look back over their shoulders towards these speakers (fig. 114). Eve and Adam do not appear ashamed, and the male figures speaking to them do not appear threatening. They have been interpreted as two representations of Christ, symbolizing the promise of redemption given to the first parents even at the time of the Fall.⁸⁸

Reinforcing this optimistic, salvific theme is the addition of the symbols of labor to the scene—a sheaf of wheat by Adam’s feet, and a lamb (now damaged) beside Eve. Though these symbols are sometimes interpreted as punishments for sin, here they seem to evoke aspects of salvation theology.⁸⁹ Eve’s lamb parallels the ram (also damaged) in the “Abraham offering Isaac” scene immediately to the left. Early Christian commentary on this episode interpreted Abraham and Isaac as a prefiguration of God giving his only Son as a sacrifice, and the ram that substituted for Isaac as yet another “type” of Christ.⁹⁰ Viewers might have seen Adam and Eve’s wheat and lamb as references to Christ, the “bread of life” and “lamb of God” in the gospel of John.⁹¹ Eve with the lamb thus foreshadows Mary who bore “the Lamb of God,” one instance of an Eve-Mary typology displayed on this sarcophagus (and found elsewhere in both texts and art).⁹² To the right, Cain and Abel bring God offerings of wheat and a lamb, the very attributes given to their parents (fig. 115). Scholars have noted that, contrary to the biblical episode that describes Abel’s offering as acceptable but Cain’s as rejected, the image here and in other early Christian works

⁸⁷ Rep. III, 23–25, no. 38, Taf. 12.1–5, 13.1–7; compare the later “Dogmatic” sarcophagus in the Vatican’s Museo Pio Cristiano: Rep. I, 39–41, no. 43, Taf. 14.

⁸⁸ Rep. III, 24: “zweimal Christus erscheint” (“Christ appears twice”); Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España*, 161.

⁸⁹ As punishments: e.g., Calcagnini-Carletti, “Adam and Eve. II. Iconography,” 9–10.

⁹⁰ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 143–148, overviews the iconography, early Christian commentary, and modern scholarship on the sacrifice of Isaac; see also Jensen, “The Offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Tradition,” *Biblical Interpretation* 2.1 (1994): 85–110.

⁹¹ John 6:35, 48; 1:29, 36; suggested by F. Grossi Gondi; cited in Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España*, 162.

⁹² Discussed in Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” and Jensen, “The Economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve”; see also Taylor, “Painted Veneration,” 21–37.

seems to depict both offerings as equally pleasing gifts.⁹³ Viewers taking in the two scenes of the first parents and their children may have perceived a message that deity provides humanity the means necessary for their reconciliation.⁹⁴

A second image of Adam and Eve appears at the left end of the upper register, to the left of the shell portrait. They stand naked and diminutive in size before a seated, bearded man, surrounded by three other male figures (figs. 103, 109). The scene has been interpreted as the creation of Adam and Eve (depicted as “newborn children”) by the Trinity, with the addition of Paul at the far right, who looks to Christ and rests his left hand on Adam’s shoulder, alluding to Paul’s role as the one who wrote of Christ as the “second Adam.”⁹⁵ Directly beneath the creation scene, in the lower register, is a parallel “Adoration of the Magi” scene (fig. 109)—a juxtaposition that sets up a visual typology between the upper and lower registers: the disobedience of Adam and Eve vs. the obedience of the Virgin and Christ; the benefaction of the three persons of the Trinity and the three magi; humanity’s creation fulfilled in its new creation.⁹⁶

Other scenes on the sarcophagus also symbolically allude to salvific themes—the healing of the hemorrhagic woman and the Canaanite woman’s daughter, the Cana and multiplication miracles (with their Eucharistic valences), the water miracle (with its allusion to the saving waters of baptism). Returning to the central shell portrait of the sarcophagus owners, one can see how, given the visual connections between this couple and Adam and Eve, the first parents function here as a key element in an iconographic program that links the commemorated couple with salvation history, and situates them within the paradigm of biblical recipients of divine favor.

Another example of visual connections between spousal portraits and the first parents is an early fourth-century strigillated sarcophagus (discussed in Chapter 3) on which certain parallels link the upper

⁹³ Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España*, 162.

⁹⁴ Jensen, “The Economy of the Trinity,” 533–534; Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España*, 161–162; with grateful acknowledgement, too, to Paige Wetzel for sharing her insight with me. Cf. the juxtaposition of Cain and Abel with Adam and Eve’s symbols of labor on Rep. I, no. 25.

⁹⁵ Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45–49; Jensen, “The Economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve,” 527–546; cf. the alternative interpretation by Deborah Markow, “Some Born-Again Christians of the Fourth Century,” *The Art Bulletin* 63.4 (1981): 650–655.

⁹⁶ Discussed more fully in Jensen, “The Economy of the Trinity,” 545–546.

and lower registers of the front, central panels (fig. 84).⁹⁷ In the upper panel, centered on the enthroned Christ, the sarcophagus owners are apparently represented twice, once as diminutive worshipers kneeling at Jesus's feet, and a second time in unfinished portraits.⁹⁸ This scene is mirrored in the lower panel by an Allocation of Labors image, with Christ again in the center, handing over symbols of labor (wheat and a lamb) to Adam and Eve. The placement of Adam and Eve beneath the spouses gives priority to the commemorated patrons and subordinates Adam and Eve as types (while on the Arles "Trinity" sarcophagus, Adam and Eve appear *above* the spouses, yet subordinated in size).

Another, more subtle visual connection between married patrons and the first parents appears on the so-called Sarcophagus of Stilicho at Milan (also discussed in Chapter 3). At the bottom center of both the front and back panels, small figures representing the married sarcophagus owners kneel worshipfully at the feet of a large, enthroned Christ (figs. 92–93).⁹⁹ In this same location at the bottom center of the right side, similarly small-scale figures of Adam and Eve appear in a scene of the Fall (now damaged, fig. 116). Here the disobedience of the first parents would seem to be contrasted with the piety and adoration of the sarcophagus owners. Yet the small figures of Adam and Eve are connected to the larger image at right of Noah in the ark—the waters beneath Noah touch the right figure in the Fall scene. The "ark" is made to seem octagonal in shape rather than square as in earlier depictions, indicating an effort to strengthen image's associations with baptism (fonts and baptisteries were often octagonal, an idea that was particularly pronounced at Milan).¹⁰⁰ Together, the two juxtaposed images suggest that the Fall that

⁹⁷ Rep. I, 139–141, no. 241, Taf. 54; cf. Koch, *Früchrichtliche Sarkophage*, no. 54; the sarcophagus is from the Albani hypogeum at St. Sebastian.

⁹⁸ Jutta Dresken-Weiland identifies this as an instance of "repräsentative Huldigungsszene unter Einschluss Verstorbener," a representative homage scene beneath the inclusion of the deceased; personal correspondence, Jan. 14, 2016; the head of the left kneeling figure is unfinished; the couple is depicted a third time on the lid in unfinished portrait busts in front of a *parapetasma*. Cf. Rep. II, no. 10; Rep. III, no. 32.

⁹⁹ Rep. II, 56–58, no. 150, Taf. 59.3–8, 60.1–2, 61.1–2; Steen, "The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio"; Lawrence, "City-Gate Sarcophagi." The married sarcophagus owners also appear in a large tondo portrait on the lid. Cf. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 158, who misidentifies the kneeling figures as "kneeling women" anointing Jesus's feet; the figure on the left is damaged but Dresken-Weiland identifies the pair as a representation of the deceased sarcophagus owners: Rep. II, 56–57.

¹⁰⁰ On Noah and baptism, see 1 Pet 3:20–21; Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 17–20; on the associations of baptism with the number eight and octagons, especially at Milan, see Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery*, 204–209.

separated humanity from deity and made salvation necessary is remedied in the waters of baptism.¹⁰¹ The visual parallel between the first parents and the married sarcophagus owners fosters an allusion to the patrons' baptism and implies a claim for their salvation.

In still other works, even in the absence of overt visual parallels, it is possible that Christian viewers may have linked images of Adam and Eve with commemorated couples, guided by Christian discourse and the developing nuptial blessing that cast believing spouses in the role of Adam and Eve's successors. The foregoing examples, however, illustrate that in some cases, there were efforts to create clear visual connections between Adam and Eve and commemorated couples in ways that made claims for the couple's own participation in the drama of salvation.

The Labors of Adam and Eve as Marital Iconography

This section gives special attention to images with symbols of the labors of Adam and Eve (a sheaf of grain and a sheep), examining the particular potential of these images to convey notions related to marriage and the married vocation as they were developing among fourth-century Christians at Rome. These images seem particularly strongly tied to a context of marriage; of 12 or 13 occasions when the symbols of labor appear on intact sarcophagi (the number depending on whether one additionally considers baskets of fruit symbols of labor), 11 occur in the context of marriage—the commemoration of a married couple in portraiture or epigraphy.¹⁰² This is a significant majority, notwithstanding the small number of the sample.

Early Christians associated the married way of life with work. In the fourth century, Eusebius described the monastic and married strands of Christian tradition as alternative vocations, each divinely

¹⁰¹ Cf. Steen, "The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio," 292, who discusses the connection between the Fall and Noah, but not in terms of baptism.

¹⁰² Context of marriage: Rep. I, nos. 40, 43, 44, 52, 241, 772; Rep. II, no. 20, 120; Rep. III, nos. 38, 40, 107. Intact with no context of marriage: Rep. I no. 680 (Junius Bassus sarcophagus), Rep. II no. 152, if the baskets are considered symbols of labor. Inconclusive: Rep. I, nos. 21, 25, 146, 176, 284, 337, 734, 840, 979, 984, 999; Rep. II, no. 22; Rep. III, nos. 41, 71, 228, 437.

given. He highlighted not just childbearing but also work as particular characteristics of the married vocation:

Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property, nor the possession of wealth... And the other more humble, more human [way] permits men to join in pure nuptials and to produce children...; it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well as for religion.¹⁰³

Jerome, too, connected the married way of life to work—the work of Adam—in his letter to Eustochium on virginity: “Let them marry and be given in marriage who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow.”¹⁰⁴

The association of marriage and work was one of the characteristics of a broader development in late antiquity—the construction of the laity as a category that could be differentiated from the religious elite.¹⁰⁵ As discussed in Chapter 1, the term *saeculares* that clergy and ascetics often applied to laypersons characterized them as Christians engaged in “worldly” pursuits like marriage and working in professions.¹⁰⁶

Problems with the “Punishments” Interpretation

As with other images of Adam and Eve, there has been a tendency to interpret the Allocation of Labors reductively in terms of sin and its consequences or punishments. This view appeals to the biblical text in which the Lord tells Adam that because he had eaten the forbidden fruit he would have to “toil ... all the days of [his] life” (Gen 3:17), and regards the image rather simply as an illustration of the text:

¹⁰³ Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 1.8, PG 22, 76–77: ὥστε ἤδη καὶ τῆ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησία δύο βίων νενομοθετησθαι τρόπους· τὸν μὲν ὑπερφυῆ, καὶ τῆς κοινῆς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης πολιτείας ἐπέκεινα, οὐ γάμους, οὐ παιδοποιίας, οὐδὲ κτήσιν, οὐδὲ περιουσίας ὑπαρξίν παραδεχόμενον... Ὁ δ’ ὑποβεβηκῶς ἀνθρωπινώτερος, οἷος καὶ γάμοις συγκατιέναι σώφροσι καὶ παιδοποιίαις... ἀγρῶν τε, καὶ ἐμπορίας, καὶ τῆς ἄλλης πολιτικωτέρας ἀγωγῆς μετὰ τοῦ θεοσεβοῦς φροντίζειν...; trans. W. J. Ferrar, *The Proof of the Gospel, Being the Demonstratio evangelica of Eusebius of Casarea* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 1.48–50.

¹⁰⁴ Jerome, *Epistula* 22.19 (written c. 384 at Rome), CSEL 54, 168: nubat et nubatur ille, qui in sudore faciei comedit panem suum; trans. NPNF II, 6:29.

¹⁰⁵ Torjesen, “Clergy and Laity,” 389–405; Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 2–43, discusses reasons why the boundary between these two categories was ambiguous; e.g., various types of ascetics were not technically clergy, but were nonetheless revered as religious elites; lower orders of clergy, on the other hand, often led lives not particularly distinguishable from lay Christians.

¹⁰⁶ Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity*, 2; see, for example, Jerome’s letter to Pammachius, *Epistula* 48.2, in which Jerome states, “Men of the world are indignant that they are in a rank lesser than that of virgins,” CSEL 54, 352: saeculi homines indignantur in minori gradu se esse quam uirgines.

“The scene can be considered a visual representation of Gen. 3:17,” Calcagnini-Carletti states.¹⁰⁷ To be sure, commentary on this text by such church fathers as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and John Chrysostom does uniformly interpret that labor of Gen 3:17 as punishment for Adam and Eve’s transgression.¹⁰⁸ Chrysostom, for instance, described the labors as a kind of penance:

Since man had shown great disobedience, God ... condemned him to a life of toil and labor, speaking to him in some such fashion as this: ‘The ease and security that were yours in abundance have led you to this great disobedience. They made you forget my commandments. You had nothing to do.... Therefore, I condemn you to toil and labor, so that while tilling the earth, you may never forget your disobedience and the vileness of your nature.’¹⁰⁹

A patristic “labors as punishment” reception of Genesis 3:17 seems clear enough, but the question remains whether the image of the Allocation would have called to mind this notion, to the exclusion of other ones, for patrons and viewers of Roman Christian sarcophagi. Would the grain and sheep, as symbols of farming and wool-working, have been understood primarily as consequences of sin?

Discontinuities between the image and the biblical text suggest that the Allocation was not intended primarily to illustrate the account in Genesis 3. While the biblical account of the Fall does indicate that Adam’s punishment would be toiling to raise crops and eat bread (arguably symbolized by a bundle of wheat), it does not mention a sheep or Eve’s wool-working. Rather, the text has the Lord telling Eve, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16). These consequences impact Eve in her roles as a mother and a wife, but the Allocation does not portray Eve with children, nor does it necessarily present her in a role subservient to Adam. Though Adam stands to Christ’s right and Christ sometimes turns slightly toward Adam, in other cases Christ faces forward, and in all cases Adam and Eve stand on the same level where each receives from Christ.¹¹⁰ If Eve’s attribute of the sheep in the

¹⁰⁷ Calcagnini-Carletti, “Adam and Eve, Iconography,” 10; cf. Wilpert, *I Sarcophagi Cristiani*, vol. 2, *Testo*, 228–229; Josi, “The Museo Pio Cristiano,” 228; Lamia, “Labor / Trades / Occupations,” 479–480.

¹⁰⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.23.3; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.11, *De cultu feminarum* 1.1; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.28; Cyprian, *De habitu virginum* 22.

¹⁰⁹ John Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 2.4–5, SC 50, 135–136; trans. Paul W. Harkins, ACW 31, 44–45.

¹¹⁰ Early Christian relief sculpture certainly did make use of iconography that reinforced patriarchal gender norms; as seen in *clipeus* portraits of spouses, for example, the husband typically held a scroll and made a speaking gesture, while the wife supportively and subserviently rested one hand on his arm and another on his shoulder. The image of Adam and Eve receiving

Allocation scene has any allusion to the domestic sphere, that connection is not made in the text of Genesis 3.

Later medieval artists alluded more directly to Eve's childbearing by adding the young Cain and Abel to scenes of the first parents laboring together. Yet these images, too, often preserve the earlier, non-biblical tradition associating Eve with wool-working. For example, a miniature from an early 15th-century illuminated German Bible depicts Eve sitting at left beneath a shaded, woodland "roof," working a spindle and distaff; at her feet is a cradle holding a small boy, while a larger boy stands behind it; to the right, in an "outdoor" area, Adam swings a farming tool (fig. 117). Likewise, in Jacopo della Quercia's 15th-century relief, the young Cain and Abel wrestle at Eve's feet as she holds a distaff and Adam works the ground with a shovel.¹¹¹ Medieval artists who visualized the labors of Adam and Eve, like their fourth-century predecessors, had in mind not only the text of Genesis, but also another tradition that led them to portray Eve spinning wool.

In addition to discontinuities between the Allocation and Genesis, another problem with the "labors as punishment" interpretation concerns the purposes of sarcophagus decoration. When figures from myths or narratives appear on sarcophagi, they project their symbolic valences onto the deceased and those who commissioned their tombs, and those monuments were meant, in large part, to honor the dead, to display their virtues, and to elevate the status of both the commemorated and their patrons.¹¹² It is doubtful that such visual panegyric could be advanced by an image held to symbolize "disobedience and the vileness of your nature."¹¹³ Consequently one seeks to identify ways patrons and viewers might have understood images of Adam and Eve that better align with the purposes of figured sarcophagi.

their labors can be seen as one that, while not challenging the patriarchal system, nevertheless emphasized concepts of spousal parity, cooperation, and sharing in the labors of life.

¹¹¹ See Lamia, "Labor / Trades / Occupations," 476.

¹¹² Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 22, 44; Dresken-Weiland, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.–6. Jahrhunderts*, 214.

¹¹³ John Chrysostom, *Catechesis*, 2.4–5; cf. Jensen, "The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve," 37; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 178.

An Iconography of Benefaction

A clue to the Allocation emerges with comparison to other early Christian images in which Christ extends his hands to figures on either side of him. These consistently signal the bestowal of a gift or blessing. One scene contemporary with the Allocation and popular on sarcophagus reliefs is the Multiplication of the Loaves: Christ stands between two apostles, who hold baskets or loaves of bread on which Christ places his hands in the act of blessing (fig. 118). The image alludes to the feeding miracles in the gospels and evokes their Eucharistic and salvific overtones.¹¹⁴

Another motif seen in fourth-century sarcophagi and other media is the *traditio legis*, the handing over of the law: Christ stands or sits enthroned between Peter and Paul, and extends to one of them (usually Peter) a scroll representing the Lord's teachings, while making a speaking gesture towards the other apostle (figs. 88, 90, 91, 95). This scene does not illustrate a biblical episode, but rather represents the authority and teachings Christ bestowed upon his apostles and the church.¹¹⁵

As discussed in Chapter 2, fourth-century gold glasses made in Rome depict the figure of Christ standing between saints like Peter and Paul, or Christian spouses, extending wreath-crowns over their heads, calling to mind such notions as eternal reward, spiritual victory, martyrdom, immortality, and *concordia* (figs. 4, 25, 26).¹¹⁶ A variation of this image appears on a gold medallion made in Rome in the early fifth century: spouses face each other and Christ stands between them, extending his arms to crown each (fig. 27).¹¹⁷

Byzantine betrothal rings and marriage belts were decorated with scenes of spouses standing to either side of Christ, who extends his arms to each or joins their right hands (fig. 32).¹¹⁸ Coronation ivories of the 10th–11th centuries depicted Byzantine emperors and empresses or their Carolingian

¹¹⁴ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 56, 74, 84–85; Jefferson, *Christ the Miracle Worker in Early Christian Art*, 130–131, 134–138.

¹¹⁵ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 46, 89, 97, 100 (fig. 33), 107–108; Robert Couzin, *The Traditio Legis: Anatomy of an Image* (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2015); Lee Jefferson, “Revisiting the Emperor Mystique: The Traditio Legis as an Anti-Imperial Image,” in *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in its Imperial Context*, ed. Lee Jefferson and Robin Margaret Jensen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 49–86.

¹¹⁶ E.g., Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 79–80, 124–127; nos. 10, 37, plates 46, 103.

¹¹⁷ Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 307–308, no. 281.

¹¹⁸ Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 283–285, nos. 262–263; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 1–16; Sabine Müller, “Dextrarum iunctio,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall et al. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 2061–2062.

counterparts with Christ standing elevated between them, reaching out with each arm to touch their crowns (fig. 119).¹¹⁹ In the 14th century, Adam and Eve again appear to either side of Christ in the *anastasis* fresco of the Chora Church at Constantinople: at the resurrection, Christ reaches out to lift Adam and Eve out of their sarcophagi (fig. 120).¹²⁰

In all of these images—both those of the fourth century and their later echoes—the iconography of “Christ in the middle,” extending his arms to figures on his right and left, carries an essentially positive symbolic value. It represents the divine extension of blessing, miraculous power, authority, legitimacy, honor, or eternal life. In each case it connotes a relationship of benefaction between Christ and the other figures. Considering these images as a visual genre, one may read them in a form-critical way; put simply: when Jesus is shown between two figures, extending his arms to each, whatever he’s giving them is going to be good. By contrast, the single-handed blessing in an early sixth-century mosaic at Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna depicts Christ pronouncing a favorable judgment upon his sheep with his extended right arm, while rejecting the goats to his left (fig. 121).¹²¹

The structure of the Allocation image, then, would suggest that Adam and Eve’s divinely given symbols of labor were to be seen as some form of blessing, favor, or beneficial role. A number of scholars have ventured salvation history interpretations of the Allocation that align with this iconography of benefaction (if not identifying it explicitly): Giovanni de Rossi saw in it a promise of redemption made to the first parents after their transgression; for Raffaele Garrucci, too, the scene expressed “the promised redemption of mankind”; Luise Troje saw an allusion to extracanonical accounts of Adam’s sacrificial offerings and their foreshadowing of Christ’s passion; F. Grossi Gondi identified symbols of Christ as the “bread of life” and “lamb of God”; Friedrich Gercke proposed a Eucharistic interpretation; Manuel Sotomayor concluded that there must be something more to the image than mere work as penance or the

¹¹⁹ E.g., Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 134–136, fig. 74; Walter, “Marriage Crowns in Byzantine Iconography,” 85, 87.

¹²⁰ Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, 207, fig. 122; Jensen, “The Economy of the Trinity,” 546.

¹²¹ The scene illustrates the judgment described in Matt 25:31–46. Again this is a symmetrical composition with Christ at the center, but in this case, Christ extends only his right arm as a gesture of favor here, representing the biblical detail that at the judgment, “The king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed of my Father...’” (Matt 25:34).

assignment of livelihood.¹²² Robin Jensen stated, “Jesus’ placement between Adam and Eve ... suggests the cross/tree equation,” and one may see Christ as the “New Adam, already reconciling the two to God through his own future life and death.”¹²³

Reading the Allocation in terms of salvation history has the merit of identifying aspects of benefaction in the given attributes, as the iconographic genre would seem to require. Suggestions of divine favor also better fit the aims and commemorative practices of sarcophagus owners. Additionally, these alternatives more accurately reflect the ways Adam and Eve function in Christian discourse on creation and redemption, in addition to sin and the Fall.¹²⁴ Without excluding these readings, the marital context of most of the Allocation images raises the possibility of further interpretations.

The Allocation of Labors as a Modified Wedding Scene

The iconography of the Allocation bears some basic similarities to Roman wedding scenes. As discussed in Chapter 2, wedding scenes on Roman sarcophagi, funerary altars, urns, and grave reliefs typically depicted the man and woman standing, turned three-quarters toward each other, as they join right hands; from the Antonine period the arrangement often included a central *pronuba* figure (figs. 9–11, 18–21). Similar iconography was used to depict spouses performing a rite of offering, bidding each other farewell, or reuniting after death.¹²⁵ For example, two parallel scenes on the Arles “Dioscuri-and-spouses” sarcophagus depict a married couple turned three-quarters toward each other, the man on the left and the woman on the right (fig. 17). In the scene at right the spouses are posed in the *dextrarum iunctio*, while at left the wife rests her right hand upon her husband’s left shoulder. Both scenes have been

¹²² These views surveyed in Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos*, 161–162, “hay algo mas que alusion al trabajo-penitencia o a los medios materiales de subsistencia”; Luise Troje, “Adam und Zoe: Eine Szene der altchristlichen Kunst in ihren religionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhänge,” *Heidelbergische Sitzungsberichte, philos.-hist. Klasse* (1916): 7–17 (Sotomayor cites p. 64); Friedrich Gerke, *Spätantike und frühes Christentum* (Baden-Baden: Holle, 1967), 106.

¹²³ Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 41, 38; Jensen, “Economy of the Trinity,” 546.

¹²⁴ Jensen, “The Fall and Rise of Adam and Eve,” 26. “In Christian tradition, Adam and Eve’s fall is only part of the story—a part that comes somewhere in the middle of the narrative. Early commentaries refer to the creation, the fall, and the restoration of Adam and Eve—to their eventual reinstatement as well as their expulsion.”

¹²⁵ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 60–73; Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l’Arles antique*, 124–130.

interpreted as farewells that simultaneously allude to the couple's marriage.¹²⁶ In sacrifice, farewell, or reunion scenes, the central mediator figure is absent, while the spouses are otherwise posed as in wedding scenes, though they do not necessarily join hands. Writing of one such image—the portrayal of a married couple's posthumous reunion as the mythical Protesilaus and Laodamia—Stine Birk notes that the scene presents “a composition that is reminiscent [of] Roman marriage scenes showing the joining of hands, thus connoting the highly valued family virtues.”¹²⁷ Images resembling the wedding ritual “do not necessarily represent an actual scene from the life of the person buried in the sarcophagus,” but rather serve as “symbols of social roles that illustrated the social status to which the deceased aspired.”¹²⁸

The Allocation of Labors may be considered as an iconographic innovation similar to these other images derived from the Roman “wedding scene.” Though Adam and Eve are not given portrait features of sarcophagus owners, they do serve as their prototypes, and are posed using compositional elements of images in which spouses wed, make a religious offering, bid farewell, or reunite, thus calling to mind marital and social roles. The stance of Adam and Eve, usually turned three-quarters toward each other, replicates the stance of spouses in marriage-related images. Between the man and woman, Christ has replaced Concordia. The figure of Christ may have called to viewers' minds the gospel tradition that the first woman and man had been joined together by God.¹²⁹ Yet the Allocation is not identical to Christian wedding images in which Christ unambiguously fills the role of *pronubus*, placing crowns upon the spouses' heads or joining the right hands of the couple (figs. 22, 25–27, 32, 39).¹³⁰ In the Allocation, the scene represents not the moment of the first parents' joining in marriage (as on the Velletri plaque), but rather a moment when they receive divinely given attributes associated with their marital vocation. The Velletri image and the Allocation may be seen, respectively, as the first couple joining in a harmonious marriage and then accepting the work associated with the married way of life. Where the image of the

¹²⁶ Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l'Arles antique*, 125–128; Rep. III, 37–38, no. 51, Taf. 18.1–3; Reekmans, “La dextrarum iunctio,” 57.

¹²⁷ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 97, fig. 49.

¹²⁸ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 61.

¹²⁹ Matt 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9.

¹³⁰ Cf. Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, vol. 1 *Testo*, 90–91; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt and Marriage Rings,” 1–16.

Fall depicted Adam and Eve “separated by the tree,”¹³¹ the Allocation showed them joined together by Christ in a common cause.

When this scene appeared on a sarcophagus commemorating a married couple, its resemblance to marriage-related images could have evoked for viewers the marital and social roles of the grave owners, with an implied statement that their married way of life was divinely appointed, and thus worthy of honor.

Ideal Partnership in the Division of Labors

One way viewers may have perceived the marital and social roles implied in Adam and Eve’s symbols of work is as a reference to the idealized partnership in the division of labors between husband and wife. The gendered distinction of male or female spheres of work reflects, of course, an ancient, patriarchal view. Partnership in the division of labors was a social and marital ideal found not only in the biblical description of Eve as a counterpart (or helper) suitable to Adam (Gen 2:18), but also in Greek and Roman thought.¹³² The educated, wealthy elites who purchased sarcophagi would have been familiar with the tradition, and operated very much within it.¹³³

In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle had written, “With the human race division of labor begins at the outset, and man and woman have different functions; thus they supply each other’s wants, putting their special capacities into the common stock.”¹³⁴ Xenophon, also in the fourth century BCE, had argued that this division and partnership was divinely instituted: “The gods with great discernment have established this kind of yoking of male and female ... in order that they may form a perfect partnership in mutual service.” The divinely appointed sphere for the man was outdoors, while the woman’s was indoors

¹³¹ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 12.

¹³² Greek and Roman traditions about the ideal division of labors in marriage are discussed in Treggiari, *Roman Marriage, passim* (esp. 185, 188, 202–203, 206, 215, 220–221, 227, 243–244, 251–252); the division of labors as a primary reason for marrying is discussed in Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 65–69; funerary art displaying men’s virtues in the public sphere and women’s virtues in the domestic sphere is discussed in Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 13–19.

¹³³ Levine, “The Image of Christ in Late Antiquity,” 224, discusses the recent trend in sarcophagus studies, exemplified in works by Wrede, Brandenburg, and Borg, that gives attention to *paideia* as “a structuring principle of elite thought” for both Christians and non-Christians during the second sophistic, and thus to the role that *paideia* plays in understanding a sarcophagus’s iconography. That approach underlies the remainder of this section.

¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.12.7, LCL 73, 502: εὐθὺς γὰρ διήρηται τὰ ἔργα, καὶ ἕστιν ἕτερα ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός· ἐπαρκοῦσιν οὖν ἀλλήλοις, εἰς τὸ κοινὸν τιθέντες τὰ ἴδια; trans. H. Rackham, LCL 73, 503, Anglicized spelling revised; see also Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 188.

and was particularly characterized by wool working. Thus the respected Isomachus was successful because he observed these roles, and had instructed his wife: “Since we know what duties have been assigned to each of us by the god, we must try, each of us, to do the duties allotted to us as well as possible. ... When wool is brought in to you, you must see that clothing is made for those who need it.”¹³⁵

This convention continues in the first century CE with Philo’s statement that men belong in the public sphere, “market-places and council-halls and law-courts,” while “women are best suited to the indoor life”—men rule cities, women govern households.¹³⁶ Along the same lines, Musonius Rufus upheld traditions that the tasks of men and women “are suited to the nature of each,” and so, with occasional exceptions, “spinning and indoor work would be more fitting for women than for men, while gymnastics and outdoor work would be more suitable for men.”¹³⁷ While Philo and Musonius focused on the separate spheres of activity, their contemporary, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian, emphasized harmonious partnership, writing of a young man’s right to choose his own wife to be his “lifepartner” and “the companion of [his] labors, anxieties, and cares.”¹³⁸

Though to modern eyes the division of labors may represent oppressive constructs of a bygone society, Susan Treggiari observes that for Romans, it “theoretically gives the wife a province in which she is supreme.”¹³⁹ Thus one sees a visual balance as the spheres of men’s and women’s activities appear on Roman sarcophagi, with the ideal roles of and husband and wife portrayed to either side of figured panels.¹⁴⁰ An early fourth-century columnar sarcophagus at Ostia Antica features a large, central marriage scene (now damaged) with the wife on the left, the husband on the right (fig. 122).¹⁴¹ Scenes in

¹³⁵ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.18, 22, 29, 36, LCL 168, 446–453: οἱ θεοί, ὃ γύναι, δοκοῦσι πολὺ διεσκεμμένως μάλιστα τὸ ζεῦγος τοῦτο συνθετικέναι, ὃ καλεῖται θῆλυ καὶ ἄρρεν, ὅπως ὅτι ὠφελιμώτατον ἢ αὐτῶ εἰς τὴν κοινωνίαν. ... εἰδότας ἅ ἑκατέρω ἡμῶν προστέτακται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, πειρᾶσθαι ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστα τὰ προσήκοντα ἑκάτερον ἡμῶν διαπράττεσθαι.... καὶ ὅταν ἔρια εἰσενεχθῆ σοι, ἐπιμελητέον, ὅπως οἷς δεῖ ἰμάτια γίγνηται; trans. E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd, rev. Jeffrey Henderson, LCL 168, 447–453; see also Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 185.

¹³⁶ Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 3.169–170, trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 320, 580–582; see also Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 215.

¹³⁷ Musonius Rufus, frag. 4, “Should Daughters Receive the Same Education as Sons?” in Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” 47; see also Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 221.

¹³⁸ Quintilian, *Declamationes minores* 257: ego eligam cum qua victurus sum, ego comitem laborum, sollicitudinum, curarum ipse perpendam (“I shall choose my lifepartner, I shall form my opinion of the companion of my labors, anxieties, and cares”); trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 500, 112–113; see also Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 251–252.

¹³⁹ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 203.

¹⁴⁰ Also discussed in Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 204, 208.

¹⁴¹ This sarcophagus also discussed in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 124–125; fig. 65, no. 643.

architraves to the left and right illustrate the wife's activity in the domestic sphere and the husband's in the public sphere: at left, the wife stands with a female attendant, who hands her a cosmetics box; at right, the man stands holding a scroll and engaging in conversation with a philosopher. Similarly, on the lid of the late Antonine Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, spouses in a central *dextrarum iunctio* scene are flanked by scenes to the left of the wife supervising a son's bath and a daughter's instruction, and to the right, the military commander husband showing *clementia* to conquered barbarians (fig. 59).¹⁴² Such forms of self-representation displayed sarcophagus owners as worthy of honor in their harmonious partnership and conformity to social mores, in the same way that Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* had presented Isomachus as respectable because he and his wife had conducted themselves capably within their respective spheres. The strategic use of left and right fields of relief sculpture to depict spouses' distinct realms of activity prefigures the iconography of the Allocation, with Adam and Eve to Christ's right and left.¹⁴³

The ideal division of labors in Roman marriage was also expressed in epigraphy. Epitaphs typically praised men for virtues they manifest outside the home, and women for their domestic virtues, often symbolized by wool-working. The second century BCE epitaph of Claudia announces that she "kept house and made wool."¹⁴⁴ In the second century CE, Amymone the wife of Marcus "worked wool, was

¹⁴² Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 143; Martin Henig, ed., *A Handbook of Roman Art* (Phaidon, 1983), 93; Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 15–17. Cf. Kampen, "Biographical Narration and Roman Funerary Art," 47–58, who does not read the scene as organized into gendered female and male spheres to the left and right, but as related entirely to the male deceased; Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 148, who identifies the scene at left as the husband's first bath; and Huskinson, "Picturing the Roman Family," 536–357, who reads the scenes from left to right as "four successive scenes of family life" in the life of the man, the woman at left as the man's mother, and the bath as the man's own. But in "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 17, Huskinson undertakes a "reappraisal of our own prior assumptions" and argues the other alternative: the program should not be read as dealing only with the man, for the scenes on the left side depict the life of the wife and mother, in balance and symmetry with the man's life on the right. This concurs with Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 301, who identifies the scene at left as "the veiled and seated wife and a nurse giving a bath to the couple's first child" (while noting the "alternative interpretation" of the scene as "the bath of the deceased himself"). I agree with these latter readings on the grounds that (a) the central depiction of marriage guides the viewer to identify the left and right sides of the lid as the wife's and husband's spheres, respectively, and (b) the long-established ideal of the tradition of division of labors / spheres in marriage would also steer the viewer in this direction. Ewald, "Sarcophagi and Senators," 565, also sees this: "On the so-called marriage sarcophagi, half of the space is dedicated to the female realm," and this reflects the second-century "importance of the family, of the *femina clarissima* and her children"; see also Wrede, *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, 42–53. The unfinished face of the woman in both the left and center scenes would also seem to weigh in favor of identifying the woman at left as the deceased commander's wife, and therefore the bath as that of the couple's child. See also the discussion of this lid in Chapter 3.

¹⁴³ Visual symmetry of wife's and husband's spheres discussed in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 126–127, figs. 67–68, nos. 54–55; and in Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 17–19; cf. D. E. E. Kleiner and S. B. Matheson, *I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996), 206–208, no. 162.

¹⁴⁴ CLE 52; *Tituli Sepucrales*, 18; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 243: *Domum servavit, lanam fecit*.

pious, modest, frugal, chaste, and stayed home.”¹⁴⁵ Susan Treggiari observes that “in an idealized archaic time, matronly industry was in perfect balance with the husband’s activity in the forum.” Wool-working was “the common characteristic of all virtuous wives” and “the wife’s major contribution to household economy.... Spinning also had a moral function. Like embroidery in the nineteenth century or knitting in the twentieth, it provided employment for hands which might have been idle. It was incompatible with adultery or riotous living and it provided a guarantee that the wife was home-loving.” These concepts were so integrated in Roman thought that it became stereotypical for writers bemoaning the decline of public morality to point both to women’s unchastity and their neglect of spinning wool.¹⁴⁶

Karen Hersch has recently written about how wool-working was associated with the bride in the Roman wedding. Wedding ceremonies included material symbols of wool work which stood for “the bride’s skills within this sphere of labor” and “a Roman woman’s cloistered virtue.” “At the Roman wedding, onlookers may have seen in these tools of woolworking symbols not only of the bride’s future industry, but also the spinning out of a good destiny for her marriage and children.”¹⁴⁷

Archaeology and texts attest to the Christian reception of these Greco-Roman traditions about wool working, female virtue, and an ideal division of labors. Christian women were sometimes buried with implements of wool work. At Dunaszekcsó, Hungary, “a decorative spindle carved of bone” was discovered in a fourth-century burial of a Christian woman, along with a gold glass medallion portraying a married couple, presumably the woman and her husband (fig. 123).¹⁴⁸ Inside the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina at Tolentino, which announces the husband’s public activity (his service as Praetorian Prefect) and the wife’s more familial activities (commissioning the construction of the

¹⁴⁵ CE 237; ILS 8402 = CIL VI; trans. Kate Wilkinson, *Women and Modesty in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 58. *HIC SITA EST AMYMONI MARCI OPTIMA ET PULCHERRIMA LANIFICA PIA PUDICA FRUGI CASTA DOMISEDA*. Cf. Jane F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, eds., *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1991), 52; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 243.

¹⁴⁶ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 243, 206.

¹⁴⁷ Karen K. Hersch, “The Woolworker Bride,” in *Ancient Marriage in Myth and Reality*, ed. Lena Larsson Lovén and Agneta Strömberg (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 123, 126, 129. Hersch notes that the development of these traditions associating woolworking with the Roman wedding “points up the talents of the Romans for reshaping symbols common to their predecessors and neighbors,” 131. In the deployment of images of Adam and Eve by Roman Christians, we see yet another illustration of this talent for reshaping received symbols. For earlier discussion of connections between wool-working and the bride at weddings, see Williams, “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals,” 21, n. 20.

¹⁴⁸ Ferenc Fülep, “Early Christian Gold Glasses in the Hungarian National Museum,” *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 16 (1968), 406.

sarcophagus and mausoleum), a distaff with a large wad of raw linen fibers was discovered with the skeleton of Septimia Severina.¹⁴⁹

In *Paedagogus*, Clement of Alexandria discusses men's and women's activities that are approved by Christ, who as *Logos* (Reason) is "the Instructor" of humanity: Women "are to exercise themselves in spinning, and weaving, and superintending the cooking if necessary. ... The Instructor will approve of a woman like this, who stretches forth her arms to useful tasks, rests her hands on the distaff, opens her hand to the poor, and extends her wrist to the beggar." The ideal woman emulates Sarah, who fed visitors, and Rachel, who tended sheep. For men, appropriate exercises include wrestling, playing ball games in the sun, walking into the country or into town, and working with farming tools in agricultural labor.¹⁵⁰

Near the beginning of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a church order of the third century, two successive passages instruct men and women regarding their proper activities. To the men it says, "Be always attending to your craft and your work,"¹⁵¹ and the next section instructs women, "Fear your husband and reverence him, and please him alone, and be ready to minister to him; and let your hands be put forth to the wool, and your mind be upon the spindle." The text then quotes Proverbs 31:13: "She made wool and linen with her ready hands."¹⁵² In the fourth century, the *Didascalia* was reworked into the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which retained these instructions to men and women about their ideal roles.¹⁵³

Also in the fourth century, John Chrysostom preached a sermon on "How to Choose a Wife" in which he reiterated the familiar theme of the division of labors in marriage:

In general our life is composed of two spheres of activity, the public and the private. When God divided these two he assigned the management of the household to the woman, but to the man he assigned all the affairs of the city, all the business of the marketplace, courts, council-chambers,

¹⁴⁹ Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcogago di Flavivs Ivllivs Catervivs*, 131.

¹⁵⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 3.10.49.1–50.2, SC 158, 106–109: ...ταλασιουργία δὲ γυμναστέον καὶ ἰστοουργία καὶ τῶ παραστήναι τῇ πεττούσῃ, εἰ δέοι... τὴν τοιαύτην γυναῖκα ὁ παιδαγωγὸς ἀποδέχεται, ἢ τοὺς πήχεις ἐκτενεῖ εἰς τὰ χρήσιμα, τὰς χεῖρας δὲ αὐτῆς ἐρείδεται εἰς ἄτρακτον· χεῖρας δὲ αὐτῆς διήνοιξεν πένητι, καρπὸν δὲ ἐξέτεινεν πτωχῶ...; trans. William Wilson, ANF 2:283. Though Clement wrote *Paedagogus* in the Greek East at the end of the 2nd century / beginning of the 3rd, rather than at Rome in the early 4th century when the Allocation appears, this work illustrates a Christian expression of the traditional division of labors; Clement's work was known by Christians of the Latin West: Jerome, *Epistula* 70.4 to Magnus, a Roman orator; cf. Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 12, where Clement's Latin contemporary listed a wife's domestic duties, which included watching over the work of spinning.

¹⁵¹ *Didascalia Apostolorum* 2; R. Hugh Connolly, trans., *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 11 (pronouns modernized here and following).

¹⁵² *Didascalia Apostolorum* 3; Connolly, *Didascalia*, 20–22 (pronouns modernized).

¹⁵³ *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 1.2.4; 1.3.8.

armies, and all the rest. A woman cannot throw a spear or hurl a javelin, but she can take up the distaff, weave cloth, and manage everything else that concerns the household... God provided for peace by preserving the suitable position for each. He divided our life into these two parts....¹⁵⁴

The description of gender roles in these Christian texts closely parallels the image of the Allocation of Labors. In Clement and Chrysostom, deity assigns the activities proper for women and men; in the Allocation image, Christ stands at the center handing symbols of activity to Adam and Eve. The texts identify domestic duties as women's activities, including feeding visitors, tending sheep, and wool working; the Allocation depicts Eve receiving a sheep. Men's activities take place outside the home and include agricultural work; in the Allocation Adam receives a bundle of wheat from the fields. It is in the traditional discourse of gender roles and the division of work in marriage, more than in Patristic commentary on Genesis 3:17, where one finds close correspondence to the Allocation of Labors, and therefore a more likely approximation of what sarcophagus viewers and patrons would have seen in the image.

In the Allocation, the prototypical first married couple models the tradition of partnership in the division of labors and the reception of divinely appointed roles. When this image appeared in the context of a portrait or epigraphic commemoration of a married Christian couple, it may have suggested to viewers that the commemorated pair was to be esteemed as upholders of the divinely given social order, in the pattern of the first parents.

Ongoing Creation

Beyond the idealized partnership in the division of labors, the Allocation, especially when it appeared in marital contexts, could also have evoked for viewers the role of the first parents, and of married Christians, in the perpetuation of life. The attributes of grain, a sheep, and baskets full of fruit that appear with Adam and Eve were constituent elements of Roman iconography signaling life and abundance. The three Graces, deities who blessed marriages, sometimes hold bundles of grain,

¹⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, "How to Choose a Wife"; Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson, trans., *St John Chrysostom: On Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 96–97; also cited in Harrison, "The Silent Majority," 92.

symbolizing the blessing and fertility of the earth.¹⁵⁵ Grain, sheep, and baskets appear particularly on sarcophagi depicting the four Seasons. On a Dionysus sarcophagus in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, the personification of Summer clutches a bundle of wheat in his right hand and holds aloft an overflowing basket in his left, while next to him the personification of Fall grasps a hare in his right hand and holds a cornucopia in his left (fig. 124).¹⁵⁶ A sheep stands by the feet of one of the seasonal genii on a Seasons sarcophagus in the Capitoline Museum (fig. 125). The Seasons have been interpreted as references to “the fullness of life and the ever-recurring cycle,” “the eternal return of the years,” “happiness, blessing, and plenty,” and “the renewal of life.”¹⁵⁷ When their familiar attributes appear with Adam and Eve, they would seem to highlight the first parents’ association with the continuance and regeneration of life—a role inherent to the pair the Creator told to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). Their very names refer to the cultivation and procreation that were the imperatives of agrarian life in the ancient world: “Adam” plays off the Hebrew *‘adamah*, the soil from which God formed the man (Gen 2:7) and which man must till, and Eve is called “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).

The role of married believers to reproduce humanity in the pattern of the first parents was clearly on the minds of late antique Christians. In the late second century Irenaeus wrote that ascetic sects that preached abstinence from marriage were “setting aside the original creation of God,” who had “made the male and female for the propagation of the human race.”¹⁵⁸ Irenaeus linked creation and human reproduction as purposeful elements of the divine plan:

Humanity was created according to the image and established in the likeness of the uncreated God. The Father decided and commanded; the Son molded and shaped; the Spirit nourished and developed. Humanity slowly progresses, approaches perfection, and draws near to the uncreated God. ... It was therefore appropriate for humanity first to be made, being made to grow, having grown to be strengthened, being stronger to multiply [*plethynthenai*, the same verb used in LXX

¹⁵⁵ Gerhart Rodenwaldt, “The Three Graces on a Fluted Sarcophagus,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 28.1 (1938) 60–64, Pl. 6–8.

¹⁵⁶ Jensen, “Economy of the Trinity,” 533, identifies the animal given to Eve in some instances as a hare, and observes: “Although the hare was sometimes a symbol of fertility, in this instance the hare (*lepus*) probably symbolizes wild game, a frequent image in third-century Roman monuments (and often associated with the personification of Autumn), and the wheat represented the harvest of crops.”

¹⁵⁷ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 44, 166; McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 97. Cf. Lawrence, “Season Sarcophagi of Architectural Type,” 273–295 (esp. 277).

¹⁵⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.28.1, SC 264, 354: ...frustrantes antiquam plasmationem Dei ... qui et masculum et feminam ad generationem hominum fecit...; cf. 4.11.1; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF 1:353.

Gen 1:28], having multiplied to grow strong, having grown strong to be glorified, and once glorified to see its Lord.¹⁵⁹

Irenaeus's passage is strikingly reminiscent of the composition on the Vatican "Dogmatic" sarcophagus (fig. 110). A depiction of the Trinity creating Adam and Eve appears at the left end of the upper register, immediately next to the Allocation of Labors, evocative of Irenaeus's description of the Trinity creating humanity and humanity's imperative to grow and multiply. These scenes appear immediately to the left of a central *clipeus* portrait of the married sarcophagus owners, alluding to their own role as successors of Adam and Eve. And as discussed earlier in this chapter, the Arles "Trinity" sarcophagus similarly includes images of the creation of Adam and Eve and symbols of their labors in connection with portraits of the married sarcophagus owners, once again linking creation and the first parents' role in propagating life on earth (figs. 109, 114).

The role of married believers in perpetuating creation was acknowledged as vital even by proponents of celibacy. In an eleven-discourse treatise on virginity, Methodius paused just one section in to discuss the importance of those who chose to marry and bear children (a move by which Methodius preempted any charge of denigrating marriage).¹⁶⁰ The blessing "be fruitful and multiply" spoken to Adam and Eve in the garden was "God's declaration and command regarding procreation," which "is still being accomplished even now, since the Creator is still fashioning human beings. . . . It is necessary that human beings cooperate in producing the image of God, since the universe continues to exist and to be created. *Increase and multiply*, Scripture says."¹⁶¹ For Methodius, married Christians cooperated with deity in the ongoing act of creation, living out the words God spoke to Adam and Eve.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.38.3, SC 100, 954–957: . . .plasmatus homo secundum imaginem et similitudinem constituitur infecti Dei, Patre quidem bene sentiente et jubente, Filio vero ministrante et formante, Spiritu vero nutriente et augente, homine vero paulatim proficiente et perveniente ad perfectum, hoc est proximum infecto fieri, hic autem est Deus. Oportuerat autem hominem primo fieri, et factum augeri, et auctum corroborari, et corroboratum multiplicari [πληθυσθῆναι], et multiplicatum convalescere, convalescentem vero glorificari, et glorificatum videre suum Dominum; trans. J. Patout Burns, ed., *Theological Anthropology* (Philadelphia, PA: 1981), 24–25; cited in Cohen, *Be Fertile, and Increase*, 239–240.

¹⁶⁰ Noted by Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 17.

¹⁶¹ Methodius, *Symposion e peri hagneias* 2.1, SC 95, 68–71; trans. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 64–65.

¹⁶² Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10: through marriage and procreation, "the human being becomes the image of God, by cooperating in the creation of another human being;" trans. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 41; *Stromata* 3.9.66: "Marriage is co-operation with the work of creation," (matrimonium creationi aliquid affert auxilii), *The Library of Christian Classics: Volume II, Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origin*, ed. John Ernest Leonard Oulton (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1954), 71.

While Methodius wrote in Greek in Asia Minor, his contemporary Lactantius articulated similar views in the Latin West, arguing that God did not command celibacy because “it is necessary that human beings be created.”¹⁶³

Adam and Eve’s role in the perpetuation of life is highlighted in the earliest text of Christian wedding prayers, the aforementioned *Sacramentarium Veronense*, which dates to the early sixth century, though the text likely preserves prayers approximating those developed in fourth-century Rome.¹⁶⁴ Here the description of Adam and Eve, like the attributes of the Seasons, calls to mind the continuing cycle of life and regeneration, and marrying Christians are ritually inducted into their roles as Adam and Eve’s successors.¹⁶⁵

Listen favorably, O Lord, to our prayers
and graciously grant your help
to the institutions you have established
for the propagation of the human race. ...
Father, creator of the world,
you gave life to every living creature
and commissioned [human beings] to multiply.
With your own hands, you gave Adam a companion. ...
Thus your command to share the marriage bed,
to increase and multiply in marriage,
has linked the whole world together
and established ties among the whole human race. ...
Thus it was that generation was to follow generation,
those who came first
being succeeded by those who came after;
so that humankind,
though destined for death,
and despite life’s brevity,
goes on without end.¹⁶⁶

Marriage liturgy and literary sources applied the first parents’ procreative role to married Christians in late antiquity. The image of the Allocation may have been seen to serve a similar function in

¹⁶³ Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 6.23.38; SC 509, 354: Quod quidem deus non ita fieri praecepit tamquam adstringat, quia generari homines oportet; trans. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 76. Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti* 127.30–31, CSEL 50.412–413; Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 292.

¹⁶⁴ Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 40–41; Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 4–5.

¹⁶⁵ Hunter, “Nuptial Metaphor and Nuptial Reality,” 5. With thanks to David G. Hunter for drawing my attention to this source.

¹⁶⁶ *Sacramentarium Veronense*, 1109–1110, in Mohlberg, ed., 140: “Adesto, domine, supplicationi[bu]s nostris, et institutis tuis, quibus propagationem humani generis ordinasti, benignus adsiste: ... Pater, mundi conditor, nascentium genitor, multiplicandae originis institutor, qui Adae comitem tuis manibus addesdisti... hinc ad totius multitudinis incrementum coniugalis tori iussa consortia, quo totum inter se saeculum colligarent, humani generis foedera nexuerunt. ... dum per ordinem flueret digesta posteritas ac priores uentura sequerentur, nec ullum sibi finem in tam brebi termino, quamvis esset / caduca posteritas”; trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 42–43.

the visual field. In the Allocation, Adam and Eve receive objects iconographically associated with abundance and the renewal of life. The appearance of this image on sarcophagi commemorating married Christians could have been perceived as a way of connecting the first parents to their fourth-century successors who, like their progenitors, cooperate with the work of creation.

To conclude this section on the Labors of Adam and Eve: these images constituted new visual vocabulary serving both traditional aims of funerary display and new Christian messaging. For patrons and viewers, the images had the potential to convey and evoke a rich array of theological and social values. Particularly on sarcophagi commemorating married persons, the images contributed to presenting couples as upholders of the social and spiritual order, as successors of the first parents who cooperated with deity in the ongoing creation of humanity, and as harmonious spouses joined and endowed by divine action at the center of their relationship.

Other Biblical Role Models of Marriage

In conclusion, a few brief notes about other biblical role models for marriage are in order.

Scenes of Susanna and the elders appear in catacomb wall paintings and decorate some fourth-century sarcophagi. As in the biblical tale, Susanna's husband is never depicted. Though the images may allude to a concept of marital fidelity and chastity, they more plausibly denote faithfulness in the face of threatening circumstances and divine deliverance of the just.¹⁶⁷

The wedding of Cana became a repeated point of reference in marital liturgy from the fifth century forward, as a proof that the Lord approved of marriage. In early Christian art, however, the subject never portrays the bride and groom, but focuses on the transformative miracle with its apparent Eucharistic and baptismal significance.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ The interpretation of chastity and fidelity is discussed in Smith, "Inventing Marital Chastity," 3–24; Susanna as a model of faithfulness in tribulation and deliverance is discussed in Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 27, 36, 78, 87.

¹⁶⁸ Paulinus, *Carmen* 25, 150–152; Byzantine rite, II.2, 4a, 5, 9, 14; Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 36, 63, 65, 71, 73, 77, 78; on the symbolism of the Cana miracle, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 86, 126.

One late fourth- or early fifth-century sarcophagus portrays the betrothal of Mary and Joseph, who join hands in the *dextrarum iunctio*.¹⁶⁹ Fifth-century mosaics in the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome depict the marriages of Jacob and Rachel (fig. 126), Moses and Zipporah (fig. 127), and Joseph and Mary (fig. 128), with the spouses joining right hands. These coincide with a custom, seen in Paulinus's early fifth-century wedding poem and subsequent liturgical texts, of holding up the patriarchs and other biblical figures as exemplars for marrying couples.¹⁷⁰

One of the nine seventh-century silver plates discovered in 1902 as part of the Lambousa treasure depicts the marriage of David to Michal. Using the traditional wedding scene iconography, the two clasp right hands in front of a *pronubus*, in this case, Michal's father, Saul.¹⁷¹

Though many of these objects and texts lie outside the third- and fourth-century Roman focus of this dissertation, they do illustrate that Adam and Eve represented the leading edge of a tradition in which texts and images appealed to biblical figures to affirm that marriage, and married Christians, were in continuity with God's creation and chosen people.

Medieval church paintings and icons added the figures of the bride and groom; e.g., the 14th-century paintings at the church of St. Nicholas at Thessalonika; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Agios_Nikolaos_Orfanos_Fresken.jpg.

¹⁶⁹ Rep. III, 133, no. 267.

¹⁷⁰ Paulinus alluded to Rebekah and Isaac, Sara and Abraham, *Carmen* 25, 107, 149; the Verona Sacramentary calls upon the bride to emulate Rachel, Rebecca, and Sarah, *Sacramentarium Veronese* 6b, ii; the Gregorian Sacramentary or "Hadrianum" replicates this prayer for the bride to be "an imitator of holy women," specifying Rachel, Rebecca, and Sarah, *Sacramentarium Gregorianum* 8d–e; the Gelasian marriage rite includes a prayer that the couple "might imitate the holy patriarchs," 10b; the Byzantine rite alludes several times to Isaac and Rebecca, runs through a litany of biblical couples the Lord blessed (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and Aseneth, Moses and Zipporah, Joachim and Anna, Zechariah and Elizabeth), and blesses the groom in the pattern of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the bride after Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel; Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 35–36, 43, 48, 53, 58, 60, 65, 67, 76.

¹⁷¹ Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 482–483, no. 432; Lazaridou, *Transition to Christianity*, 162–163, no. 133a.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE, DEATH, AND THE AFTERLIFE

Bonds that Endure Past Death?

This chapter examines visual and literary evidence of spousal devotion after death and the ways individuals expressed hopes of an afterlife for themselves and their partners. Much of the visual evidence for early Christian marriage (like much early Christian art generally) belongs to a funerary context, and speaks to matters of death and afterlife. Inquiring how marriage figured in this funerary art goes to the heart of Christian valuation of the married state—was the significance of marriage limited to the duration of mortal life, or did it extend in some sense beyond death? Beliefs about the afterlife also have implications for this life. “The ways in which people imagine heaven tell us how they understand themselves, their families, their society, and their God,” M. Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang observe in a historical survey of Judeo-Christian conceptions of the hereafter. Discourse about heaven, they find, reflects “both the private and public dimensions” of culture, and promotes “ideas which control the behavior of the blessed.”¹ Thus, examining what people believed about spousal relationships in the afterlife gives insight into their sense of the place and practice of marriage in this life.

Initially this may seem an unlikely avenue of inquiry. There is little in the New Testament suggesting any kind of significance to marital or familial bonds beyond death.² Paul wrote that a woman was bound to her husband only so long as he lived; if he died, she was free to remarry (1 Cor 7:39). When Paul described the future reunion of the faithful with those who had died, it was only as a large family reunion comprised of the *adelphoi* of the church—all the “brothers and sisters” of the faith whose kinship was “in Christ” (1 Thess 4:13–18). In the synoptic gospels, when a group of Sadducees posed a problem

¹ M. Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), xvi, xv.

² For an exception, see the discussion below on variants of 1 Peter 3:7.

to Jesus regarding a woman who had had seven husbands, asking whose wife she would be in the resurrection, Jesus answered, “When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25; par. Matt 22:30; Luke 20:34–36). Some commentators have drawn attention to the ambiguity in Jesus’s response, with its reference to there being no *creation* of marriages, rather than no *existence* of marriage, in the age to come; for example, New Testament scholar Ben Witherington observed that Jesus’s statement that “no new marriages will be initiated in the eschatological state” is “surely not the same as claiming that all existing marriages will disappear in the eschatological state.”³ Yet Jesus gave his answer in response to the question, “In the resurrection whose wife will she be?” and many early Christian writers understood his answer, and his reference to a state “like angels,” to point to a nonconjugal afterlife.⁴ The picture of an angelic, unmarried state hereafter for the “family” of believers seems to have had implications for behavior in this life: numerous New Testament sayings subvert familial loyalties and subordinate the kin relationships of believers to their ties with the faith community.⁵

Some early Christian burial practices seem to reflect this perspective. Christian epitaphs in nearly every region of the western empire generally de-emphasized familial relationships, often making no mention of them at all.⁶ The Roman catacombs, as Fabrizio Bisconti states, constituted “a radical innovation with respect to previous Roman burial customs ... in the sense that the entire community was laid to rest in a vast underground chamber ... as if in a vast embrace that united the faithful.”⁷ In Roman

³ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 328; *contra*, e.g., Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 18, who summarizes the intent of Jesus’s statement: “both marriage and death cease to exist after the resurrection.”

⁴ E.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.4.3; Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 1.1.4; Jerome, *Epistulae* 75.2; but see Witherington’s response in *The Gospel of Mark*, 328–329, explaining Jesus’s answer in terms of the practice of levirate marriage assumed in the Sadducees’ question (i.e., in the resurrection people would not be given in *levirate* marriage): “In the eschatological state we have resurrected beings who are no longer able to die. Levirate marriage existed precisely because of the reality of death. When death ceases to happen, the rationale for levirate marriage falls to the ground as well. When Jesus says in v. 25b that people will be like the angels in heaven in the life to come, he does not mean they will live a sexless identity (early Jews did not think angels were sexless in any case; cf. Gen. 6:1–4!), but rather that they will be like angels in that they are unable to die. Thus the question of the Sadducees is inappropriate to the conditions of the eschatological state.”

⁵ E.g., Matt 8:21–22 (=Luke 9:59–60); 12:48–50 (=Mark 3:33–35; Luke 8:21); 19:10–12, 29; Luke 9:59–62; 11:27–28; 14:26; see also the discussion in Chapter 1.

⁶ Brent D. Shaw, “Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 33.4 (1984), 467ff.; cf. Richard P. Saller and Brent D. Shaw, “Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers, and Slaves,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 124–156.

⁷ Bisconti, “Rome, the Spread of Christianity and Art,” 77, 81.

North Africa Christians tended to be buried with fellow believers rather than in family groups; Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen observe, “Family and other social relationships seem to have been considered significant only during earthly life.”⁸

Such data have led to some fairly sweeping characterizations of what Christians imagined regarding the heavenly state of their family and marriage relationships. “No marriage in heaven” is the subject heading McDannell and Lang gave to a discussion of early Christian views.⁹ “The nuptial bond would be dissolved with the resurrection, as would family ties,” summarizes Dyan Elliott.¹⁰ As for posthumous reunions, Nicola Denzey poses the questions: “Who waits for us in the afterlife? ... Does marriage continue in heaven, or do we all live as genderless angels...?” The answer in late antiquity, she proposes, “depended on whether you were Christian or pagan.” In Roman religions, “the bonds of marriage were as enduring as they were comforting,” but for Christians, “earthly marriage would be transcended in heaven” and the “communities of celestial faithful” would be “disconnected from the earthly fetters of family” and “bonded to a new and enduring family of saints.”¹¹

The evidence presented in this chapter complicates such interpretations. Surprisingly, both material and literary sources indicate that the afterlife expectations of late antique Christians and non-Christians do not fit neatly into a binary of dissolution or reunion. Roman (“pagan”) beliefs in an afterlife were hardly so uniform or unambiguous, and Christian notions regarding familial relationships in the hereafter were also complex. The subversion of familial loyalties seen in the earliest Christian texts begins to be modified already in the New Testament, as some of the later authors sought to define a way of life more accommodating of this world’s social structures, including marriage and family.¹² Third- and

⁸ J. Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 122–123, 462–463.

⁹ McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 24–32.

¹⁰ Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 39.

¹¹ Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers*, 58–59. The expectation that Christians after death would join the heavenly family of saints is well-represented in Cyprian, *Treatise 7, De mortalitate* 26; Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 140, interprets Cyprian’s statement as a description of reuniting with family members in the afterlife, but this seems to me a mistake—Cyprian has redefined “family” here as the faith community of Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, New Testament apostles, and early Christian martyrs and saints.

¹² E.g., Heb 13:4; 1 Pet 2:17; the NT household codes (Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; Titus 2:1–10; 1 Pet 2:13–3:7); the requirement of monogamy and good household management for bishops and deacons (1 Tim 3:1–13); opposition to ascetics who forbid marriage (1 Tim 4:3); see also the discussion below about 1 Pet 3:7 and its variant readings.

fourth-century Christians, too, expressed New Testament tradition in their own cultural contexts, and particularly in Rome one can trace their negotiations in the material and literary record. Though the catacombs were communal cemeteries, they also included *cubicla* and *arcosolia* for family burial sites, which, like the *mausolea* and *hypogea* constructed near churches, united families as sub-groups within the larger faith community.¹³ Brent D. Shaw noted an exception to his general finding that Christian epitaphs made little mention of familial relationships: in and around Rome, epitaphs of Christian aristocrats and soldiers exhibit “much stronger conjugal ties” and “a generally strengthened nuclear family group.”¹⁴ Through funerary art, Roman Christians of both wealthy and modest socio-economic classes made conspicuous visual display of their marriages.¹⁵ In surveying that visual evidence, along with literary sources, this chapter describes a high degree of continuity with some Roman traditions about spousal devotion after death and hopes for reunion and a shared afterlife—even an amplification of such traditions. It demonstrates that rank and file Christians and church authorities, though motivated by somewhat different concerns, mutually participated in Christianizing these Roman afterlife traditions, which were ambiguous and not uniformly shared, but were concretized and affirmed as they were re-imagined within the framework of Christian expectations.¹⁶ Gospel teachings about there being no “marrying or giving in marriage” in the resurrection were retained but were brought alongside the notion that a bond, a fidelity between spouses, endured beyond death, and that spouses and family members would reunite in heaven. This Christianizing project, enacted through word and image, served to advance

¹³ Ramsay MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129.3 (2010): 610; for a recent study (critiqued by MacMullen) assuming (like Bisconti, Denzey, and others) that Christian familial identity was dissolved at death, see Anne Marie Yasin, “Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community,” *The Art Bulletin* 87.3 (2005): 433–457.

¹⁴ Shaw, “Latin Funerary Epigraphy,” 471, 472, 478; cf. Brent D. Shaw, “Seasons of Death: Aspects of Mortality in Imperial Rome,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 109; “Although Christian populations (the sample from Rome we are using being no exception in this regard) consistently down-played the noting of secular relationships at death [in epigraphy], the patterns that emerge from an analysis of those who did do this is [*sic*] consistent. In fact, in our sample, which is representative of the whole of Christian epigraphy from the city, elementary or ‘nuclear’ family relationships are wholly dominant (about 97 percent of all recorded cases).”

¹⁵ Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 108, notes: “In frühchristlicher Zeit bleibt die Sitte bestehen, Porträts der Toten auf Sarkophagen abzubilden. Sie ist allerdings auf Rom und einige Gegenden beschränkt, die unter stadtrömischer Einfluß stehen” (“In early Christian times, the custom persists of reproducing portraits of the dead in sarcophagi. It is, however, limited to Rome and some areas that are under the influence of the city of Rome,” my trans.).

¹⁶ This constitutes one example of the larger trend Kyle Harper describes: “One of the most important effects of Christianity, in the long term, was its absorption of Greco-Roman norms. . . . Christianity became an institutionalized carrier of Roman marital ideology.” Harper, “Marriage and Family,” 693.

such social agendas as promoting the new faith over traditional Roman religions, claiming status and divine approbation, and reordering society by means of an ideal of indissoluble, sexually exclusive marriage.

The development of a Christian theory of marriage and afterlife was part of a broader revolution in family life that took place in late antiquity. Kate Cooper, in *The Fall of the Roman Household*, acknowledges the significant academic work on late antique ascetic practices and the renunciation of marriage, yet calls attention to “a second aspect of the revolution in family life, the widespread adoption of an evolving ideal of marriage as a commitment for eternity” that “has received far less attention.”¹⁷ Cooper examines this latter phenomenon, focusing primarily on literary sources of the fifth and sixth centuries. The present chapter will discuss earlier stages in the adoption and evolution of this ideal—“marriage as a commitment for eternity”—as found in visual and textual sources of the third and fourth centuries. It will keep in play three overlapping ideas elevated among late antique Christians: (1) spousal devotion and fidelity after death; (2) the endurance of a marital “bond” after death (if not marriage itself, as defined in Roman law and practice); and (3) spousal reunion after death, understood not just in a metaphorical sense (e.g., in co-burial or “joining in death”), but as a real affirmation of meeting again and being together in an afterlife.

Roman Marriage after Death

Scholarship on Roman Beliefs about the Afterlife

The subject of Roman beliefs about the afterlife is fraught with debate. At issue are such questions as what is to be taken as evidence (literature? art? epitaphs? funerary ritual?), how the evidence

¹⁷ Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, ix. Here and there historians have alluded to this development without giving it full exposition: Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, *Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325* (New York: Scribner, 1886), 367, described Tertullian’s argument in *De Monogamia* and *De exhortatione castitatis* as the promotion of “an ideal conception of marriage as a spiritual union of two souls for time and eternity”; Dooley, *Marriage According to St. Ambrose*, 101, contextualized some of Ambrose’s statements by referring to “an early tradition in the Church [that] considered marriages to endure, in a certain way, even after the death of one of the spouses”; Harper, “Marriage and Family,” 680, mentions: “To discourage remarriage, bishops could evoke the belief in an afterlife and an eternal family that continued to exist after death.”

is to be interpreted, and the extent to which the evidence represents the actual expectations of most Romans. The very question of whether eschatological beliefs are represented in Roman funerary art, Verity Platt remarks, is one “that is always a source of much anxiety” among art historians.¹⁸ For the purposes of this study, a necessarily brief survey will clarify the broad spectrum of disparate Roman beliefs, expressions, and images related to death and the beyond that late antique Christians would have encountered. This will provide a foundation for examining how marriage figured in Roman literary and visual funerary discourse, and how Roman Christians compared to their non-Christian neighbors with regard to marriage, death, and afterlife.

Modern scholarship on possible expressions of afterlife beliefs in Roman material culture continues to work within tensions articulated in the mid-twentieth century by Franz Cumont and Arthur Darby Nock. In 1942, Cumont published a much-anticipated culmination of many years’ research, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*, arguing that much Roman sepulchral art symbolized beliefs in a life after death. His analysis engaged contemporaneous epigraphic and literary sources, and postulated that an intimate religious knowledge (Pythagorean) was necessary to understand the meaning of figured sarcophagi.¹⁹ In reviews of Cumont’s work appearing in 1946 and 1948, Nock acknowledged that Roman funerary art may in some cases symbolize afterlife beliefs, but argued that overall Cumont had over-interpreted the symbolism, that the art was sometimes just decorative, that it generally expressed classicism rather than religious belief, that Cumont had placed too much weight on his selection of examples, and that the Neopythagorean worldview was not sufficiently dominant in antiquity to explain Roman art as a whole.²⁰

For a time, scholars working with Roman funerary art and practice continued to maintain that at least some Romans during the empire held quite confident beliefs in life after death. In 1950 Ian Archibald Richmond’s brief study, *Archaeology, and the After-Life in Pagan and Christian Imagery*,

¹⁸ Platt, “Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi,” 218.

¹⁹ Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*; a thorough discussion of Cumont, *Recherches*, and its reception appears in Janine Balty and Jean-Charles Balty, eds., *Franz Cumont, Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015).

²⁰ Nock and Beazley, “Sarcophagi and Symbolism,” 140–170; Nock, “Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*” [review], 154–156.

discussed the wide range of expectations, “from sheer negation to an expectation of individual human survival of the most vivid kind.” Richmond postulated that the decline in cremation and rise of inhumation reflected an increase in the expectation of survival of individuality, and pointed to the evidence of Virgil, Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, and Dionysian cults.²¹ In 1995, Michael Koortbojian’s *Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi* examined the use of Greek myths on Roman sarcophagi, and the symbolic polyvalence that resulted from this iconographic appropriation and adaptation. Patrons and viewers could potentially perceive multiple meanings in art, including hopes and beliefs regarding an existence after death.²² The following year, J. M. C. Toynbee’s *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, like Richmond’s earlier work, described a range of afterlife beliefs held by ancient Romans, and on the basis of written and archaeological evidence for funerary practice identified a broadly-shared optimism on afterlife, more hopeful than what some poetry and other literary sources would lead one to expect. Stoic and Epicurean pessimism were exceptions; “among the great majority of people of the Roman age, ... there persisted and prevailed the conviction that some kind of conscious existence is in store for the soul after death and that the dead and living can affect one another mutually. Human life is not just an interlude of being between nothingness and nothingness.”²³

More recently, the opinion of scholars working in Roman art has more closely resembled Nock’s. Paul Zanker and Björn Ewald’s 2004 study, *Mit Mythen leben*, published in English in 2012 as *Living with Myths*, takes up the subject matter of mythological sarcophagi, but with more overall skepticism than Koortbojian about iconographic symbolism (the authors describe themselves as “generally wary of wanting to tease a sense out of absolutely everything and to discover a deep meaning everywhere”), and with less willingness to admit hopes for afterlife and reunion with loved ones.²⁴ Barbara E. Borg is similarly reluctant to identify Roman afterlife beliefs in her 2013 work on third-century Roman tombs; she cites the Cumont-Nock debate, and on the evidence of epitaphs (citing Lattimore), she identifies a

²¹ Richmond, *Archaeology, and the After-life in Pagan and Christian Imagery*, 41–44.

²² Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*.

²³ Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, quotation p. 34.

²⁴ Paul Zanker and Björn Christian Ewald, *Mit Mythen leben* (München: Hirmer, 2004); Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 51; willingness to identify hopes for after reunion in some cases (e.g., 49), general skepticism: see 87, 91, 94, discussed further below.

“strong will to believe, rather than belief as such.”²⁵ Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais, describing current thought on Roman tomb art, emphasizes the difference between permanent decoration like wall painting, which tended to be more linked to this world, and moveable sepulchral art such as sarcophagus reliefs, which were more closely related to burial function and therefore potentially more “afterlife-related.” Both media, however, employed mythical themes that, while not necessarily alluding to afterlife, may have expressed “vague hopes for the beyond.”²⁶

One observation to be noted is that the media of epitaphs, art, and literature each had their own conventions and limitations, and in isolation may not provide as clear a view of Roman expectations as a more multidisciplinary approach that also considers funerary practice. Then again, if the expectations Romans actually held were not uniform or clear, as seems to be the case, there may have been no certain or established vocabulary for their expression; Feraudi-Gruénais calls attention to “the absence of concise symbols referring to an afterlife in tomb décor,” and to funerary inscriptions “which are occasionally quite verbosely vague in thematizing a world beyond.” These characteristics of Roman funerary art are “the result of a lack of ‘dogmatically’ binding concepts of an afterlife.”²⁷ Moyer V. Hubbard concurs: in contrast to Christianity, Greco-Roman religion “had no canonical texts to teach ‘orthodox’ dogma on any point, and hence coming to terms with Hellenistic conceptions of the afterlife essentially amounts to cataloging and organizing a broad range of disparate popular beliefs and images.”²⁸ Let us turn, then, to this range of beliefs and images.

Roman Beliefs about Afterlife and Posthumous “Reunion”

Romans beliefs about what followed death may be described as points along a spectrum. At one extreme was a pessimistic view that human consciousness met annihilation at death. Associated

²⁵ Borg, *Crisis and Ambition*, 161; cf. Richmond Alexander Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, vol. 28, no. 1 (University of Illinois Press, 1942).

²⁶ Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais, “The Decoration of Roman Tombs,” in *A Companion to Roman Art*, ed. Barbara E. Borg, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 431–432, 441.

²⁷ Feraudi-Gruénais, “The Decoration of Roman Tombs,” 445.

²⁸ Moyer V. Hubbard, “Greek Religion,” in *The Word of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 121.

particularly with Epicureans and Stoics, this view underlies epitaphs like *omnia cum vita pereunt et inania fiunt* (“When life ends, all things perish and turn to nothing”), or the oft-used formula, *non fui, fui, non sum, non curo* (“I was not, I was, I am not, I don’t care”).²⁹ “Death is nothing to us,” wrote Epicurus, “for what has suffered dissolution has no perception, and what has no perception has nothing to do with us.”³⁰

More Romans seem to have believed in, or wished for, some form of the soul’s continued existence after death. Conceptions of this post-mortem existence fall along a spectrum from the semi-conscious survival of a “shade” in a dark, vague, subterranean existence, to a fully conscious and potentially blissful endurance of the soul in an Elysian paradise or, for a few, an astral realm of the gods.³¹ Some married couples sought initiation into mystery religions that affirmed the immortality of the soul. Plutarch wrote to his wife upon learning of their daughter’s death and reminded her of “the mystic formulas of the Dionysiac rites, the knowledge of which we who are participants share with each other.” Because of their shared knowledge of these rites and other traditional teachings, they did not believe as the Epicureans, but held that “the soul ... is imperishable.” If, at death, the soul is overly attached to this world, it might seek to re-enter a body and experience “repeated births,” but if it remembers the other world it will not linger at the tomb but will be “set free by higher powers” and enter “a region ... that is better and more divine” than this world—a notion that Plutarch and his wife found comforting, and “harder to disbelieve than to believe.”³² Amid these various concepts of what lay beyond death, “reunions” with departed loved ones might occur in the dreams of the living, in the joint burial of spouses and a kind of eternal union in the grave, in some form of afterlife, or in a combination of these.³³

²⁹ CLE I, no. 420; Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 34; trans. Toynbee, 285, n. 68, 70; also discussed in Maijastina Kahlos, “Fabia Aconia Paulina and the Death of Praetextatus—Rhetoric and Ideals in Late Antiquity (CIL VI 1997),” *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 28 (1994), 22.

³⁰ Epicurus, *Ad Menoeceum*, 124, and *Kyriai doxai*, II (quoted in *Mor.* 1103D and 1105A); as cited in Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume VII, LCL 405, 601, note c.

³¹ Franz Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism: Lectures Delivered at Yale University on the Silliman Foundation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922); Richmond, *Archaeology and the After-life in Pagan and Christian Imagery*, 41; Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 33–39; Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 351–395; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 50–53; Hubbard, “Greek Religion,” 121.

³² Plutarch, *Consolatio ad uxorem*, LCL 405, 601–605.

³³ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 246–247.

Roman expressions of spouses or lovers meeting after death (whether those expressions represented actual beliefs or mere longings) drew in part from Greek and Etruscan precedents. In an exception to a generally pessimistic view of afterlife in Greek literature, Euripides wrote of the reunion of the faithful wife Alcestis with her husband Admetus. Before his wife dies in his place and goes to the Underworld, Admetus begs her, “Wait for me to arrive there when I die and prepare a home where you may dwell with me,” and he vows, “I shall command my children here to bury me in the same coffin with you and to lay out my body next to yours. Never, even in death, may I be parted from you, the woman who alone has been faithful to me!”³⁴ However, the couple’s reunion occurs not in Hades, but in the mortal realm when Hercules brings Alcestis back from the Underworld.

Many Greek funerary monuments make use of the *dexiosis*, the image of spouses’ clasped right hands, in farewell scenes. An example is the stele of Philoxenos and Philoumene, which dates, like Euripides, to the fifth century BCE. The husband, clad in armor, takes leave of his wife; their right hands join in a farewell that represents the husband’s death and, John Walsh proposed, signifies their “eternal union” transcending death (fig. 129).³⁵ Similar images were used on Etruscan monuments, such as the late fourth/early third-century BCE sarcophagus from Vulci now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The lid is carved with a relief of the spouses in an embrace, as if in bed (fig. 130). At the center of the front panel the spouses stand together and join right hands as the wife drapes her left arm over her husband’s shoulders (fig. 131). The portraits allude to the couple’s marriage, and some scholars have proposed that in this funerary context the portraits also allude to the couple’s reunion in an afterlife.³⁶

³⁴ Euripides, *Alcestis* 363–368; LCL 12, 188–189: ἀλλ’ οὖν ἐκεῖσε προσδόκα μ’, ὅταν θάνω, καὶ δῶμ’ ἐτοίμαζ’, ὡς συνοικήσουσά μοι. ἐν ταῖσιν αὐταῖς γάρ μ’ ἐπισκήψω κέδροις σοὶ τοῦσδε θεῖναι πλευρά τ’ ἐκτεῖναι πέλας πλευροῖσι τοῖς σοῖς· μηδὲ γὰρ θανάων ποτε σοῦ χωρὶς εἶην τῆς μόνης πιστῆς ἐμοί; cf. Most, “Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers,” 20.

³⁵ *dexiosis*: Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 627–630; “eternal union”: John Walsh, “Acquisitions / 1983,” *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 12 (1984), 234, no. 7.

³⁶ Boston Museum of Fine Arts inv. no. 1975.799; Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 630–632; Most, “Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers,” 24.

Posthumous Spousal Devotion and Reunion in Roman Literature

Latin literature from the first century BCE forward exhibits a growing interest in the subject of reunion with departed loved ones. Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* describes a dream of Scipio Aemilianus in which he is visited by his deceased grandfather, Scipio Africanus, and meets and embraces his dead father, Paulus:

Although I was greatly terrified, by dread not so much of death as of treachery from men of my own household, I found courage to ask if he was himself alive and my father Paulus and others, whom we regarded as dead. "Yea verily do they live," said he, "who from the bonds of the body, as from a prison-house, have soared away; but your life, as it is called, is really death. Nay, look at Paulus, your father, coming towards you!" On seeing him I shed a flood of tears, but he folded me in his embrace and by kisses endeavoured to hinder me from weeping.³⁷

Descriptions of lovers meeting after death flourished from the first century BCE forward in Latin poets like Virgil, Ovid, and Tibullus.³⁸ Virgil (70–19 BCE) held a view that was not entirely cheerful. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas's journey to the Underworld includes a visit to a place reserved for people who have died for love and continue to grieve. Aeneas sees Dido as "a dim form amid the shadows" yet with "Syphaeus, her lord of former days," who "responds to her sorrows and gives her love for love."³⁹ In *Georgics*, Virgil's version of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice ends tragically. Orpheus goes to the Underworld to find his wife Eurydice, who had died of a snake bite, and leads her out nearly to the light of this world when he momentarily loses faith and looks back at her, whereupon the Fates tear her away and drag her back down to the Underworld forever.⁴⁰

³⁷ Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* 1.6; trans. W. D. Pearman, *M. Tullii Ciceronis, Somnium Scipionis, The Dream of Scipio Africanus Minor, Translated from the Original Latin* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1883), 6; Latin text: W. D. Pearman, ed., *M. Tullii Ciceronis, Somnium Scipionis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1883), 15: ego, etsi eram perterritus non tan mortis metu quam insidiarum a meis, quaesivi tamen uiueretne ipse et Paulus pater et alii, quos nos extinctos arbitraremur. 'Immo uero' inquit 'ii uiuuntj qui e corporum uinclis tamquam e carcere euolauerunt, uestra uero quae dicitur uita mors est. Quin tu aspicias ad te uenientem Paulum patrem?' Quern ut uidi, equidem uim lacrimarum profudi, ille autem me complexus atque osculans flere prohibebat.

³⁸ Discussed in Most, "Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers," 21–23. Most also includes Propertius, who he says writes with "confidence" to his lover Cynthia that "a continuation of their love after his death will provide some degree of solace" (21), but the only posthumous reunion Propertius describes is in the form of their joint burial; otherwise the view is rather pessimistic: "You will sometimes weep for the friend you have lost; it is a duty to love for ever a mate who is dead and gone. ... But in vain, Cynthia, will you call back my silent shade: for what answer shall my crumbled bones be able to make?" Propertius, *Elegies* 2.13.51–58; trans. G. P. Goold, LCL 18, 140–141.

³⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.440–476; LCL 63, 562, 564: per umbras obscuram ... coniunx ubi pristinus illi respondet curis aequatque Syphaeus amorem; trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, LCL 63, 563, 565; cf. Most, "Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers," 22.

⁴⁰ Virgil, *Georgics* 4.453–527; LCL 63, 250–257; cf. Most, "Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers," 22–23.

Commenting on this and other similar tales of the posthumous reunion of lovers, Plutarch, writing in the late first/early second century CE, stated: “If it is ever any use to cite the evidence of mythology, we may learn from the tales about Alcestis and Protesilaüs and Orpheus’ Eurydicê that Love is the only one of the gods whose commands are obeyed by Hades.”⁴¹ But one should also note that these tales are about the dead returning to the world of the living, not reunions in an afterlife, and they do not generally go well. They deal more with grief and parting than with confident hopes for the endurance of relationships in a postmortem existence.⁴²

However, there seems to have been an interest in giving more affirmation to afterlife hopes. Writing a few decades after Virgil, Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) gave the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice a happier ending by describing the couple’s ultimate reunion in a more pleasant existence after death: “The poet’s shade fled beneath the earth, and recognized all the places he had seen before; and, seeking through the blessed fields, found Eurydice and caught her in his eager arms. Here now side by side they walk; now Orpheus follows her as she precedes, now goes before her, now may in safety look back upon his Eurydice.”⁴³

In one of his elegies written while he was ill, Tibullus (55–19 BCE) imagined his death, the burial of his body, and the journey of his soul, escorted by Venus, to the Elysian Fields. His description of this afterlife setting includes lovers who continue to enjoy the amorous pursuits of the realm of the living:

There never flags the dance and song. The birds fly here and there, fluting sweet carols from their slender throats. Untilled the field bears cassia, and through all the land with scented roses blooms the kindly earth. Troops of young men meet in sport with gentle maidens, and Love never lets his warfare cease. There are all, on whom Death swooped because of love; on their hair are myrtle garlands for all to see.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Amatorius* 761 E-F, LCL 425, 382: εἰ δὲ πού τι καὶ μύθων πρὸς πίστιν ὄφελός ἐστι, δηλοῖ τὰ περὶ Ἄλκηστιν καὶ Πρωτεσίλεων καὶ Εὐρυδικὴν τὴν Ὀρφείως, ὅτι μόνῳ θεῶν ὁ Ἄϊδης Ἔρωτι ποιεῖ τὸ προσταττόμενον; trans. Edwin L. Minar, F. H. Sandbach, W. C. Helmbold, LCL 425, 383.

⁴² Discussed in Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 93.

⁴³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.61–66; LCL 43, 124: Umbra subit terras, et quae loca viderat ante, cuncta recognoscit quaerensque per arva pioruminvenit Eurydicen cupidisque amplectitur ulnis; hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo, nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevious anteit Eurydicenque suam iam tuto respicit Orpheus; trans. Frank Justus Miller, LCL 43, 125.

⁴⁴ Tibullus, *Elegies* 1.3.57–66; LCL 6, 208: hic choreae cantusque vigent, passimque vagantes / dulce sonant tenui gutture carmen aves; / fert casiam non culta seges, totosque per agros / floret odoratis terra benigna rosis; / ac iuvenum series teneris immixta puellis / ludit, et adsidue proelia miscet Amor. / illic est, cuicumque rapax Mors venit amanti, / et gerit insigni myrtea sarta coma; trans. F. W. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, J. W. Mackail, rev. G. P. Goold, LCL 6, 209; cf. Most, “Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers,” 21.

Posthumous Spousal Devotion and Reunion in Roman Epitaphs

Intriguingly, the inscription Tibullus imagines being placed on his tombstone does not allude at all to his vivid afterlife expectations, but simply refers to his friend and patron Messalla whom Tibullus was accompanying on a military expedition: *HIC IACET IMMITI CONSUMPTVS MORTE TIBVLLVS, / MESSALLAM TERRA DVM SEQVITVRQVE MARI* (“Here lies Tibullus, ravished by death’s hand, / Messalla comrading o’er sea and land”).⁴⁵ Tibullus thus provides evidence that one could hold beliefs in the reunion of loved ones after death without representing those beliefs on one’s tomb. Epitaphs in particular had their own conventions and limitations for patrons and the commemorated, and were not always given over to expressing beliefs about the afterlife.⁴⁶

Instances when epitaphs do convey the expectations of spouses include an inscription commissioned by a man who commemorated his dead wife as *coniunx perpetua*, “a wife forever,” and the monument of the freedwoman Furia Spes who prayed to see her husband in her dreams and to rejoin him “more sweetly and more quickly”—the comparatives apparently implying a reunion that would surpass mere dream-state visions.⁴⁷ Susan Treggiari summarized the evidence of Roman spousal epitaphs:

Love joined the pair: they are therefore joined also in death. The sharing of a tomb, or the expectation that the tomb will be shared when the surviving partner dies, is sometimes expressed as the sharing of a marriage-bed, a poignant comparison familiar from literature. The shared bed then becomes eternal and the partner who dies first may wait for the other there. . . . wives and husbands claim that their dead live on.⁴⁸

Treggiari noted a number of epitaphs that she interpreted as alluding to “the desired permanence of marriage.” For example, a young husband

links mutual love with ‘eternity.’ A marriage which the couple wants will be *perpetuum*. Catullus, in equating his affair with marriage, had prayed that his relationship with Lesbia might be

⁴⁵ Tibullus, *Elegies* 1.3.55–56; LCL 6, 208–209.

⁴⁶ Nock, “Sarcophagi and Symbolism,” in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, vol. 2, 626, 629: “Epitaphs now assert and now deny survival: far more often they are silent upon it. . . . Suggestion in art could easily outrun suggestion even in verse. . . .”; Segal, *Life after Death*, 351: “The fact is that not everyone chooses to mention resurrection or immortality of the soul on a tombstone”; Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE-700 CE)* (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1991), 114: “Most of our epitaphs yield disappointingly little information concerning the ideas of either the survivors or the deceased about life after death.”

⁴⁷ *coniunx perpetua*: CIL 6.19008 (pars 3, 2049)=CE 1571; as noted in Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 246; Furia Spes epitaph: CIL 6.18817, pars 3, 2033, *DVLCIVS ET CELERIVS*; discussed in Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers*, 69; in Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 247; and in Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 99.

⁴⁸ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 246.

perpetuum, ‘that we may be allowed to perpetuate for the whole of life this eternal treaty of hallowed love.’⁴⁹

Gordon Williams saw this epigraphic record as evidence of a Roman “concept of the eternity of the marriage-bond.”⁵⁰ However, in the years since he and Treggiari wrote (1958 and 1991 respectively), increased scholarly attention to the vague, wistful, and disparate character of Roman afterlife beliefs calls for some caution. In such a milieu, commonplaces about a “perpetual marriage-bond” might, in some instances, have reflected little more than the ideals of marital *concordia* and its important place in a stable Roman society.

Posthumous Spousal Devotion and Reunion in Roman Funerary Art

In Roman funerary art portraits could convey notions about spouses’ continuing devotion to each other after death, but whether couples expected to reunite in an afterlife is not always clear. Scholars have expressed varying points of view on this. The following discussion surveys selected artifacts and interpretations, setting forth the diversity of perspectives. The purpose here is not to argue for one or another interpretation, but to demonstrate the ambiguity that faces the modern viewer and might well have faced the ancient viewer.

Since marital *concordia* ranked high among the social values of imperial Rome, visual representations of harmonious couples became popular in public, domestic, and especially funerary contexts, where images expressed a conjugal devotion that persisted beyond death.⁵¹ Funerary reliefs on stelae, altars, cinerary urns, and sarcophagi depict spouses in the *dextrarum iunctio*; even after this pose came to signify primarily marriage and marital harmony, it retained its earlier associations with bidding farewell in death, and, Glenys Davies proposed, reuniting in the hereafter. These various meanings “are not mutually exclusive,” Davies argued, “but complement one another. Parting in this world implies reunion with ancestors in the next, and it is the strength of family ties (especially the bond of marriage?)

⁴⁹ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 260.

⁵⁰ Williams, “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals,” 25.

⁵¹ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 66; Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 179.

that helps to close the gulf between the living and the dead.”⁵² The handclasp motif on funerary reliefs, Diana E. E. Kleiner states, symbolizes that “the bonds formed in life between family members, *conliberti*, or between *liberti* and their patrons, were not broken by death.”⁵³ Peter Stewart observes that a *dextrarum iunctio* portrait on a monument commissioned by a surviving spouse might represent “a memorialized pose of fidelity that crosses the boundary between life and death,” whereas a portrait created while the couple was still alive “looks forward to enduring fidelity in the future.” Stewart adds, “The statuesque modification of the common pose conveyed a stronger sense of immortality—or the immortality of the marriage bond—through memorialization.”⁵⁴

One of the more famous examples of this type of memorial is the so-called “Portia and Cato” portrait, a marble relief of the early empire reworked into three-dimensional sculpture in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century (fig. 132). A woman and her husband are posed side by side, joining right hands, as the woman rests her left hand on her husband’s right shoulder. An inscription identifies the pair as Gratidia Chrite and Marcus Gratidius Libanus.⁵⁵ Describing this double-portrait as “arguably the finest funerary portrait produced for the lower and middle classes during the early Roman Empire,” Eric R. Varner calls attention to the *dextrarum iunctio* as “a major component of the Roman marriage ceremony” and states: “Clearly, the husband and wife hoped that the bonds they had forged in life would not be severed after death. Gratidia’s left hand, which rests on her husband’s shoulder, further emphasizes the physical and spiritual intimacy between the couple.”⁵⁶ A humbler portrait of a working-class couple appears on the early second-century grave relief of a circus official in Ostia (fig. 133). The official’s wife is portrayed in smaller scale and standing on a pedestal as if a statue, while her larger-scale husband stands beside her, clasping her right hand. This presentation, Kleiner and Mamiya propose, represents

⁵² Davies, “Handshake Motif,” 632.

⁵³ Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture*, 46; cf. McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 127: “the *dextrarum iunctio* scene as a symbol of the eternal union of the couple in the afterlife.”

⁵⁴ Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 103–104; cf. Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 124: the couple represented in a *dextrarum iunctio* scene with unfinished portraits “would have been reunited through the completion of the portraits. In the meantime the figures stand as a statement of the marital bonds of the couple that did not vanish because one of them died, but which continued in an eternal agreement of *concordia*.”

⁵⁵ CIL 6.35397.

⁵⁶ Eric R. Varner, “Funerary Portrait of Gratidia M. L. Chrite and Marcus Gratidius Libanus (Cato and Portia),” in *Rings: Five Passions in World Art*, ed. J. Carter Brown, Jennifer Montagu, and Michael E. Shapiro (New York City: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the High Museum, 1996), 62–63.

“the plebeian artist’s shorthand way of saying the wife died before the husband, that her death had not broken their marriage bond, and that, because the husband has now died, the two will be reunited in the afterlife.”⁵⁷

Aside from *dextrarum iunctio* portraits, other forms of self-representation might have announced some form of spousal relationship after death. Antoninus Pius, whose coins propagated the image of marital concord as a microcosm of civic order (figs. 7–9), was depicted on his column base in an apotheosis scene: he and his deified wife, Faustina, who had preceded him in death, are borne upward to the skies, together (fig. 134). Kleiner and Mamiya observe that this depiction was “new to the imperial repertoire”:

Faustina had died 20 years before Antoninus Pius. By depicting the two as ascending together, the artist wished to suggest that Antoninus had been faithful to his wife for two decades and that now they would be reunited in the afterlife. This notion had been employed before in the funerary reliefs of freed slaves and the middle class but had never been used in an elite context.⁵⁸

Spouses in the late second century portrayed themselves on their sarcophagi in the guise of mythical couples who met again after death, such as Alcestis and Admetus, or Protesilaus and Laodamia, suggesting to some scholars that the sarcophagus owners hoped for their own similar reunion.⁵⁹ For example, successive scenes on a sarcophagus in the Vatican Museums depict Protesilaus bidding farewell to Laodamia, their right hands clasped, as he goes off to war (fig. 135), Protesilaus lying slain in battle as his shrouded shade meets Hermes (fig. 136), and the hero’s reunion with his wife (fig. 137).⁶⁰ Zanker and Ewald point to the myth’s tragic ending (after the brief reunion Laodamia commits suicide) and argue that

⁵⁷ Fred S. Kleiner and Christin J. Mamiya, *Gardner’s Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective*, 12th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), 198–199, fig. 7-47; see also Kleiner and Matheson, *I, Claudia*, 186: “The theme of the reunion of spouses after death was a common one among freedmen and a standard theme in freedmen’s funerary art.”

⁵⁸ Kleiner and Mamiya, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 204–205, fig. 7-57; see also Diana E. E. Kleiner and Fred S. Kleiner, “The Apotheosis of Antoninus and Faustina,” *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Rendiconti* 51 (1978): 389–400.

⁵⁹ Wood, “Alcestis on Roman Sarcophagi,” 499–510; cf. Berg, “Alcestis and Hercules in the Catacomb of via Latina,” 219–234; Denzey, *Bone Gatherers*, 62; Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*, 75–78, 98; but Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, though willing to identify hopes for after reunion in some cases (e.g., 49), are more skeptical overall: Alcestis sarcophagi stress separation rather than reunion, 87; Hylas and the nymphs is an image of “happy reunification” but gives no specific ideas about the place or reality of afterlife, 91; Protesilaus and Laodamia illustrate not “the couple’s happy reunion but their final separation and endless despair,” 94.

⁶⁰ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 97–98, 306, fig. 49, cat.no. 595.

it illustrates not “the couple’s happy reunion but their final separation and endless despair.”⁶¹ Verity Platt, however, notes that the reunion scene is given special importance by its location at the center of the front panel and its architectural framing, and proposes that the reworking of the myth facilitates not only the idea of grief, but also an expression of optimism for a future, permanent reunion.⁶²

Similar debates revolve around other mythical male-female pairs that figured in the self-representation of spouses (as surveyed in Chapter 4). Stine Birk notes that the popularity of Selene and Endymion on married patrons’ sarcophagi suggests

a positive attitude to the afterlife that alludes to a possible renewal of existence and a hope for a reunion after death... Both Endymion and Selene are represented with individualised features, thus emphasising the bond of love as transcending death. The two figures can be understood as the deceased and the patron... The encounter between Endymion and Selene expresses the hope that the two people will meet again in another sphere, either after death or through sleep.⁶³

Related views have been set forth by Michael Koortbojian and Jean Sorabella.⁶⁴ Arthur Darby Nock, however, interpreted scenes of Selene and Endymion as expressions of emotions and classicism that had nothing to do with specific beliefs about an afterlife.⁶⁵

In these disputes one again confronts the two related considerations that (a) an unambiguous visual vocabulary apparently did not exist for expressing hopes of afterlife and reunion, evidently because (b) a clear, defined, and broadly shared belief in afterlife also did not exist. If, in some cases, bereaved spouses were attempting to express both grief and hopes for a future reunion, it is possible that they selected what they felt was the best visual vocabulary available to them. Perhaps its ambiguity was part of what eventually permitted the more-defined Christian afterlife to gain purchase as Rome underwent gradual transformation to Christianity.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 94.

⁶² Platt, “Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi,” 223, 226. Regarding the visual reworking of myths: Huskinson, “Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi,” 23, “Viewers ... were often helped toward particular readings by adjustments to what was often traditional iconography for the myth.”

⁶³ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 54.

⁶⁴ Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning, and Memory*, 75–78; Sorabella, “A Roman Sarcophagus and its Patron,” 67–81.

⁶⁵ Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 641; cited in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 54, n. 230.

⁶⁶ Hubbard, “Greek Religion,” 121: “the cacophony of perspectives [on the afterlife] that bombarded residents of a typical Greco-Roman city ... allowed little room for certainty and was a stark contrast to the clear proclamation and teaching of Paul and his fellow apostles.”

In the third century, mythological portraiture gave way to other forms of self-representation, particularly portrait busts of spouses within a *clipeus*. Since these portraits were most often given individualizing characteristics, Ian Archibald Richmond proposed that they might indicate beliefs “in the survival of individuality.” He reasoned, “In representational art, therefore, the abstraction of the *imago* and its concentration into a *tondo* or mirror-like form, is in effect a method of reflecting the individual soul.”⁶⁷ For Romans who held beliefs in the survival of the soul, then, *clipeus* double-portraits on tombs might have suggested the survival of the relationship between the depicted married couple. More certainly they expressed *affectio* and marital devotion, for often the surviving spouse would have been the one to commission the tomb.⁶⁸ The portrait both commemorated the deceased and presented the surviving spouse as one who saw to the socially expected memorials.⁶⁹

Funerary displays of conjugal fidelity could serve claims of status, individual merit, and religious legitimacy. The Theodosian era in particular seems to have been a time when the vying paradigms of Christianity and traditional Roman religions prompted especially bold expressions of afterlife expectations; the discourse of mourning became a form of rhetoric, a front at which competing views met. In 384, the pagan senator Vettius Agorius Praetextatus died, and his wife Aconia Fabia Paulina commissioned an epitaph for his monument. The inscription is at once a widow’s moving expression of marital devotion and a Roman noblewoman’s defense of traditional religion. After praising her husband’s civic deeds, Paulina announces that because he taught her about the gods and initiated her into the mysteries of Cybele, Attis, Ceres, and Hecate, she is freed from the lot of death; he “kindly binds his faithful wife to him as a companion in the rites, a sharer in knowledge of gods and men.”⁷⁰ She claims divine approval, then, for their future reunion: “Happy would I have been had the gods granted that my husband had outlived me. Yet I am happy because I am yours, was yours, and soon—after death—shall

⁶⁷ Richmond, *Archaeology and the After-life in Pagan and Christian Imagery*, 40.

⁶⁸ Birk, “Sarcophagi, Self-Representation, and Patronage in Rome and Tyre,” 10; Dresken-Weiland, *Sarkophagbestattungen des 4.–6. Jahrhunderts*, 22–24, 211–214.

⁶⁹ Discussed in Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 21–31.

⁷⁰ CIL 6.1779 (Pars 1, 397–398)=ILS 1259, D22–29, 38ff: *sociam benigne coniugem nectens sacris hominum deumque consciam ac fidam tibi* (my trans., with thanks to Dr. Daniel Solomon for consultation).

be yours.”⁷¹ Maijastina Kahlos notes that the use of past, present, and future tenses of *esse* in this closing statement (*tua quia sum fuique postque mortem ero*) could have represented a refutation of Epicurean disbelief in an afterlife, often expressed in the epitaph *non fui, fui, non sum, non curo* (“I was not, I was, I am not, I don’t care”).⁷² Simultaneously it represented a defiant claim of religious legitimacy in response to the rival claims of Christianity, which Jerome did not fail to notice, and to which he objected.⁷³

A comparable piece of visual rhetoric is the so-called Symmachus ivory in the British Museum (fig. 138). At the bottom of the relief, the statue of a bearded Roman nobleman sits in a gabled edifice upon a cart drawn by four elephants. The nobleman’s funerary pyre appears in the background, and above this, the man himself is carried upward by winged personifications of the winds, who bring him to his ancestors awaiting him in the skies and reaching out their right hands to take hold of his outstretched hand. (Similarly, the epitaph for the late fourth-century senator and poet Rufius Festus Avenius describes him arriving in heaven where a “chorus of gods extends right hands” to welcome him.⁷⁴) The monogram at the top of the ivory leaf has been interpreted *Symmachorum*, likely a reference to the illustrious senator Quintus Aurelius Symmachus who died in 402.⁷⁵ Made at a time of competition between pagans and Christian among the Roman aristocracy, the ivory relief’s visual claim for the senator’s heavenly afterlife and familial reunion rivals the Christian message about the next world and its vision for this world.

To summarize: Roman funerary discourse, in literary and visual forms, could display conjugal fidelity after death, express human love and longing, and in some instances convey a hope of reunion in an afterlife. For the living, these expressions could announce domestic harmony, familial piety, civic virtue, personal merit, divine favor, and religious legitimacy.⁷⁶ Such was the commemorative tradition in which Roman Christianity and its visual culture emerged, and with which they interacted.

⁷¹ CIL 6.1779 (Pars 1, 397–398)=ILS 1259, D22–29, 38ff: *felix, maritum si superstitem mihi diui dedissent, sed tamen felix, tua quia sum fuique postque mortem mox ero*; trans. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 99.

⁷² Kahlos, “Fabia Aconia Paulina and the Death of Praetextatus,” 22.

⁷³ Jerome, *Epistula* 23, to Marcella; discussed further below.

⁷⁴ ILS 2944; Matthews, “Four Funerals and a Wedding,” 263, 273 n. 24.

⁷⁵ Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, 30–31.

⁷⁶ For a discussion of personal merit claimed by funerary expressions of conjugal devotion, see Carlo Carletti, “Un mondo nuovo’: Epigrafia funeraria dei cristiani a Roma in età postcostantiniana,” *Vetera Christianorum* 35 (1998), 51–53.

While the commonplaces of Roman love poetry, funerary epitaphs, and grave decoration certainly attest to spousal devotion and fidelity after death, there is less certainty about clear or broadly held Roman beliefs in the endurance of a marriage bond or spousal reunion in an afterlife. In many instances the evidence surveyed above might have represented only vague hopes or expressions of longing rather than confident, concrete expectations on par with the developed eschatology in Christian doctrine. However, to Christian eyes, Roman commonplaces might have looked like belief—like rival claims. When heirs of these commonplaces embraced Christianity, they transposed their conventions, setting them within the framework of the self-assured and developed Christian afterlife, and bringing Roman marriage into a new paradigm.⁷⁷ The sections that follow relate how that transposition took place through visual and literary means, in the productions of both ordinary married Christians and church authorities.

Christian Marriage after Death: Visual Evidence

Sub-Clipeus Images on Early Christian Sarcophagi

As with non-Christian sarcophagi, Christian sarcophagi with spousal portraits or epitaphs were often commissioned by a surviving spouse and indicate a conjugal devotion beyond death. Christians, however, placed spousal portraits among biblical vignettes alluding to Christian concepts of salvation and afterlife, visually expressing the hopes of the grave owners.⁷⁸ In the case of double portraits, visual programs seem to have suggested a hope for salvation that comes to the pair as a couple. The idea of a couple's afterlife would have been reinforced when salvation or resurrection-related images were placed in the small space directly beneath *clipeus* portraits on double-register or strigillated sarcophagi.

Stine Birk discusses images that appear beneath portraits, and calls these sub-*clipeus* images “tertiary motifs,” third in a hierarchy of “primary motif” (the *clipeus* portrait) and the “secondary motif”

⁷⁷ Matthews, “Four Funerals and a Wedding,” 271: “The Roman aristocracy ... moved over to a Christianity that allowed it to preserve the essentials of its traditional position, social, economic and cultural, within the protective shell of its new religion. As for the next life, ... here, too, the conversion of the Roman aristocracy is to be understood, not so much in terms of a change of mentality, as in the adaptation of a cultural idiom within which a repertory of common ideas could continue to be expressed.”

⁷⁸ Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab, und Wort*; Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 10–11.

(figures at the far right and left ends of the front panel, separated from the central “primary” and “tertiary” motifs by strigil panels). The tertiary motif, not a portrait itself, is “often made to look as if it supports the *clipeus*.”⁷⁹ On Christian sarcophagi, perhaps the sub-*clipeus* image ought to be ranked second rather than third in priority: Birk rightly observes that the central portrait should be the “the starting point of an interpretation,” and on double-register Christian sarcophagi, crowded with images, the largest image (the portrait) and the diminutive scene directly beneath it form the focal point and attract the viewer’s gaze.⁸⁰ The placement of the smaller scene beneath the portrait connects the two images and invites the viewer to consider them together.⁸¹ Sub-*clipeus* images, as Manuela Studer-Karlen argues, represent not only a formal connection to the portrayal of the deceased, but also a substantive one.⁸² Often the connection constitutes a visual claim of salvation.

The chart below (Table 2, next page) lists the sarcophagi in the three volumes of the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* that contain double-portraits and sub-*clipeus* motifs. Of the thirty cases that can be evaluated, twenty-seven contain probable or at least potential allusions to salvation or afterlife. Eight are fragments too damaged to evaluate, and two double-portraits appear above a continuous frieze with afterlife symbolism but no single defined, centrally placed motif directly below.

The most-attested theme for images beneath double-portraits is a pastoral motif featuring sheep, goats, shepherds, and other bucolic imagery, with seven documented cases (in addition to three instances when this motif appears beneath a portrait of a single commemorand).⁸³ An example is the sarcophagus of Faustinus, dated to 353 CE, which features a large tondo portrait of Faustinus and his wife (her features unfinished, perhaps since she was still living when the sarcophagus was made), placed at the center of

⁷⁹ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 44–45; N.B.: the caption on 44, fig. 18 mistakenly switches the definitions of “primary” and “secondary” motifs.

⁸⁰ Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 22, cf. 44.

⁸¹ *Contra* Meader, “Symmetry in Early Christian Relief Sculpture,” 141, who asserts that “it was chiefly a regard for the form of the field” that guided the selection of motifs for sarcophagus lids and sub-*clipeus* decoration. Form and field size surely were influential, but the symbolic subject matter was arguably more “chiefly” influential.

⁸² Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenen Darstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 66: “Vor allem die einzonigen Riefelsarkophage mit zentralem Clipeus bieten unter diesem einen geschlossenen Anbringungsort für ein Bild, das zur Verstorbenen Darstellung darüber nicht nur eine formale, sondern auch eine inhaltliche Verbindung darstellen konnte.”

⁸³ Rep. I, nos. 34, 87, 239, 681, 689, 778, 962; single portraits with pastoral sub-*clipeus* images: Rep. I, nos. 85, 811, 1003; in addition, Rep. I no. 1023 is a fragment of a *clipeus* frame with a part of a shepherd, but it cannot be determined whether the *clipeus* originally contained a single or double-portrait.

two registers of strigils, directly above an image of a shepherd milking a goat and another shepherd standing with a donkey (fig. 139).⁸⁴ Such pastoral themes, when visually linked to spousal portraits in this way, suggest (as Studer-Karlen states) that the fortunate visions associated with the bucolic images were to be bestowed upon the deceased.⁸⁵

Sub-clipeus Motif	#	Sarcophagi as numbered in <i>Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage</i>
Probable or potential allusion to salvation or afterlife		
Shepherds and pastoral scenes	7	Rep. I, 34, 87, 239, 681, 689, 778, 962
Jonah	5	Rep. I, 44, 1010; Rep. II, 24, 103; Rep. III, 40
Daniel	4	Rep. I, 40, 42, 43; Rep. II, 12
Crux <i>invicta</i>	2	Rep. II, 102; Rep. III, 453
Pharaoh's army drowning	2	Rep. III, 41, 203
Adoration of the magi	2	Rep. II, 20, 23
3 Hebrew youths	1	Rep. I, 625
2 deer drinking from river of Paradise	1	Rep. III, 211
Sacrifice of Isaac	1	Rep. I, 112
3 putti treading grapes	1	Rep. I, 188
2 intersecting cornucopiae	1	Rep. III, 83
TOTAL	27	
Afterlife symbolism in a continuous frieze rather than a centrally-placed sub-clipeus motif directly beneath the double-portrait		
3 Seasons + Daniel	1	Rep. I, 39
Cana + multiplication	1	Rep. III, 38
Inconclusive fragments		
Frag., upper portion of 2 males	1	Rep. I, 187
Frag., sub-clipeus motif lost	7	Rep. I, 385, 435, 782, 812; Rep. II, 25, 104; Rep. III, 268
No apparent reference to afterlife		
2 wrestling Erotes	1	Rep. I, 244
Winged putti + cock fight	1	Rep. I, 650
Atlas	1	Rep. III, 87

Table 2. Sub-clipeus motifs on Christian sarcophagi

Other sarcophagi place more explicitly biblical images beneath *clipeatae*, such as scenes of Jonah, which appear beneath spousal portraits on five sarcophagi.⁸⁶ An example is a double-register sarcophagus from the second quarter of the fourth century with an abbreviated Jonah cycle beneath the

⁸⁴ Rep. I, 72, no. 187, Taf. 26.

⁸⁵ Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 66: "Ihre Unterbringung unter dem Verstorbenenbild macht deutlich, dass die mit den bukolischen Bildern verbundenen Glückvisionen dem Verstobenen zuteil werden sollen"; 67, n. 343 lists sarcophagi with bucolic sub-clipeus images, including single-portraits, and omitting Rep. I no. 681. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates*, 287–288, also calls attention to the connection of pastoral life with philosophical pursuit, and bucolic images as visual metaphors for spiritual longing; possibly sub-clipeus bucolic images are meant also to reflect autobiographically on the philosophical virtues of the deceased.

⁸⁶ Rep. I, nos. 44, 1010; Rep. II, nos. 24, 103; Rep. III, no. 40.

large shell portrait of the sarcophagus owners (fig. 140).⁸⁷ On the left side of the sub-*clipeus* scene, a man aboard a little ship casts Jonah overboard into the jaws of the sea monster *kētos*; at right, Jonah, having emerged from the belly of the sea monster, reclines Endymion-like beneath the vine, as the monster looks on. The Jonah cycle (depictions of Jonah swallowed, cast up, at rest, and praying) was the most popular Old Testament theme in early Christian visual culture; in Christian texts and art these elements of the Jonah story typified death, resurrection, and immortality.⁸⁸ This symbolism grew out of Jesus's saying that his own death and resurrection was prefigured by Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the sea monster (the "sign of Jonah," Matt 12:40). In patristic literature, the typology was expanded to serve as assurance of every Christian's ultimate resurrection.⁸⁹ The placement of this cycle directly beneath the couple's portrait on this sarcophagus connects the two images; taken together, they may be seen as an expression of the hope that, despite the intervention of death, resurrection and eternal life will ultimately come to this pair.⁹⁰ Some viewers might have sensed that this symbolism was reinforced by the presentation of the couple in a shell, which as a marine symbol resonates with the images of Jonah, the sea monster, and the waves below. If they perceived the shell as a container of life in a realm where human beings cannot live, they may have seen in it an apt frame for the representations of the man and woman who look forward to a life beyond death. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the shell was a fairly common decorative motif, both in portraiture and architecture, and even in this composition with marine imagery it may have been perceived as little more than an aesthetic device.

⁸⁷ Rep. I, 41–43, no. 44, Taf. 14; Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31535.

⁸⁸ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 51, 68–69, 75, 159–160, 171–174; Ferguson, "Jonah in Early Christian Art," 350; Everett Ferguson, "Jonah," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1998), 628. For additional symbolic meanings of Jonah: Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 171–174; Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁸⁹ E.g., Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 5.5.2; Tertullian, *De resurrectione carnis*, 58; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum*, 14.17; *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 5.7.12.

⁹⁰ Cf. Rep. I, no. 1010, Rep. II, nos. 24, 103, and Rep. III, no. 40, for other double-portraits directly above a Jonah scene; Rep. I, no. 23 for a fragment of a *clipeus* portrait that apparently had a Jonah scene (Jonah cast out? also at rest?) beneath it; Rep. I, nos. 33, 95, and Rep. III, no. 305, for Jonah scenes beneath *clipeus* portraits of single individuals. See also Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenen-darstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 67, fig. 55.

The image of the biblical figure Daniel was another choice for the space beneath double-portraits, appearing in four preserved examples.⁹¹ A typical example is the depiction of Daniel praying between two lions, attended by the angel and the prophet Habakkuk bringing him bread (as in the deuterocanonical book of Daniel), beneath the shell portrait of a couple on a sarcophagus dating to the second quarter of the fourth century, (fig. 70).⁹² Along with Jonah, the story of Daniel alluded to divine deliverance, particularly deliverance from death—Daniel was “buried” in the lions’ den and emerged alive. Jonah and Daniel were among the biblical episodes that served as proofs of the resurrection in Christian texts, such as the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*:

We believe there is to be a resurrection also from the resurrection of our Lord. For it is He that raised Lazarus, when he had been in the grave four days.... He that brought Jonas in the space of three days, alive and unhurt, out of the belly of the whale, and the three children out of the furnace of Babylon, and Daniel out of the mouth of the lions, does not want power to raise us up also.⁹³

Christian spouses may have asked for the image of Daniel to be placed beneath their sarcophagus portraits as a way of expressing their hope in a future resurrection for both of them.

Another resurrection image that was selected for placement beneath spousal portraits (in two known cases) is the *crux invicta*, or *tropaion*: a cross surmounted by a wreathed christogram, with two doves perched on the cross beam and two Roman soldiers seated below.⁹⁴ This image seems to have been developed around 330 CE and appears as the central image on numerous “Passion sarcophagi,” so called because they often contain scenes of Christ’s arrest, trial, and crowning, along with biblical vignettes typifying Christ’s salvific death. The *crux invicta* adapted imperial imagery to represent “the victory of Christ over death and his resurrection.”⁹⁵ One of the earliest uses of this motif is on the Julia Latronilla

⁹¹ E.g., Rep. I, 35–41, nos. 40, 42, 43; Rep. II, 5–6, no. 12; cf. Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenendarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 67, Figs. 31, 42, 56, 57. Huskinson, *Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi*, 230, and note 120, apparently overlooks these images of Daniel and states, “the only Christian subject regularly to appear [below the *clipeus*] was the story of Jonah.”

⁹² Rep. I, 37–39, no. 42, Taf. 13, Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano inv. 31532.

⁹³ *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 5.7.12, SC 329, 226: Πρὸς δὲ τούτοις πιστεύομεν γίνεσθαι τὴν ἀνάστασιν καὶ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Κυρίου ἀνάστασεως· αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ καὶ Λάζαρον ἀναστήσας τετραήμερον ... Ὁ τὸν Ἰωάνν διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ζῶντα καὶ ἀπαθῆ ἐξαγαγὼν ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας τοῦ κήτους καὶ τοὺς τρεῖς παῖδας ἐκ καμίνου Βαβυλωνίας καὶ τὸν Δανιὴλ ἐκ στόματος λεόντων, οὐκ ἀπορήσει δυνάμεως καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀνεγείραι; trans. James Donaldson, ANF 7:440.

⁹⁴ Rep. II, no. 102; Rep. III, no. 453, cf. Rep. III no. 49.

⁹⁵ Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab, und Wort*, 340; Jensen, “The Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography,” 158–169, fig. 3–4.

sarcophagus, dated to around or shortly after 330—though this dating is disputed (fig. 141).⁹⁶ Here the image also includes miniature busts of Sol and Luna, perhaps alluding to night and day as symbols of death and life, or to the heavenly realm of the afterlife, and also suggesting the parity of the wife and husband depicted in the *clipeus* portrait above. The *tropaion* forms a base for the portrait, which rests atop the christogram as if it were the pinnacle ornament of the victory trophy. Visually this image of triumph expresses the couple's hope in a way that seems to echo the words of Paul: "When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' ... Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54, 57).

Other sub-*clipeus* motifs may also allude to hopes for the afterlife, though some may also be read as general expressions of Christian faith or piety. These include the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace (an antetype of the resurrection, as seen in the *Apostolic Constitutions* cited above), the drowning of Pharaoh's army (part of a typology of baptism and victory over death in 1 Cor 10:1–2), the sacrifice of Isaac (a foreshadow of Christ's redemptive death), a pair of deer drinking from the river of Paradise (an image from Psalm 42:1–2, seen as symbolic of baptism, Eucharist, and their salvific effects), putti treading grapes (potentially an allusion to the joy of heaven and the life-giving Eucharist), the adoration of the magi (signaling the coming of salvation through the incarnation), and two intersecting cornucopiae (which could be seen as a symbol of heavenly plenty).

“Joint-Heirs of the Grace of [Eternal] Life”

In the foregoing examples of images that underlie double-portraits, symbols of a blessed afterlife and salvation from death are visually applied to wife and husband *as a couple*, encircled and set apart within a *clipeus* or shell. The presentation seems to express a conception of Christian marriage like that

⁹⁶ Rep. II, 32, no. 102, Taf. 33–34; Koch, *Früchristliche Sarkophage*, 275, 279, 617, questions whether this sarcophagus is ancient or a modern counterfeit, briefly citing concerns raised by the unusual iconography, style, and coarse execution of the central motif (without elaboration), and stating that only in-person examination of the sarcophagus and its inscriptions would make it possible to verify authenticity.

found in 1 Peter 3:7 (a passage from one of the New Testament household codes), in which husband and wife together are “joint-heirs of the grace of life.”⁹⁷ While the preferred reading of this phrase is συνκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς (“joint-heirs of the grace of life”), two manuscripts—P⁷², dated to the 3rd–4th century CE, and syr^p, dated to the 5th century CE—both contain the variant reading συνκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς αἰωνίου (“joint-heirs of the grace of *eternal* life”).⁹⁸ This variant suggests that some late antique Christians were placing marriage in an eschatological framework, as sarcophagus patrons seem to have done; spouses could inherit eternal life together, as a pair.⁹⁹

The “co-heirs” passage in 1 Peter does not receive much commentary in patristic literature; Ambrose twice used the text when discussing married life, but not with reference to afterlife.¹⁰⁰ This seems to be an instance where there is a disjuncture between the literary and visual record. Dyan Elliott observes, “the theological development of a spiritual bond between spouses which in some way promoted the unified salvation of husband and wife” was “no incredible leap insofar as Paul stated explicitly in 1 Cor 7:14 that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believing,” but the tendency among patristic authors was often “to see the conjugal debt as a shackle that linked husband and wife and impeded the salvation of either or both.”¹⁰¹ By contrast, a notion of Christian spouses as co-recipients of eternal life was evidently of importance to the married Christian patrons of sarcophagi, and constituted an operative concept in the visual art they selected for personal commemoration.

⁹⁷ Schatkin, “Marriage,” 722: “Christianity made the wife equal to the husband, sharing the same perfection, in relation to Christ and the kingdom of God.”

⁹⁸ *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed., edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, United Bible Societies, 2001), 791–792.

⁹⁹ Alternately, it could be argued that the addition of αἰωνίου might have resulted from ζωῆς “attracting” the modifier due to the ubiquity of the phrase “eternal life” elsewhere in the NT and early Christian writings, producing a variant without great significance; but see Dyan Elliott’s argument in the following paragraph.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Ambrose, *Epistula* 63.107; *De Paradiso* 4.24–25; cf. Dooley, *Marriage According to St. Ambrose*, 28. A few other patristic citations of 1 Pet 3:7 quote the phrase describing woman as “the weaker vessel” but not the “co-heirs” phrase: Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.51; *Homily on Joshua* 3.1; *Commentary on Matthew* 14.16; and a possible allusion in *Fragmenta e catenis Proverbia* 160,B 4; Ambrose, *De paradiso*, 14.72. These are the only citations of 1 Pet 3:7 listed in *Biblia patristica: index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*.

¹⁰¹ Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 42.

Posthumous Spousal Devotion and Reunion on Christian Sarcophagi

Dextrarum iunctio spousal portraits on sarcophagi signaled the couple's marital harmony, and given the funerary context also expressed a conjugal devotion that endured past death.¹⁰² Might they also have indicated an anticipated reunion in the afterlife? Glenys Davies has argued that reunion was one of the handclasp's symbolic values in earlier Roman, Etruscan, and Greek art, but even among scholars who have tended to affirm continuities between Roman art and its Greek and Etruscan precedents, there has been, Davies observes, a inclination to place "rather less emphasis on the concept of reunion in the afterlife."¹⁰³ Adrien Bruhl was one who considered posthumous reunion a potential meaning of *dextrarum iunctio* portraits, along with the formation of marriage and bidding farewell in death.¹⁰⁴ Given the popularity of the *dextrarum iunctio* in Roman art, the fact that the concept of posthumous reunion (whether belief or longing) grew more pronounced in the Roman world from the first century BCE forward than it had been in the Greek world, and Christian continuities with Roman use of the handclasp, there seems to be cause for taking seriously the possibility that Christian funerary portraits with the *dextrarum iunctio* might allude to posthumous reunion.

Unfortunately, the figured panels of many Christian sarcophagi have become separated from their lids which might have borne inscriptions revealing the grave owners' expectations (though, as discussed above, epitaphs do not always provide this information). In a few existing cases, however, inscriptions do clarify patrons' views, and function with images to indicate conjugal devotion after death and hopes for a shared afterlife with one's spouse.

¹⁰² Rep. I, nos. 86, 678, 688, 853, 918, 922, 952; Rep. II, nos. 148, 149, 151; Rep. III, no. 51. Many more Christian spouses opted for *clipeus* portraits, possibly an alternate means of representing matrimonial devotion after death and a hoped-for afterlife reunion. A. M. Giuntella, "Marriage. III. Iconography," in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Cambridge and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:529; Müller, "Dextrarum iunctio," 2061–2062.

¹⁰³ Davies, "Handshake Motif," 632–633.

¹⁰⁴ Adrien Bruhl, *Liber pater: origine et expansion du culte dionysiaque à Rome et dans le monde romain* (Paris, E. de Boccard, 1953), 322; referring to a relief of Dionysus and Ariadne clasping right hands (Plate 16, though Plate 15 is erroneously cited on 322), Bruhl poses the question, without answering: "Cette poignée de main représente-t-elle l'union par la *dextrarum iunctio*, l'adieu ou la rencontre dans le monde céleste?" ("Does this hand clasp represent the union by *dextrarum iunctio*, farewell, or meeting in the heavenly world?" my trans.); cited by Davies, "Handshake Motif," 633, n 46.

The late fourth-century Tolentino sarcophagus (fig. 53) was commissioned by Septimia Severina for the burial of her husband, Flavius Julius Catervius, and for her own later burial alongside him.¹⁰⁵ As previously described, one side bears a large tondo portrait of the pair with their right hands clasped (fig. 23). Above their heads a hand extends a crown; though some historians have interpreted it as a reference to the wedding wreath, in this funerary context it more strongly alludes to the eschatological reward God gives the two of them, though of course these are not exclusive meanings. (As outlined in Chapter 2, the wedding wreath came to be understood by Christians as a divinely bestowed victory crown, which could have referred to a victory over pleasure in this life, while also anticipating an eternal reward to be realized after death). That the divine hand extends one crown over both spouses' heads implies that their heavenly reward is an honor they receive as a pair, in contrast to figures on contemporaneous "stars and crowns" sarcophagi who receive crowns individually (fig. 38).¹⁰⁶ Spandrels above the portrait of Severina and Catervius contain christograms with the letters *alpha* and *omega*, identifying the spouses' shared faith in Christ, perhaps also alluding to victory like the crown, and securing divine protection for the pair encircled beneath.¹⁰⁷ A pair of doves occupies the lower spandrels, each facing inward, clutching an olive branch. Beyond representing God's peace (as Noah's dove) or the couple's departed souls, the pair of doves alludes to conjugal devotion (as in the biblical Song of Songs)—similar pairs appear on several tombs of married Christians (figs. 54, 141, 142).¹⁰⁸ Paulinus of Nola referred to the newlyweds Julian and Titia as "paired doves" joined together by Christ.¹⁰⁹ Viewers might have seen the doves as symbols of

¹⁰⁵ Rep. II, 52–54; for a discussion of the dating to the 390s: Marco Ioli, *Il Sarcophago Paleocristiano di Catervio nel Duomo di Tolentino* (Bologna: Casa Editrice Prof. Riccardo Patron, 1971), 70–71.

¹⁰⁶ Rep. II, 53; Rep. I, 28, Taf. 11, no. 31, for a sarcophagus fragment with individual apostles crowned by the hand of God (dated in Deichmann to the last third of the 3rd century [a typo?], but now held to date to 375–400; Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31522).

¹⁰⁷ See the discussion of the christogram as symbol of victory and apotropaic device in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁸ Regarding doves as symbols of departed souls, see Ambrose, *De Isaac vel anima*, 7.59; Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 8:37–41; Spier, *Picturing the Bible*, 219; Jensen, "The Emperor Cult and Christian Iconography," 162. Regarding doves as symbols of conjugal devotion as in the Song of Songs, see Song of Songs 2:14; 5:2; 6:9; but cf. Elsner, "Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive," 336, who sees the doves in the portrait of Severina and Catervius as symbols of "the Holy Ghost." For paired doves on other tombs, see, e.g., Rep. II, 32, Taf. 33–34, no. 102; 56–58, Taf. 59.3–8, 60.1–2, no. 150; cf. Rep. III, 35, no. 49, Taf. 17 (two doves, now broken off and lost, originally appeared on the crux invicta beneath portraits of spouses on the lid).

¹⁰⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25.3, CSEL 30, 238: Christe deus, pariles duc ad tua frena columbas ("Christ God, draw these paired doves towards Your reins"), trans. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 31.

“devoted love that endured beyond death.”¹¹⁰ The *Physiologus*, a popular text in late antiquity, describes the turtledove as a bird that “very much loves her husband” such that “she lives chaste with him and only keeps faith with him.” If the dove’s “husband” dies, “she unites with no other man but is always desiring him and is every moment longing for him. And in this remembrance of the husband and this desire for him she remains till death.”¹¹¹

Severina’s visual symbols thus display enduring spousal devotion after death, and hint at a bond that surpasses death (the *dextrarum iunctio*) and shared blessedness in an afterlife (the crown). These concepts are made explicit in the inscription directly above the portrait:

[The two] whom the all-powerful Lord joined in sweet marriage with equal merits,
The grave guards for eternity.
Catervius, Severina rejoices that she has been joined to you.
May you [two] rise together among the blessed with the help of Christ,
Whom Probianus, the priest of God, baptized and anointed.¹¹²

Evidently carved when Severina was buried alongside her husband (perhaps according to her instructions), the inscription uses a wordplay in her being “joined” (*coniuncta*) to Catervius, indicating a continuing marital devotion even in their dual interment, and hinting at their reunion in the beyond. Both the inscription and the iconography frame the afterlife expectations of Catervius and Severina in terms of

¹¹⁰ Bernhard Jussen, “Posthumous Love as Culture: Outline of a Medieval Moral Pattern,” in *Love after Death*, 39. Cf. Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavivs Ivliivs Catervivs*, 87; von Shüling believed the doves on the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina represent “marital fidelity conditioning mutual love.”

¹¹¹ *Physiologus* 28.2–5; Francis J. Carmody, ed., *Physiologus Latinus, Éditions préliminaires versio B* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1939), 49–50: Physiologus de turture dicit ualde uirum suum diligere, et caste cum illo uiuere, et ipsi soli fidem seruare; ita ut si quando euenerit ut masculus eius aut ab accipitre aut ab aucupe capiatur, haec alteri masculo se non iungit, sed ipsum semper desiderat et ipsum per singula momenta sperat, et ipsius recordatione et desiderio usque ad mortem perseuerat; trans. Jussen, “Posthumous Love,” 39, except for my substitution of *remembrance* for Jussen’s *representation*.

¹¹² CIL IX 5566 = ILS 1289 = CLE 1560a = ILCV 98b = ICI X 22b; Rep. II, 52–53. *QVOS PARIBVS MERITIS VINXIT MATRIMONIO DVLCI / OMNIPOTENS DOMINVS TVMVLVS CVSTODIT IN AEVVM / CATERVI SEVERINA TIBI CONIUNCTA LAETATVR / SVRGATIS PARITER CRISTO PRAESTANTE BEATI / QVOS DEI SACERDVS PROBIANVS LAVIT ET VNXIT*; my trans., with assistance from Dr. Max Goldman, and with thanks to Drs. Jutta Dresken-Weiland and Robin M. Jensen for discussing details of the inscription with me. I read the first two lines as a single sentence beginning with a relative clause (*quos ... dominus*) that forms the object of the sentence. Jutta Dresken-Weiland, Andreas Angerstorfer, and Andreas Merkt, *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom: Tod und Jenseits in christlichen und jüdischen Grabinschriften der Antike* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 162, break these lines into two sentences, evidently reading *tumulus* as a misspelled accusative rather than a nominative: “Der allmächtige Herr verband euch mit gleichen Verdiensten im süßen Band der Ehe. Er (der Herr) beschützt das Grab auf ewig.” = “The almighty Lord joined you with equal merits in the sweet bond of marriage. He (the Lord) guards the grave forever” (my trans.). This leads them to conclude: “The marriage of Catervius and Severina as well as the grave are, according to the text, under the protection of God. The hope of the common resurrection is mentioned as joyful perspective in the face of death” (163, my trans.). I would agree that their grave (as well as their marriage) is presented as divinely protected, but I see that represented visually through the iconographic program, not verbally in the inscription. Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavivs Ivliivs Catervivs*, 91, translates *beati: fra i beati*, “among the blessed”; Dresken-Weiland et al., *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom*, 161, translates it *ihr Glücklichen*, “you fortunate ones.”

the resurrection and eternal life they will receive together by their faith in Christ (“may you [two] rise together among the blessed”).

Like their pagan senatorial contemporaries Paulina and Praetextatus, Severina and Catervius anticipate posthumous reunion as co-initiates and sharers in knowledge of the divine. One can detect a kind of conversation taking place between late fourth-century Christians and non-Christians through the rival claims they displayed on their tombs—a “competitive commemoration.”¹¹³ Severina may even have intended an anti-pagan polemic: the right and left side panels of the sarcophagus contain companion scenes (often paired on sarcophagi) of the three Hebrew youths refusing to bow to the king’s image and the magi bringing their gifts to the Virgin and the Christ child—biblical exemplars of the faithful who reject false worship of an earthly king and adore the true king.¹¹⁴ On the right side, the Roman style of the king and his portrait (seen above his head, fig. 143) fosters a polysemic image that recalls both the three youths before Nebuchadnezzar and the magi before Herod, and could have been seen as a rejection of the former Roman order (and its religions) that had once opposed Christianity (as Babylon had once opposed the Jewish nation, and Herod had sought to kill the Christ child).¹¹⁵

The fourth line of the inscription, “May you two arise together among the blessed,” envisions *both* spousal reunion *and* joining the heavenly company of saints, far from the claim that Christians anticipated the latter to the exclusion of the former.¹¹⁶ As in the family *cubicula* of the catacombs, one sees here a funerary memorialization of a familial entity within the larger faith community.

¹¹³ Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus,” 157–176; cf. Karen B. Stern, “Inscription as Religious Competition in Third-Century Syria,” in *Religious Competition in the Third Century CE: Jews, Christians, and the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Jordan D. Rosenblum et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2014), 141–152.

¹¹⁴ Robin M. Jensen, “The Three Hebrew Youths and the Problem of the Emperor’s Portrait in Early Christianity,” in *Jewish Art in Its Late Antique Context*, ed. Uzi Leibner and Catherine Hezser (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 303–320; cf. Steen, “The Iconography of the Sarcophagus in S. Ambrogio,” 293. For some viewers, the pair of scenes may also have evoked Jews (the Hebrew youths) and Gentiles (the magi), or Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, and thus the universal scope of Christianity.

¹¹⁵ Several sources identify this image only as the magi before Herod: Rep. II, 53; Dresken-Weiland et al., *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom*, 163; Nestori, *Il mausoleo e il sarcofago di Flavius Iulius Catervius*, 82. However, the king’s bust atop a column, as well as the Persian-style caps worn by the three youths, allude to the story in Daniel. For more discussion of the Hebrew Youths/Magi image as anti-pagan visual rhetoric, see Elsner, “Rational, Passionate, and Appetitive,” 342–346.

¹¹⁶ Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers*, 58–59; but the translation of *beati* is debated: Nestori, *Il Mausoleo e il Sarcofago di Flavius Iulius Catervius*, 91, translates *beati*: *fra i beati*, “among the blessed”; but Dresken-Weiland et al., *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom*, 161, translates it *ihr Glücklichen*, “you fortunate ones.” See, however, the quotation below from John Chrysostom, *Ad viduam junioem*, for a comparable expectation of *both* spousal reunion *and* joining the company of the saints.

Another Theodosian-era sarcophagus with a *dextrarum iunctio* spousal portrait comes from the mausoleum of Sextus Petronius Probus and his wife Anicia Faltonia Proba and is believed to be Probus's sarcophagus.¹¹⁷ At the center of the back panel, the spouses join right hands as they stand between columns and beneath an arch; atop each column a bird feeds from a basket full of fruit—another instance of a couple portrait accompanied by paired doves (fig. 144). The mausoleum was dismantled in the 15th century, but fortunately not before a Vatican secretary recorded two epitaphs found inside. In one, Proba anticipates a future burial with her husband: “Proba, ... best of wives, has obtained this consolation for such great grief, that the urn may join (*iungat*) them as equals. Happy, alas too happy, while he lived, joined (*iuncta*) to a worthy husband, worthy of a tomb together.”¹¹⁸ Here again a wordplay describes co-burial using nuptial terms, and like Severina and Paulina, Proba is depicted as a happy wife. Hers is another voice in this late fourth-century conversation.¹¹⁹ The second epitaph refers to Probus's conversion and baptism late in his life, and closes with a prayer that Probus, in heaven with Christ and angels, may bring “aid to his children and wife.”¹²⁰ The epitaphs highlight a continuing marital and familial bond after death, and resonate with the portrait of Probus and Proba with their hands joined. In such a context, the image alluded simultaneously to their marriage, their farewell in death, and their continuing bond.¹²¹ If Proba also intended their portrait to allude to a future reunion, however, that particular hope was left unstated in the inscriptions.

Such was not the case with the late fourth-century sarcophagus made for the 22-year-old Christian woman Bassa.¹²² On it a verse epitaph announces Bassa's ascent to heaven where she lives in

¹¹⁷ Rep. I, 277–278, Taf. 107, no. 678; Dresken-Weiland, “Christian Sarcophagi from Rome.”

¹¹⁸ ICUR 2, 347/8; trans. Dennis Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus,” 162. The last two couplets “were written in anticipation,” Trout, 161. The use of *urna* may refer to Proba's future burial. It may also be poetic and refer to the sarcophagus. Regarding the use of sarcophagi for the deposition of cremated remains (like earlier cinerary urns), see Jaś Elsner, “Decorative Imperatives between Concealment and Display: The Form of Sarcophagi,” *Res* 61/62 (2012): 179–180 and notes 2–4. My thanks to Robert Couzin for calling my attention to this.

¹¹⁹ Matthews, “Four Funerals and a Wedding,” 263, notes the similarity: “The two sides, pagan and Christian, ... visualise life after death in very similar terms. Praetextatus dwells in a ‘heavenly palace’ in the Milky Way, Petronius Probus ‘crosses new thresholds’ in the white robes of baptism. So too the senator and poet Rufius Festus Avienius... Jupiter ‘opens heaven’ to Festus, that he may enter ‘clothed in white.’ Now he arrives, a ‘chorus of gods extends right hands’ in welcome, the heavens ‘resound in praise.’ Just so for Probus the Christian, his epitaph asks that he may be ‘joined to the heavenly choruses.’”

¹²⁰ ICUR 2, 347/8; trans. Trout, “The Verse Epitaph(s) of Petronius Probus,” 164.

¹²¹ Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler*, 150, identifies farewell in death.

¹²² See also the discussion in Chapter 2 of the visual composition of this epitaph and its centrally-placed *chi-rho*.

Christ. The epitaph closes in Bassa's own voice, consoling her bereaved husband Gaudentius and assuring him of their future reunion:

Sweet husband, most closely bound to me forever,
drive off your tears, the noble court of heaven is pleasant,
and it is not fitting to weep because I, a virtuous woman, have abandoned earth; ...
You will be saved, I confess, and will come to the kisses of Bassa.¹²³

The sarcophagus, though badly damaged, is striking for its departure from the conventions of Bethesda-type sarcophagi, so named because the central scenes of its visual program typically depicted Christ's healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (related in John 5). The usual "Bethesda sarcophagus" program progressed from left to right through a series of healing scenes to the climactic entry into Jerusalem, foreshadowing Christ's ultimate miracle of salvation and resurrection (fig. 145).¹²⁴ The program has been interpreted as expressing hope in life after death.¹²⁵ On the sarcophagus of Bassa, however, the large tabula for the inscription interrupts the flow of the visual program, which leaves off with Christ gesturing not toward the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda, but toward the inscription (fig. 146). Yet, as Dennis Trout has persuasively argued, what seems to have been a "clumsy," "cavalier" alteration that "artlessly" disrupts the visual imagery might have prompted viewers to consider Bassa's ascension to heaven as another one of Christ's miracles.¹²⁶ Viewers might also have interpreted the gesturing figure of Christ as a sign of blessing on the commemorated woman and her husband, and an approval of their hopes for meeting again.¹²⁷

The epitaphs from the tombs of Catervius, Probus, and Bassa function together with their surrounding visual imagery to indicate belief in the endurance of spousal bonds after death and hopes of a reunion and shared afterlife. They raise the question of whether the expression of similar hopes might

¹²³ ICUR 5.14076: Dul[c]is in aeternum mihimet iun[tissi]me coniux, / Ex[c]ute iam lacrimas, placuit bona [r]egia caeli; / Nec lugere decet terras quia casta reliqu[i]; / ... Sospes eris fateor v[. . . . o]scula Bassae; final line as Antonio Ferrua reconstructed it: Sospes eris fateor u[enies et ad o]scula Bassae; Trout, "Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative," 341–343; Rep. I, 229–230, Taf. 85, no. 556.

¹²⁴ Discussed in Trout, "Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative," 347–351, see also 338, figs. 10.1–3.

¹²⁵ Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Wort und Grab*, 247–266; Dresken-Weiland et al., *Himmel, Paradies, Schalom*, 105–107.

¹²⁶ Trout, "Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative," 350–354.

¹²⁷ A connection between the Bethesda program and the deceased might have been implied by the grave owners' portrait busts on the sarcophagus lid, as on *Sternkranz* sarcophagi (which portray the grave owners on the lid rather than in the acclamation scene on the casket), but unfortunately, no lids have survived of the 14 extant "Bethesda" sarcophagi; Studer-Karlen, *Verstorbenenarstellungen auf frühchristlichen Sarkophagen*, 225; Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, 314–315.

have been intended by the spousal portraits and visual programs on other Christian sarcophagi, even in the absence of accompanying inscriptions.

A Reassessment of the Arles Spouses-Dioscuri Sarcophagus

Chapter 2 included a brief description of two spousal portraits on a sarcophagus in the *Musée de l'Arles antique*. Returning to it now provides an additional case study on how iconography without inscriptions may express posthumous conjugal devotion and allude to afterlife (in furtherance of the discussion above of sarcophagi with sub-*clipeus* images alluding to afterlife).

On this sarcophagus, columns divide the front panel into four architraves, the center two depicting spouses in the *dextrarum iunctio* (right) and a farewell scene in which the wife's right hand rests on her husband's left shoulder (left) (fig. 17). Brigitte Christern-Briesenick identified the *dextrarum iunctio* portrait as a wedding scene, but since the husband is depicted at an old age (bearded), Reekmans (followed recently by Gaggadis-Robin) interpreted it as a scene of the couple's "ultimate farewell" (*adieu suprême*) in death (fig. 147).¹²⁸ Reekmans noted how this image works with the farewell scene to the left, which shows the husband at a younger age (beardless), attired in military garb, about to take leave of his wife to travel with the army (fig. 148): together, the two vignettes "form a diptych and illustrate the separation of the couple both during life as well as at the moment of death."¹²⁹

Yet both images also allude to the couple's marriage. At left, the wife wears the "knot of Hercules" tied around her midsection. The *nodus Herculanus* was an element of Roman wedding customs. According to Festus the groom was to untie the knot in the privacy of the bedchamber after the couple's wedding ceremony.¹³⁰ So, while depicting a farewell, the portrait simultaneously refers to the

¹²⁸ Rep. III, 37–38, *Hochzeitsszene*; Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 57; Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l'Arles antique*, 128.

¹²⁹ Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 57; "les deux forment un diptyque et illustrent la séparation du couple aussi bien pendant la vie qu'au moment de la mort" (my trans.).

¹³⁰ Festus, Sextus Pompeius, Paul (the Deacon), *De verborum significatu quae supersunt*, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Lipsiae: B.G. Teubner, 1913), 55; the knot symbolizes that the husband will be bound to his wife as fibers in a ball of wool are interconnected, and invokes the good fortune of having offspring like Hercules, who fathered seventy children: s.v. *Cingillo nova nupta praecingebatur, quod vir in lecto solvebat, factum ex lana ovis, ut, sicut illa in glomos sublata coniuncta inter se sit, sic vir suus secum cinctus vinctusque esset. Hunc Herculaneo nodo vinctum vir solvit ominis gratia, ut sic ipse felix sit in suscipiendis liberis*,

couple's wedding and the bride's chastity. Regarding the *dextrarum iunctio* scene to the right, Reekmans asserted that the sculptor, wanting to represent the couple's final farewell in death, deliberately omitted Concordia and Hymenaeus from the usual wedding image (seen on other "spouses and Dioscuri" sarcophagi, fig. 149) in order "to avoid a motif allusive to marriage."¹³¹ It seems more precise to say that the sculptor avoided alluding *only* to marriage; the result was a leave-taking scene that at once recalls the couple's initial joining in marriage, and thus expresses a continuing sense of conjugal fidelity even in death. It may be that the surviving wife commissioned the sarcophagus, and by this program showed herself to have performed the services of commemoration for her husband that were the social obligations of a devoted spouse.

The Dioscuri here support the theme of a devotion and destiny beyond death. Historians have interpreted the twins variously as symbols of harmonious love, personifications of Eternity, the daily revolutions of day and night, the harmony of the world, perhaps even a private divinization, given the resemblance of each portrait of the husband to its adjacent Dioscurus (both are young and beardless on the left, older and bearded on the right).¹³² But Reekmans and Gaggadis-Robin felt these interpretations were difficult to reconcile with the patrons' Christianity (indicated by the scenes on the small sides: the multiplication miracle, and Peter seated and teaching); they preferred Garrucci's interpretation that the Dioscuri, depicted here as horsemen, allude to the deceased man's position in the cavalry (suggested by his military dress in the left vignette) and membership in the equestrian order.¹³³ The deceased man's association with the Dioscuri was to be understood in terms of his being a horseman, but not in terms of immortality.

ut fuit Hercules, qui septuaginta liberos reliquit. Festus also noted that Juno "has a sacred name in weddings, because the beginning of marriage is the unloosing of the belt": s.v. *Cinxiae Iuonis; nomen sanctum habebatur in nuptiis, quod initio coniugii solutio erat cinguli, quo nova nupta erat cincta*; trans. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 109, see also 110, n. 201.

¹³¹ Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 56; "mais qu'il a voulu éviter . . . un motif allusif au mariage" (my trans.). The sculptor substituted a bundle of scrolls in the place of Hymenaeus, on the floor between the spouses, alluding to *paideia*.

¹³² Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 58; Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l'Arles antique*, 128–129; Huskinson, "Representing Women on Roman Sarcophagi," 18; Huskinson, "Reading Identity on Roman Strigillated Sarcophagi," 86; Birk, *Depicting the Dead*, 62; Reinsberg, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben*, 105, 179.

¹³³ Reekmans, "La dextrarum iunctio," 58–59; Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l'Arles antique*, 129.

But these are not necessarily exclusive, and such a position seems to assume an overly narrow view of the symbolism that traditional-minded, socially-integrated Christians might have seen in the images they chose, particularly if those patrons anticipated a diverse viewing audience of both Christians and non-Christian equestrian peers.¹³⁴ Reekmans acknowledged that the Dioscuri had come to be seen less and less as divinities even among pagans.¹³⁵ Moreover, as seen in other instances—Christian wedding scenes with Concordia, Sol and Luna on the Julia Latronilla sarcophagus, Venus on the Projecta Casket, the christogram-Bellerophon belt ornament—mythological iconography was not necessarily troubling to Christian patrons. It is possible that a late fourth-century, civically implicated Christian might have selected the twins for their mythical associations with eternity, without perceiving a religious problem. Christern-Briesenick thought so: “Since the Dioscuri also had a cosmological significance, this could lead to their interpretation as a symbol of eternity and heaven in the Christian sense, and thus legitimize their use on Christian sarcophagi.”¹³⁶ One might go further: tales of Castor receiving immortality at his brother Pollux’s request associate the twins with familial fidelity after death, divine bestowal of a shared eternity, and an afterlife in the astral realm of the gods. Framing portraits of the grave owners joined in marriage and parted in death, the Dioscuri might have been a means of suggesting to an aristocratic Roman audience that the couple, too, were to be seen as recipients of a shared afterlife.

If so, this sarcophagus would join the Ludovisi “pronuba” sarcophagus, which aligned portraits of the wife and husband with diminutive figures of Psyche and Cupid (fig. 18), as an example of monuments that draw from both the traditional “pagan” repertory and the developing selection of Christian images in order to represent afterlife hopes.¹³⁷ Gaggadis-Robin states, “For its iconography this sarcophagus belongs to the rather rare category where the pagan world borders the Christian world.”¹³⁸ Yet those

¹³⁴ See the discussion of anticipated viewing audience in Levine, “The Image of Christ in Late Antiquity,” 218–251.

¹³⁵ Reekmans, “La dextrarum iunctio,” 59.

¹³⁶ Rep. III, 37–38; “Da die Dioskuren auch eine kosmologische Bedeutung hatten, konnte dies zu ihrer Interpretation als Symbole der Ewigkeit und des Himmels im christlichen Sinne führen und damit ihre Verwendung auf christlichen Sarkophagen legitimieren” (my trans.).

¹³⁷ Rep. I, 71–72, no. 86, Taf. 25.

¹³⁸ Gaggadis-Robin, *Les sarcophages païens du musée de l’Arles antique*, 127; “Par son iconographie ce sarcophage appartient à la catégorie assez rare où le monde païen côtoie le monde chrétien” (my trans.).

borders seem porous; a good deal of the material evidence suggests that blended iconography is fairly representative of the Christian world as it existed among civically-implicated, aristocratic Romans.

Marriage and Afterlife on Gold Glass

The evidence of sarcophagi invites consideration of whether the use of gold glass medallions in funerary contexts constituted another visual means of expressing conjugal devotion after death or hopes of a shared afterlife. Placing glass objects in burials constituted a secondary use. In most cases glass medallions with spousal portraits and inscriptions like *PIE ZESES* (“Drink! May you live!” fig. 51), *VIVATIS IN DEO* (“May you two live in God” fig. 24), and *DVLCIS ANIMA VIVAS* (“Sweet soul, may you live” fig. 25) were originally decorative features on the bases of broad-rimmed, shallow vessels for domestic use and display; the invitations to drink and live were (initially) spirited toasts of the symposium setting.¹³⁹ As discussed in Chapter 1, vessels with double-portraits or *dextrarum iunctio* scenes may have been purchased originally to commemorate weddings, to give as wedding gifts, or to use in wedding feasts or other festive occasions. Certainly, however, the images on these vessels held value beyond their original, domestic functions. Either deliberately or after vessels broke, excess glass was carefully trimmed away from circular, decorated bowl bases, which by the hundreds were embedded into mortar or plaster spread over catacomb *loculi* or placed within burials. Some glasses have been preserved with a bit of the mortar in which they were placed still attached (fig. 4). The vast majority of extant gold glasses—numbering around 500 pieces—were recovered from catacombs.¹⁴⁰

Howells has recently surveyed the various proposed explanations for this secondary use.¹⁴¹ Early on, the glass medallions were thought to have served as markers that identified individual burials, but this was found to be unlikely for several reasons: embedded medallions did not always contain portraits or

¹³⁹ The use of Latin letters for the Greek expression *PIE ZESES* was common in Late Antiquity; Walker, “The Wilshire Collection of Late Roman Gold-Glass at the Ashmolean Museum,” 69; Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 60; Auth, “Drink May You Live!” 103; Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 109; Osborne and Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities*, vol. 2, 210.

¹⁴⁰ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 56, 65.

¹⁴¹ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 63; cf. the discussion in Fiochi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 78–82.

names, those with portraits were generic or stylized, and many other objects were also placed in the plaster tomb-coverings (coins, children's toys, shells, leaves), among which the glasses would not have clearly distinguished one burial from another.¹⁴² Another proposal is that medallions with images of Christ, saints, or biblical subjects could have functioned as apotropaic devices, protecting the graves of Christians, but this cannot explain the use of glasses with secular subjects (unless, as Fabrizio Bisconti observes, a protective function was achieved by profuse decoration "as if to respond to the precept of *horror vacui*, so dear to the culture of this period").¹⁴³ The proposal that the medallions are the remnants of vessels used in funerary meals and then placed in plaster, perhaps intact, meets the objection that graveside repasts took place on repeated occasions, not just at the time of initial burial when the plaster was applied, and that glasses show evidence of deliberate trimming prior to being affixed into wet plaster.¹⁴⁴ Howells concludes that the glasses, as used in burials, might best be seen simply as grave ornamentation that was inexpensive but pleasing to viewers and expressed affection for the deceased; some medallions might have been purpose-made for burials, while others might have come from vessels owned and cherished by the deceased, and thus were particularly suitable as grave goods (which would explain instances when glasses were found with the body inside *loculi*, and not only embedded in the exterior plaster).¹⁴⁵ This explanation finds support in other fourth-century glass objects, similarly inscribed *PIE ZESES*, that have been discovered in burials throughout the late ancient Mediterranean; these items seem to have enjoyed a widespread appeal as grave goods.¹⁴⁶

When considering the new meaning these objects and their decoration would have acquired in funerary contexts, one needs to imagine how glass and gold, as reflective materials, would have been experienced by those who visited the dark, intimate galleys of the catacombs by light of oil lamps or torches. The glasses placed into the walls, Howells observes, "would have captured the light of pilgrims'

¹⁴² But see Bisconti, "Rome, the Spread of Christianity and Art," 81, who notes "the placement of grave goods around the closure of the *loculus*" including "bone dolls, small metal bells and gold glasses," which "functioned as a means of recognition when the inscriptions did not help to identify the deceased in the *loculi*."

¹⁴³ Avery, "Early Christian Gold Glass," 170; Fiochi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 78; cf. fig. 85.

¹⁴⁴ Proposed, e.g., in Walker, "Late Roman Gold-Glass in the Ashmolean Museum," 72.

¹⁴⁵ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 63.

¹⁴⁶ Auth, "Drink May You Live!" 103–112; Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 108–111.

lamps, thus encouraging the visitors to direct their glance towards the resulting reflections in an attempt to ensure that those interred in the *loculi* did not go unnoticed and thus unremembered.”¹⁴⁷ Bisconti adds that “multi-coloured ‘flashes’” might have “fed and enriched the symbolic tension with respect to light” and the believer’s illumination “in a spiritual journey that led from baptism to the final resurrection.”¹⁴⁸ In the case of glasses with spousal portraits, visitors proceeding down a galley would have encountered, as sudden flashes of gold reflecting back at them, the shining likenesses of now-absent couples. If viewers paused to look closely, they might have read the common inscriptions *ZESSES* or *VIVATIS*, now seen in the same setting where catacomb paintings, sarcophagi, and grave slabs expressed hopes for a future resurrection and blessed afterlife. In that context the glasses would have invited an eschatological interpretation—“May you live” would be seen as a wish for the portrayed ones’ eternal life.¹⁴⁹ Susan Auth has argued this regarding a variety of glass grave goods inscribed *PIE ZESSES*: the meaning of these inscriptions “shifts from its original meaning as a convivial drinking toast to a wish for life in a pagan, Jewish, or Christian hereafter.”¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the ability of these verbal commonplaces to express otherworldly hopes, when translated to the sepulchral context, may constitute yet another explanation for their appeal and the popularity of their funerary use.

Some inscriptions lent themselves particularly well to afterlife allusions, such as the Greek inscription on a glass cup found in a burial at Köln-Braunsfeld: ΠΙΗ ΖΗΣΑΙΣ ΚΑΛΩΣ ΑΕΙ (“Drink! May you live well always”).¹⁵¹ Those who placed the glass in the burial may have connected the invitation “Drink!” to the *refrigerium*, the funerary meals and libations family members carried out at the tomb on behalf of their deceased relatives; the wish for living well “always” might now suggest “eternally.”¹⁵² The inscription *VIVATIS IN DEO* encircling a couple clasping right hands (fig. 24) could have been seen, in a

¹⁴⁷ Howells, *Gold Glass in the British Museum*, 63.

¹⁴⁸ Fiocchi Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni, *Christian Catacombs of Rome*, 81–82.

¹⁴⁹ Smith and Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 856: the sentiment “vivas” and related forms used by pagans was adopted by Christians who added “in Deo” to express the idea of living in God, an idea “expressive of hope both for time and for eternity on their own gems and glass vessels, and occasionally on a lamp or an amulet”; 856–857: “These wishes given in this life can be transferred to the life to come.”

¹⁵⁰ Auth, “Drink May You Live!” 103; cf. Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 109.

¹⁵¹ Auth, “Drink May You Live!” 108; cf. 106, inscription on glass flute in the Yale Art Museum: *pie zēsēs aei*, “Drink! May you live always.”

¹⁵² Jensen, “Dining with the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity,” 107–118.

burial setting, to allude to the deceased spouses' life with God, and perhaps to their enduring bond, given the symbolic polyvalence of the *dextarum iunctio*.¹⁵³ A gold glass medallion in the Hungarian National Museum features portrait busts of a wife and husband beneath the arched inscription, *SEMPER GAUDEAT[IS] IN NOMINE DEI* ("May you two rejoice always in the name of God") (fig. 123).¹⁵⁴ The glass's find spot was a late fourth-century tomb of a woman in Dunaszekcső; clearly a cherished object, in burial, its toast to the couple's happiness "always" or "evermore" (*semper*) potentially accrued meaning as a prayer for the couple's joyful afterlife.¹⁵⁵ This piece also demonstrates a desire to apply some sense of "forever" to Christian marriage, even prior to death.

Other glasses inscribed with the formula *zeses cum tuis / vivas cum tuis* ("May you live with your [loved ones]") could have expressed hopes for heavenly reunions, when placed in burials. A fourth-century glass flask bears a cityscape of Puteoli (near Naples) beneath the large inscription *FELIX PIE ZESAES CVM TVIS* ("Fortunate one, drink, may you live with your [loved ones]").¹⁵⁶ This inscription, Alison Cooley states, "can be interpreted either as simply a symposiastic invitation to drink, or as a pious hope related to Christian afterlife." Cooley also comments: "The choice of formulae commonly found in epitaphs makes the findspot of some of the flasks in graves seem less of a coincidence than previously suspected."¹⁵⁷ Gold glass medallions with spousal portraits also make use of the *cum tuis* formula; one such glass features the busts of a wife and husband beneath the inscription *MAXIMA VIVAS CVM DEXTRO* ("Maxima, may you live with Dextro") (fig. 150).¹⁵⁸ A similar inscription appears on a glass

¹⁵³ Cf. the inscription on the Junius Bassus sarcophagus (359) indicating that as a newly-baptized person he "went to God" at his death, *NEOFITVS IIT AD DEVM*; Rep. I, 279–283, no. 680; other funerary inscriptions indicated that the deceased had "gone to God" or were "living with Christ": Allen L. Clayton, "Heaven," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York and London: Garland, 1998), 512.

¹⁵⁴ Fülep, "Early Christian Gold Glasses in the Hungarian National Museum," 401–412; Martin Kemkes, ed., *Von Augustus bis Attila: Leben am ungarischen Donaulimes* (Stuttgart: Württembergisches Landesmuseum, 2000), 108. Both Kemkes, 108, and Fülep, 406 (citing L. Nagy) associate *SEMPER GAUDEATIS* with Philippians 4:4, "Gaudete in Domino semper," but it seems a closer echo of 1 Thessalonians 5:16, "Semper gaudete." I am indebted to Genevra Kornbluth and Dr. Daniel Solomon for discussing and analyzing this inscription with me. Dr. Kornbluth has made her photo of the glass available online at <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/OrdinaryPeople1.html> (accessed April 8, 2016), but N.B. that on this webpage the findspot is misidentified as Szalkszentmárton, where a different gold glass was discovered; cf. Fülep, Pl. I.

¹⁵⁵ Fülep, "Gold Glasses in the Hungarian National Museum," 411–412.

¹⁵⁶ Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 108–109, no. 26, fig. 1.34; trans. Cooley.

¹⁵⁷ Cooley, *Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*, 109, 110.

¹⁵⁸ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, no. 93; Luteraan, "Late Roman Gold-Glass: Images and Inscriptions," 81, 119, fig. 21; Dresken-Weiland, "Bilder im Grab und ihre Bedeutung im Kontext der Christianisierung der frühchristlichen Welt," 76, Abb. 8.

depicting the sacrifice of Isaac within a central square; outside each edge of the square is a portion of the inscription: *HILARIS / ZESES / CVM TVIS / SPES*.¹⁵⁹ *Hilaris* and *Spes* do not seem to be proper nouns here; the sense may be, “Cheerful may you live with your relations. Hope.”¹⁶⁰ The sacrifice of Isaac, a typological allusion to the salvific death of Jesus, may suggest here that the prospect of a pleasant life (and afterlife) with loved ones is made possible because of God’s redemptive act through Christ.

The medium of glass vessels, trimmed for secondary use, seems poetically apt for funerary commemoration of portrayed spouses. The vessels had an original domestic use, perhaps associated with the couple’s wedding; they were later given a funerary use when the first or last of the spouses had died, and the commemorative wedding vessel was broken and trimmed. The destruction of the vessel’s original function and its relocation from house to tomb seem to give visual expression to the destruction brought by death. Marriage as lived in one setting had come to an end, yet something central remained, a token of which could be set in mortar, preserved, remembered, and in the right light, made to shine once again.

Other Small Arts

The evidence of gold glasses calls for brief consideration of other small fourth-century objects bearing similar imagery and inscriptions. The bezel of a gold ring in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg features confronted busts of a woman and man encircled by the inscription *SEPTIMI ELIA VIVATIS* (“Septimius and Elia, may you two live”).¹⁶¹ On a metal seal in the Split Archaeological Museum, frontally facing busts of a couple appear with a *chi-rho* between them and surrounded by the inscription *VIVAS IN DEO* (“May you live in God”).¹⁶² And on a remarkable piece, a silver seal in the Rheinische Landesmuseum in Trier, busts of a woman and man face each other with a child between them, while two doves, one above each spouse’s head, hold a ribboned wreath between them. Encircling

¹⁵⁹ Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library*, no. 71; “Rome,” *L’année Épigraphique 1997* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 76, no. 167.

¹⁶⁰ Lutraan, “Late Roman Gold Glass,” 150; cf. Avery, “Early Christian Gold Glass,” 172, re. a medallion portrait of a man with the inscription *CVM TVIS PIE ZESES*.

¹⁶¹ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 22, no. 35, Pl. 7 (my trans.).

¹⁶² Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 23, no. 48, Pl. 8; also in Leclercq, “Mariage,” 1941–1942, no. 116, fig. 7690.

this family portrait is the retrograde inscription *MAXSENTI V/IVAS TVIS F*, or *Maxenti vivas [cum] tuis ffeliciter*] (“Maxentius, may you live h[appily with] your [loved ones]”) (fig. 151).¹⁶³

These pieces and others like them bear the same kinds of spousal portraits and wishes for life together found on glass objects placed on or within graves, where their images and inscriptions aptly expressed hopes for afterlife and reunion. The Trier seal even employs the symbols of paired doves and a crown so often employed in funerary art. It is possible that objects like these, perhaps given to spouses as gifts and used in daily life, were also used as grave goods like gold glasses. Unfortunately, the find spots of these objects are not known. One may at least note the subject matter these metal disks share with glass, and the possibility that they, too, might have been valued as tokens of spouses’ otherworldly hopes.

Christian Marriage after Death: Literary Evidence

Literary evidence shows that Christian writers from the beginning of the third century and into the early fifth century expressed many of the same notions about postmortem conjugal fidelity and spousal reunion observed in visual art and inscriptions. These texts lend support to the iconographic analysis above, and in addition show that doctors of the church were interested in promoting certain forms of social ordering related to post-death expectations, including indissoluble, monogamous marriage, sexual exclusivity, celibate widowhood, and the renunciation of wealth.

Tertullian on Marital Bonds after Death

In the treatise *De monogamia*, written around 217, Tertullian alluded to lay Christian expectations of heavenly reunion as he described the rituals of a widow mourning her husband: “She prays for his soul, and requests refreshment for him meanwhile, and fellowship (with him) in the first resurrection; and she

¹⁶³ Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, 22, no. 37 (my trans.). N.B.: Spier, 22, omits the final *F* in the inscription; Smith and Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 1:722, correctly give the inscription with the final *F*, “for *cum tuis feliciter*.” This seal also published in Antje Krug, *Römische Gemmen im Rheinischen Landesmuseum Trier* (Trier: Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, 1995), 65, no. 63.

offers (her sacrifice) on the anniversaries of his falling asleep.”¹⁶⁴ The widow follows traditional Roman funerary customs, but her expectation of reunion is described in Christian terms as “fellowship in the first resurrection” (echoed in the following century in the blessing upon Catervius and Severina to “rise together”). Tertullian added that the widow’s commemorative actions keep the marital bond intact: “For, unless she does these deeds, she has in the true sense divorced him.”¹⁶⁵ Thus, commemorative practices (both ritual and visual) were ways of maintaining ties between living and dead family members in the interim between death and afterlife reunion.

Tertullian here used a variety of verbs to describe the “bond” that would endure beyond death: *vincire* (to bind, tie, fasten, surround, guard), *tenere* (to hold, possess), *retinere* (to hold fast, maintain, preserve), *coniungere* (to connect, join, yoke together, unite, marry): “A woman is more bound [*magis ... teneri*] when her husband is dead”; “him whom she was unwilling to have lost, she retains [*retinet*]”; “she is the more bound [*magis evincta est*] to him”; in the eternal life “God will still less separate them whom He has conjoined [*coniunxit*].”¹⁶⁶ Tertullian’s repeated use of a variety of terms for the marital bond brings an emphatic quality to his argument, and makes it plain that he conceives of more than just a husband and wife happening to meet and recognize each other in the hereafter.

Tertullian took care to explain, by means of diatribe, how this reunion and “bond” were to be understood in light of the gospel saying on there being no marrying in the resurrection:

But if ‘in that age they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be equal to angels,’ is not the fact that there will be no restitution of the conjugal relation [*coniugii*] a reason why we shall not be bound to our departed consorts? Nay, but the more shall we be bound (to them), because we are destined to a better estate—destined (as we are) to rise to a spiritual consortium [*spiritale consortium*].¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10.4; SC 343, 176: pro anima eius orat et refrigerium interim adpostulat ei et in prima resurrectione consortium et offert annuis diebus dormitionis eius; trans. S. Thelwall, ANF 4:67; dated to c. 217: Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 11; see also discussion of this passage in Jensen, “Dining with the Dead: From the Mensa to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity,” 120–122.

¹⁶⁵ Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10.4; SC 343, 176: Nam haec nisi fecerit, uere repudiauit; trans. ANF 4:67.

¹⁶⁶ Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10.1, 3, 6; SC 343, 174, 178: est mulierem magis defuncto marito teneri; quem amisisse noluit, retinet; magis euincta est; id est uitae aeternae, in qua magis non separabit quos coniunxit Deus; trans. ANF 4:66–67.

¹⁶⁷ Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10.5–6; SC 343, 176: Si autem in illo aeuo neque nubent neque nubentur, sed erunt aequales angelis, non ideo non tenebimur coniugibus defunctis, quia non erit restitutio coniugii? Atquin eo magis tenebimur, quia in meliorem statum destinamur, resurrecturi in spiritale consortium....; trans. ANF 4:67.

This careful distinction between *coniugium* and *spiritale consortium* distanced Christian expectations from the amorous reunions envisioned by some Greek and Latin poets.¹⁶⁸ More importantly, it enabled Tertullian to define continuity with New Testament tradition while also validating hopes for afterlife reunion.

This validation represented a marked development from Tertullian's earlier thinking in *Ad uxorem*, written between 200–206.¹⁶⁹ There, Tertullian had given more emphasis to the dissolution of marriage after death: "To Christians, after their departure from the world, no restoration of marriage [*nuptiarum*] is promised in the day of the resurrection, translated as they will be into the condition and sanctity of angels."¹⁷⁰ Significantly, the two treatises also differ in their stance on remarriage after the death of one's spouse: in the earlier *Ad uxorem*, Tertullian generally opposed remarriage, but allowed that it was not a sin, while in the later *De monogamia* he adamantly rejected remarriage and advocated celibate widowhood.¹⁷¹ There was, then, an inverse relationship between remarriage and posthumous spousal reunion in Tertullian's thought: early on, a relatively moderate stance on remarriage combined with the unqualified dissolution of marriage at death; later, a stricter position opposing remarriage accompanied a moderated stance that accommodated reunion, even affirmed it.

The development in Tertullian's positions illustrates how discourse about this particular afterlife belief was linked to behavioral imperatives in this life: reunion hereafter called for monogamy here. Tertullian realized either that monogamy could be promoted by the prospect of couples reuniting and sharing a bond after death, or that accommodating traditions of posthumous spousal reunion required monogamy.¹⁷² Whichever the direction of influence, the two subjects were linked: "If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of course we shall be bound [*tenebimur*] to them with whom we are destined to

¹⁶⁸ E.g., Tibullus; see Most, "Some Ancient Posthumous Lovers," 21.

¹⁶⁹ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 10.

¹⁷⁰ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 1.1.4, SC 273, 94: Ceterum Christianis saeculo digressis nulla restitutio nuptiarum in diem resurrectionis repromittitur, translatis scilicet in angelicam qualitatem et sanctitatem; trans. S. Thelwall, ANF 4:39.

¹⁷¹ Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*, 1.7; *De monogamia* 10–17; Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 10–11; see also Philip L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 189–200 regarding the possible Montanist origin of the idea of a perpetual bond in marriage.

¹⁷² The former suggested in Harper, "Marriage and Family," 680.

rise.... Since this is so, how will a woman have room for another husband...?”¹⁷³ Tertullian’s increasing rigor in opposition to remarriage was accompanied, and aided, by a growing affirmation of the tradition of posthumous spousal reunion. This tradition continued to be Christianized in the following centuries.

Marital Bonds and Reunion after Death in Fourth- and Early Fifth-Century Patristic Writings

The task of defining posthumous spousal reunion and its implications was also taken up by fourth-century writers. John Chrysostom wrote to a young widow, offering the traditional consolation that death is but a journey, though he expressed this in Christian terms as the husband’s “journey to Him who is really his king, ... from earth to heaven, from men to angels, and ... Him who is the Lord of angels.” Chrysostom assured the young widow that she would reunite with her husband, and therefore urged her to remain unmarried:

The affection which you bestowed on him you can keep now just as you formerly did. For such is the power of love, it embraces, and unites, and fastens together not only those who are present, and near, and visible but also those who are far distant; and neither length of time, nor separation in space, nor anything else of that kind can break up and sunder in pieces the affection of the soul. But if you wish to behold him face to face ... keep your bed in his honour sacred from the touch of any other man, and do your best to manifest a life like his, and then assuredly you shall depart one day to join the same company with him, not to dwell with him for five years as you did here, nor for 20, or 100, nor for a thousand or twice that number but for infinite and endless ages.¹⁷⁴

As in the inscription on the sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, there is here an expectation of both spousal reunion *and* the joining of a heavenly company of saints (“you shall depart one day to join the same company with him”); there is no suggestion that these two hopes are incompatible.

Elsewhere Chrysostom used the prospect of afterlife to promote a non-materialistic approach to life. In a homily on Ephesians 5:22–33 (a “household code” passage giving instructions to wives and husbands), Chrysostom discouraged displays of wealth, the wearing of jewelry or fine clothing, and “the immodest music and dancing that are currently so fashionable.” Evidently such talk made a preacher seem like a fuddy-duddy to ancient audiences no less than to modern ones; Chrysostom quickly added, “I am

¹⁷³ Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10.5, 7; SC 343, 176, 178: Quodsi credidimus mortuorum resurrectionem, utique tenebimur cum quibus resurrecturi sumus... Cum haec ita sint, quomodo alii uiro uacabit...?; trans. ANF 4:67. Of course widowed spouses did remarry; the ideals urged in texts and images do not always reflect practical reality.

¹⁷⁴ John Chrysostom, *Ad viduam juniorem* 3.188–201; SC 138, 128–131; trans. W.R.W. Stephens, NPNF I, 9:123.

aware that many people think me ridiculous for giving such advice; but if you listen to me, you will understand the advantages of a sober life-style... You will no longer laugh at me, but will laugh instead at the way people live now like silly children or drunken men.”¹⁷⁵ He then urged husbands to persuade their wives to embrace the “sober lifestyle” and held out the posthumous reunion of spouses as a token of the heavenly values that should replace worldly values in Christian households:

Tell her that you love her more than your own life, because this present life is nothing, and that your only hope is that the two of you pass through this life in such a way that in the world to come you will be united in perfect love. Say to her, ‘Our time here is brief and fleeting, but if we are pleasing to God, we can exchange this life for the Kingdom to come. Then we will be perfectly one both with Christ and each other, and our pleasure will know no bounds.’¹⁷⁶

Many of the conventions employed by Chrysostom as he discussed heavenly reunion are also found in the Latin West. Jerome wrote in praise of the widow Valeria for her refusal to remarry because to her, her late husband Servius “was ever alive.”¹⁷⁷ Jerome also wrote to the widow Theodora, who had lived in continence with her husband Lucinius during the final years of their marriage. “We shall shortly see again those whose absence we now mourn,” Jerome told her. He reassured Theodora that the individual personality of her late husband endured in heaven, that she would see him again, and that he was even then supporting her in her struggle and preparing for her “a place near to himself” (*iuxta se locum praeparat*).¹⁷⁸ The prospect of the heavenly reunion of this couple who had already committed themselves to sexual renunciation posed no problem for the ascetic Jerome; he could feel comfortable telling Theodora, “[Lucinius’s] love and affection towards you are still the same as when, disregarding his claim on you as a husband, he resolved to treat you even on earth as a sister, or indeed I may say as a brother, for difference of sex while essential to marriage is not so to a continent tie.”¹⁷⁹ Like Tertullian, Jerome cited the gospel text stating “they neither marry nor are given in marriage,” and focused on the detail, “but are as the angels.” Jerome described the heavenly reunion of married couples as nonsexual

¹⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilia* 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33; PG 62, 135–150; trans. Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 60.

¹⁷⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilia* 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33; PG 62, 135–150; trans. Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 61.

¹⁷⁷ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.46; PL 23, 276; trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, NPNF II, 6:382–383.

¹⁷⁸ Jerome, *Epistula* 75.2; CSEL 55, 31.

¹⁷⁹ Jerome, *Epistula* 75.2; CSEL 55, 31; eodem amore et eadem caritate, qua oblitus officii coniugalis in terra quoque sororem te habere coeperat, immo fratrem, quia casta coniunctio sexum non habet nuptialem; trans. NPNF II, 6:155.

and therefore more glorious than mortal marriage. The saying that “they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven” did not imply a “taking away of a natural and real body,” but pointed to “the greatness of the glory to come” in which individual identity is preserved.¹⁸⁰

Ambrose, too, commended the chastity and fidelity of widows who remained celibate, and even used the terminology of marriage to describe the bond that endured beyond death: a widow “has not lost her husband who manifests her chastity, nor is she widowed as regards her union [*non est viduata coniugio*].”¹⁸¹ Elsewhere, Ambrose compared lifelong virgins and widows who remained celibate after their husbands had died, judging the latter “almost ... of no lesser virtue” for keeping the faith of their marriage.¹⁸² Afterlife reunions, too, were part of Ambrose’s thought. Following the death of Theodosius, Ambrose imagined the departed emperor reuniting with family members, including his wife: “he receives Gratian and Pulcheria, his sweetest children, whom he had lost here; ... his [wife] Flaccilla, a soul faithful to God, embraces him; ... he rejoices that his father has been restored to him.”¹⁸³

Bishops could encourage widowed men, as well as women, to remain chaste in the prospect of reuniting with their spouse in heaven. Augustine wrote to his friend Cornelius, recently bereaved of his wife Cypriana, to reprove him for seeking comfort with other women, and urged him to live in chastity so that he could be with his wife after death. After referring to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (who remembered his brothers after death), Augustine wrote:

How much more does your wife remember you? How much more does that chaste woman want you not to meet with the punishment of the adulterers, if that proud man did not want his own

¹⁸⁰ Jerome, *Epistula* 75.2; CSEL 55, 31–32; non natura et substantia corporum tollitur, sed gloriae magnitudo monstratur ... incliti quidem et angelico splendore decorati, sed tamen homines, ut et apostolus apostolus sit et Maria Maria (“Glorious indeed they shall be, and graced with angelic splendour, but they will still be human; the apostle Paul will still be Paul, Mary will still be Mary”); trans. NPNF II, 6:155–156.

¹⁸¹ Ambrose, *De excessu fratris Satyri* 2.13, CSEL 73, 258; trans. Dooley, *Marriage According to St. Ambrose*, 101.

¹⁸² Ambrose, *De viduis* 1.1; *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera* 14.1; trans. Dooley, *Marriage According to St. Ambrose*, 102.

¹⁸³ Ambrose, *De obitu Theodosii* 40, CSEL 73, 392: Nunc sibi rex est, quando recepit etiam filium Gratianum et Pulcheriam, dulcissima sibi pignora, quos hic amiserat, quando ei Flaccilla adhaeret, fidelis anima deo, quando patrem sibi redditum gratulatur; trans. FC 22, 325; cf. discussion in McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 60–61. The posthumous reunion of family members (not just spouses) was a prospect Paulinus of Nola shared. Writing to the parents of a child named Celsus who had died, Paulinus reflected on the painful death of his own son Celsus and anticipated that he and his wife would recover their him in heaven: “Then we shall be able to live as comrades of our [own] Celsus, and be the parents of our own sweet loved one forever”: Paulinus, *Carmen* 31.631–632; trans. P.G. Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola* (New York: Newman Press, 1975), 329; also cited in Evans-Grubbs, “Marriage and Family Relationships in the Late Roman West,” 219; cf. Tulloch, “Devotional Visuality,” 545: Along with pagans, Christians and Jews practiced devotion to ancestors and used “symbols of rebirth and rejuvenation” like dolphins and peacocks as part of a “visual culture of family continuity.”

brothers to meet with the punishment of the proud? And since that brother did not want his brothers to be joined [*coniunctum*] with him in punishment, how much less does your wife [*coniux*], who is now enjoying happiness, want to have her husband separated from her in punishment? ... Learn that you will grieve if you will not be with her. ... After all, if you loved her, you would surely desire to be with her after death, where you will certainly not be if you are going [to] be the sort of man you are.¹⁸⁴

The charge of adultery assumes the continued existence of a marital bond, underscored by Augustine's wordplay with *coniunctum* and *coniux*. Though the prospect of posthumous spousal reunion appears much more often in literary discussions of widowed women, Augustine's letter to Cornelius suggests that this probably was not due to a double standard, but more likely reflects the pastoral duties that fell upon church teachers given the prevalence of widowhood in a population where husbands were typically 10–15 years older than their wives.

Belief in heavenly reunion and matrimonial fidelity after death was so widely shared that Macrina could appeal to it subversively to defend her lifelong virginity. Her brother Gregory of Nyssa wrote that when her betrothed died before their wedding took place, she chose a celibate life, declining other proposals of marriage on the grounds that she owed fidelity to her late bridegroom who continued to live: “in her judgment he was alive to God through the hope of the resurrection, and was away on a journey, not dead, and ... it was out of order not to keep faith with one's bridegroom who had gone abroad.”¹⁸⁵

As discussed above, the aristocrat Paulina's future reunion with her senator husband Praetextatus served as rhetoric, upholding the viability of traditional Roman religions. Church fathers, no less than Paulina, could promote their own rival claims through the discourse of bereavement and reunion. Jerome bristled at Paulina's professed happiness and future reunion, and rejected her claim that her husband was in heaven: “The consul-elect, that detractor of his age, is now in Tartarus. ... He is desolate and naked, a prisoner in the foulest darkness, and not, as his unhappy wife falsely asserts, set in the royal abode of the

¹⁸⁴ Augustine, *Epistulae* 259.5, CSEL 57, 614–615: quanto magis tua coniux te recordatur? quanto magis te casta non vult ad poenas venire moechorum, si fratres suos nec superbus ad poenas venire voluit superbiorum? et cum frater nollet fratribus in malis se esse coniunctum, quanto minus vult in bonis constituta coniux virum in malis habere separatum? ... disce quod doleas, si cum illa non eris ... Nam utique si amares, cum illa esse post mortem desiderares, quo profecto non eris, si qualis es talis eris; trans. Roland Teske, S. J., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Letters 211–270* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 199; see also 197: probably written before 429/430, the date usually given.

¹⁸⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Sancta Macrina* 5, SC 178, 154–157; trans. Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), 115–116. With thanks to Robin M. Jensen and Sandy L. Haney for bringing this to my attention.

milky way.”¹⁸⁶ Augustine, too, saw mourning rites and afterlife discourse as a front where Christian and pagan positions vied for preeminence, and where Christianity’s supremacy could be manifest. He encouraged the widow Italica not to grieve “in that way like the pagans who do not have hope, since because of [God’s] most true promise we hope ... that we have not lost those of ours who have departed, but have sent them on ahead, where they will be dearer to us to the extent that they will be better known and where they will be lovable without any fear of our losing them.”¹⁸⁷

Conclusions

If one is inclined to identify clear beliefs in afterlife among at least some “pagan” Romans, then the evidence just surveyed would seem to describe the Christianization of those traditions. If, on the other hand, one emphasizes a prevailing ambiguity among non-Christian Romans regarding the hereafter, then the evidence of Christian iconography, epigraphy, and literature represents a real contrast, a distinctive claim made with confidence by both file believers and religious elites.

In assessing this development and the people who constructed it, it may be helpful to consider the question with which Alan Segal approaches the subject of the afterlife in western religions: *cui bono*—“To whose benefit is this belief in the afterlife?”¹⁸⁸ Taking this as a cue, one might ask what agendas patristic writers and married believers pursued as they promoted the claims about the afterlife surveyed above.

Christian displays of enduring conjugal fidelity and expectations of spousal reunion consoled the bereaved and expressed familial love, while also promoting the new faith. Laypersons and ecclesiastical

¹⁸⁶ Jerome, *Epistula* 23.2–3 (to Marcella); CSEL 54, 212–213; *consulem de suis saeculis detrahentes esse doceamus in tartaro ... nunc desolatus est, nudus, non in lacteo caeli palatio, ut uxor contentitur infelix, sed in sordentibus tenebris continetur*; trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, NPNF II, 6:42. Though the inscription was produced after Jerome’s letter, it may have been based on the funeral oration and thus known to Jerome; see discussion in Kahlos, “Fabia Aconia Paulina and the Death of Praetextatus,” 13–26, esp. 16–17; and in Matthews, “Four Funerals and a Wedding,” 257–258.

¹⁸⁷ Augustine, *Epistula* 92.1, CSEL 34.2, 436–437: *non enim te desolatum ... aut sic te contristari oportet quem ad modum gentes, quae spem non habent, cum ueracissimi promissione speremus nos in hac uita unde migraturi quosdam nostros migrantes non amisimus, sed praemisimus, ad eam uitam esse uenturos, ubi nobis erunt quanto notiores tanto utique cariores et sine timore ullius discessionis amabiles*; trans. Roland Testke, S.J., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century Part II—Letters, Vol. 1: Letters 1–99* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 371.

¹⁸⁸ Segal, *Life after Death*, 4.

authorities mutually pursued these aims as they participated in afterlife discourse, though apparently with additional objectives that differed somewhat. For the patristic authors, a consistent motive was promoting a doctrine of marital indissolubility; consequently, they valorized celibate widowhood and urged its practice. Patrons of sarcophagi and gold glass-decorated tombs seem to have acted with more traditionally Roman objectives: displaying spousal devotion and familial *pietas*, and particularly in the Theodosian age, claiming divine favor and even vying for status in a transforming society where individuals like Paulina, Severina, Proba, and Gaudentius were all staking their claims.

In the Christian re-casting of traditional afterlife beliefs (or mere longings), there is no consistent indication in these material or literary sources that posthumous reunions and relationships were regarded in a technical sense as “marriage” (*coniugium*, *nuptiae*, or *matrimonium*). Rather, the reunited are described in general terms as sharing a “bond” or meeting again and enjoying eternal life together. One consideration here is that the Roman definition of marriage was drawn from the legal sphere and was concerned with the production of legitimate offspring who could inherit wealth, property, and goods of this world.¹⁸⁹ In the Republic marriage had been defined as an arrangement “for the purpose of creating children,” and from the time of Augustus forward, *iustus matrimonium*, the form of marriage for both non-Christian and Christian citizens, was “a limited reproductive contract.”¹⁹⁰ Being tied to matters of reproduction and inheritance, marriage, so construed, could only be seen as an institution of this world, not the next.

Additionally, for many church teachers, the association of marriage with sexuality, and of sexuality with the problems of lust and disordered human will, made human “marriage” in its worldly sense incompatible with heaven, where absence of death made the need for reproduction a thing of the past. Thus Augustine rejected marriage in the afterlife, but not the reunion and shared eternal life of married persons; he wrote in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount that if he were to ask a good

¹⁸⁹ Modestinus, *Digest* 23.2.1: “Nuptiae sunt coniunctio maris et feminae et consortium omnis vitae, divini et humani iuris communicatio” (“Marriage is the joining together of a male and a woman, and a partnership for life in all areas of life, a sharing in divine and human law”), trans. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 9.

¹⁹⁰ Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 66; Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, x.

Christian man if he wanted to have his “wife” with him in the heavenly kingdom, the man would rightly answer no, but:

Were I to ask him again, whether he would like his wife to live with him there, after the resurrection, when she had undergone that angelic change which is promised to the saints, he would reply that he desired this as strongly as he reprobated the other. Thus a good Christian is found in one and the same woman to love the creature of God, whom he desires to be transformed and renewed; but to hate the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection and sexual intercourse: i.e. to love in her what is characteristic of a human being, to hate what belongs to her as a wife.¹⁹¹

Here, however, Augustine might have been more prescriptive than descriptive, instructing his audience about the attitudes that “a good Christian” ought to have. The necessity of specifying the correct answer to the question implies that Augustine suspected some of the laity might have answered otherwise. Gaudentius’s self-representation as a husband [*coniux*] “most closely bound” to his Bassa forever, and his description of being greeted by Bassa’s kisses in heaven, signals a somewhat different location on the spectrum of afterlife expectations.¹⁹² One cannot rule out the potential disconnect between the finer points of church doctrine and people’s intuitive expectations, deeply felt longings, or customary expressions at times of mourning. In some instances these likely stood in tension with each other. The impulse to respond to bereavement with hope for a future reunion is innately human and does not often pause to check for theological nuance.

Nevertheless, rank and file believers and church authorities alike participated in the Christian elevation, redefinition, and extension of the married relationship into the hereafter (however qualified), with implications for private life in the here and now. Pre-Christian beliefs in posthumous spousal reunions, to whatever degree they were held, had not corresponded to an institution defined by lifelong commitment; Romans might have praised the *univira*, but bonds formed by marriages remained relatively weak because they were “reversible,” as Cooper notes. The transformation of marriage among Christians

¹⁹¹ Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.15.41.971–979, CCSL 35, 45: Rursus si interrogem, utrum uxorem suam post resurrectionem accepta angelica inmutatione, quae sanctis promittitur, secum ibi uiuere uelit, tam uehementer se id uelle quam illud nolle respondebit. Sic inuenitur bonus christianus diligere in una femina creaturam dei, quam reformari et renouari desiderat, odisse autem coniunctionem copulationemque corruptibilem atque mortalem, hoc est diligere in ea quod homo est, odisse quod uxor est; trans. William Findlay, NPNF I, 6:18.

¹⁹² Trout notes that the epitaph has a “conjugal erotic tenor”: Trout, “Borrowed Verse and Broken Narrative,” 343.

eventually resulted in an “increased hold of the marriage bond.”¹⁹³ Key to this increased hold was talk of eternity. In the Roman world, the Christian afterlife was comparatively defined, optimistic, and confident; it encompassed bodily resurrection and the endurance of individuality. It took traditional expressions of posthumous spousal reunion and resituated them within the joining of the heavenly community of saints, affirming familial ties while also upholding larger commitments. It provided traction for the discouragement of divorce and remarriage. The ideal of permanent marriage drew strength by being grafted onto the Christian afterlife.

¹⁹³ Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, xi.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

“Perhaps what is lacking in literary sources has been made up in the visual sources,” art historian Thomas F. Mathews proposed.¹ The hope that early Christian art might give voice to people and perspectives largely missing from the written record has propelled this dissertation. To this point studies of marriage and family life in early Christianity, and of ancient debates over the relative value of the celibate and married ways of life, have relied primarily on literary sources. Yet these sources underrepresent or entirely neglect the perspectives of vast numbers of late ancient Christians whose lives remained fairly conventional. Without consideration of this “unheroic majority of believers,” a significant part of the story of early Christianity remains untold, and what is told may be distorted.² This study joins others that have sought to retrieve missing perspectives; it contributes to earlier work by bringing into consideration the married Christian population’s own visual productions that expressed their sense of identity.

While the visual art and texts examined here cast light on a formative period in the Christian conceptualization of marital and familial life, they are also suggestive of socio-religious dynamics more generally—how rival groups contest each other’s views, how religious communities rein in excesses over time to mark out a sustainable way forward, how texts and images work together or against each other, and how people put these media to use to advance their agendas. On matters of theology, too, the visual and literary evidence here is instructive as it indicates various ways that late antique Christians negotiated tensions between creation and re-creation, society and the kingdom of God, apocalypticism and a piety more committed to this world. If one understands religion as the organization of life around the perception of the holy, this study provides a look at religion’s effects in the realm of private life, which

¹ Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 140.

² Brown, *Body and Society*, 429.

over the first centuries of Christian history became ordered by discourses and practices that found visual expression.

More specifically, the physical artifacts examined here have been brought to bear on religious and social-historical questions about how married Christians situated themselves and defined their marriages in relation to the overall Christian community and to Roman society more broadly. Members of this population shared with their non-Christian neighbors an inheritance of classical tradition and continued to express some of its elements visually, at times choosing such figures as Concordia, Venus, mythical sea creatures, putti, Psyche, Cupid, Bellerophon, Sol, Luna, or the Diocuri to accompany their own portraits in ways that were less religious than aesthetic and symbolic. Christian patrons of art participated in the status culture with its ideals of familial piety, marriage, civic commitments, and wealth, and made use of personal representation to construct a respectable public image and memory. Simultaneously, they distinguished themselves from non-Christians, surrounding their portraits with images and symbols that identified them with the Christian community, displaced pagan deities, announced allegiance to the Christian God, and expressed hopes for a blessed afterlife as joint-heirs of eternal life with their spouses.

In the various types of spousal portraits they selected or innovated, they visually represented a distinctive concept of marriage “in Christ,” a kind of bond that was divinely formed, blessed, and honored, that held a place of importance not just in terms of Roman law but within the divine plan. The emergence of these images corresponds in time and place to the rise of nuptial blessings and the beginnings of marriage liturgy. It is possible that to some degree these developments were spurred by the laity—by, for example, their development of spousal coronation images and their requests for bishops to bless their unions—but ultimately it is more clear simply that both laity and clergy participated in the processes of Christianizing Roman marriage, through image, word, and ritual.

The visual products of married Christians also provide evidence of their negotiations within the Christian community and their participation in discourse about the relative value of the celibate and married ways of life. Certainly the ascetic values of renunciation of marriage, wealth, and status were not shared in practice by many of the aristocratic patrons of sarcophagi and other luxury items, and perhaps

not by most believers. However esteemed the solitary holy man might have been among the Christian populace, ascetic discourse cast some doubt on the religious goodness of the married way of life practiced by the majority of the faith, and further questioned the basis of the social position held by aristocratic Christians. The confident air seen in conspicuous marital portraiture is a glimpse at their alternate piety, more moderate in its stance with regard to society and asceticism.

Some artifacts seem particularly indicative of a population that would have been receptive to fourth-century anti-ascetic teachers at Rome like Ambrosiaster, Helvidius, and Jovinian. Ambrosiaster's focus on Adam and Eve and the blessing in Genesis 1:28 corresponds to the many appearances of Adam and Eve in the context of spousal commemoration, sometimes with apparently deliberate visual parallels between Christian couples and the first parents. Jovinian's teachings about the equality of reward for all the faithful baptized likewise resonates with the contemporaneous references to baptism on the late fourth-century monuments of such married Christian aristocrats as Sextus Petronius Probus and Anicia Faltonia Proba, Flavius Julius Catervius and Septimia Severina, and the owners of the sarcophagus at Sant' Ambrogio in Milan. It is possible to read some artifacts as assertively resisting the ascetic ideal, challenging the hierarchy of ascetic merit, expressing indignation on the part of traditionalist Romans, or affirming (perhaps even with defiance) the social and religious goodness of their marriages and the legitimacy of their social standing.

At the same time, it is not necessary or warranted to interpret the whole corpus of third- and fourth-century Christian marriage imagery in terms of angry protest or signs of schism. More plausibly, this evidence reflects tensions, even disagreements, within a diverse but essentially unified body whose various members for the most part needed and accepted each other, even as they occasionally worked at cross purposes.³ If the piety of married laypersons and their potential for pursuing holiness was neglected or denigrated by some who wrote Christian texts, these subjects were not so treated by all; Christian teachers and ordinary married believers alike participated in defining a way of life that could be both secular and sacralized. Scholars such as Margaret Schatkin and Gary Anderson have observed that

³ Cf. Wilken, "*The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400*, by Ramsay MacMullen [review]," 120–123.

marriage and sexuality actually had a more valued role in the early Christianity community than one might conclude from treatises on virginity or more strident voices like Jerome's.⁴ Kyle Harper observes, "The ascetic impulses of Late Antiquity, in fact, threaten to overshadow the stronger forces of continuity in a society that went on reproducing itself with a great deal of success."⁵ In light of what Peter Brown called "the cheerful impermeability of the many,"⁶ one may see early Christian marital imagery as the relatively calm expression of a long and lately-Christianized tradition, steady in its momentum, undertaken with perhaps a greater measure of contentment about the place of the married than rhetorically-charged textual sources might suggest. Religious tensions do not always indicate dysfunction; often they are productive. Throughout the conversation of the first four centuries, moderate voices repeatedly checked ascetic excesses, while in turn zealous ones called upon believers to shun the friendship of the world. Such tensions can maintain stability as well as generate controversy. There may have been a good degree of steadiness in the practice and visualization of Christian marriage in the Roman world.

⁴ Schatkin, "Marriage," 721: "The true thought of the fathers on marriage is found less in their ascetical writings, in which they compare it unfavorably with virginity, than in their apologetic works, where they defend marriage against heretical excesses of the day"; Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, 49–50, 58–62.

⁵ Harper, "Marriage and Family," 670.

⁶ Brown, *Body and Society*, 430.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, 359 CE. Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto, copyright © 2008, used by permission.



Fig. 2. Sarcophagus with a Greek physician. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Gift of Mrs. Joseph Brummer and Ernest Brummer, in memory of Joseph Brummer, 1948.



Fig. 3. Sarcophagus fragment with tondo portrait and carpenter's workshop (detail). Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 4. Gold glass medallion with Christ giving crowns to Peter and Paul, embedded in mortar from catacomb *loculus*. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Rogers Fund, 1911.



Fig. 5. Marble funerary altar with couple in *dextrarum iunctio*, 1st century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme di Diocleziano, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 6. Cameo of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, 166 CE. Cleveland Museum of Art. Photograph © Bruce M. White 2010.



Fig. 7. Reverse of *denarius* with Antoninus and Faustina in *dextrarum iunctio*, c. 141 CE. Photo: with permission of wildwinds.com for cerberuscoins.com.



Fig. 8. Reverse of *sestertius* with Antoninus (holding Concordia statuette) and Faustina, Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor, in *dextrarum iunctio*, c. 145–147 CE. Photo: with permission of cngcoins.com and wildwinds.com.



Fig. 9. Reverse of gold *aureus* with Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor in *dextrarum iunctio*, with Concordia, c. 145 CE. Photo: Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 24, lot 102.



Fig. 10. Lid of Portonaccio battle sarcophagus (detail), spouses in *dextrarum iunctio*, with Concordia, Hymenaeus, and attendants, c. 180–190 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 11. Annona sarcophagus (detail), wedding scene with spouses in *dextrarum iunctio*, Concordia, and altar, c. 270–280 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 12. Reverse of *as* of Aurelian with Severina and Aurelian in *dextrarum iunctio*, radiate bust of Sol between them, c. 270–275 CE. Photo: *FVRIVS RVFVS* (Jeremy Mancevice).



Fig. 13. Gold glass vessel base with couple portrait and Hercules, c. 360–400 CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 14. Gold glass vessel base with couple portrait and Cupid, late 4th century CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 15. Sarcophagus of the brothers (detail), wedding scene with spouses in *dextrarum iunctio*, Venus, Cupid, and *Genius* of the Roman people, c. 240–260 CE. Naples National Archaeological Museum. Photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen, Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 license.



Fig. 16. Drawing of back of sarcophagus of Titus Flavius Gorgonius, deceased and wife at center in *dextrarum iunctio*. Sarcophagus 380s CE, now at Museo Diocesano, Ancona, Italy. Drawing from Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana* vol. 5 (1879), Tav. 327.1.



Fig. 17. Front panel, sarcophagus with spouses and Dioscuri, last third of the 4th century CE. L to R: Dioscurus, farewell scene, *dextrarum iunctio/adieu*, Dioscurus. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig.18. Front panel of the “pronuba sarcophagus” (“Ludovisi sarcophagus”) with central scene of spouses in *dextrarum iunctio*, with Concordia, Psyche, and Amor/Cupid (missing). First third of 4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31408. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 19. Fragment of a strigillated sarcophagus with a central *dextrarum iunctio* scene including Concordia, ram-carrier in the right corner, sheep-carrier in the left corner. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 70.3.



Fig. 20. Fragment of a strigillated sarcophagus with a central *dextrarum iunctio* scene including Concordia and Eros, with a Good Shepherd figure in the right corner. Photo: August Stegensek, "Santa Maria in Vescovio, Kathedrale in der Sabina," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 16 (1902), 23, fig. 6.



Fig. 21. Fragment of a double-register sarcophagus with a full-length central *dextrarum iunctio* scene including Concordia. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 86.1.



Fig. 22. Fragment of a strigillated sarcophagus from Villa Albani with a central panel featuring spouses in *dextrarum iunctio*, with Christ between them placing crowns on their heads. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 74.3.



Fig. 23. Tondo double-portrait of Septimia Severina and Flavius Julius Catervius, back panel, sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, c. 390 CE. Cattedrale di San Catervo, Tolentino, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 24. Gold glass vessel base with woman and man in *dextrarum iunctio*, floating crown, pillar, and legend *VIVATIS IN DEO*, c. 360–390 CE. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Rogers Fund, 1915.



Fig. 25. Gold glass medallion with portrait busts of a husband and wife, Christ placing crowns on their heads, and the legend *DVLCIS ANIMA VIVAS*, c. 360–390 CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum. (Photo flipped horizontally.)



Fig. 26. Drawing of gold glass vessel base with portrait busts of a husband and wife, Christ placing crowns on their heads, figure of Christ identified by legend *CRISTVS*. Drawing: Raffaele Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovanti nei cimiteri dei cristiani primitivi di Roma* (Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1858), Tav. 29.3.



Fig. 27. Gold medallion with confronted busts of husband and wife, diminutive figure of Christ placing crowns on their heads, early 5th century. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Rogers Fund, 1958.



Fig. 28. Drawing of gold glass medallion with a woman and man in *dextrarum iunctio*, *chi-rho* between them, legend *MARTVRA EPECTETE VIVATIS*. Drawing: Raffaele Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovanti nei cimiteri dei cristiani primitivi di Roma* (Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1858), tav. 26.12.



Fig. 29. Gilded copper alloy belt ornament with man and woman in *dextrarum iunctio*, with a *chi-rho* between them, 4th century CE. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Purchase, Rogers Fund and Alastair B. Martin Gift, 1993.



Fig. 30. Gold finger ring with square bezel containing confronted busts of a woman and man, with a balanced cross between them, 5th century CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 31. Gold finger ring with square bezel containing confronted busts of a woman and man, with a balanced cross between them, retrograde inscription, late 4th/early 5th century. Photo: © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.



Fig. 32. Gold finger ring with engraved and nielloed oval bezel depicting Christ standing and extending arms over a bride and groom standing to either side, inscription beneath OMONY[a], 6th–7th century CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 33. Gold marriage ring inscribed *OMONOIA*, 200–256 CE, from the Christian building at Dura-Europos. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery. Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.606.



Fig. 34. Tondo portrait of married couple held by winged putti, detail from lid of plaster cast of sarcophagus of Basilica di Sant' Ambrogio, Milan, 380s CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 35. Projecta Casket, silver cosmetics box with tondo portrait of couple held by putti, Venus, Nereids, and sea creatures, c. 380s CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 36. Marble sarcophagus with Dionysus and Ariadne, c. 190–200 CE. Photo: The Walters Art Museum, creative commons license.



Fig. 37. Detail from a “passion” sarcophagus, Roman soldier placing crown upon Christ’s head, mid-4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 38. Detail from a “stars and crowns” sarcophagus depicting the hand of God holding a crown over the head of each apostle in a procession, late 4th century. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.

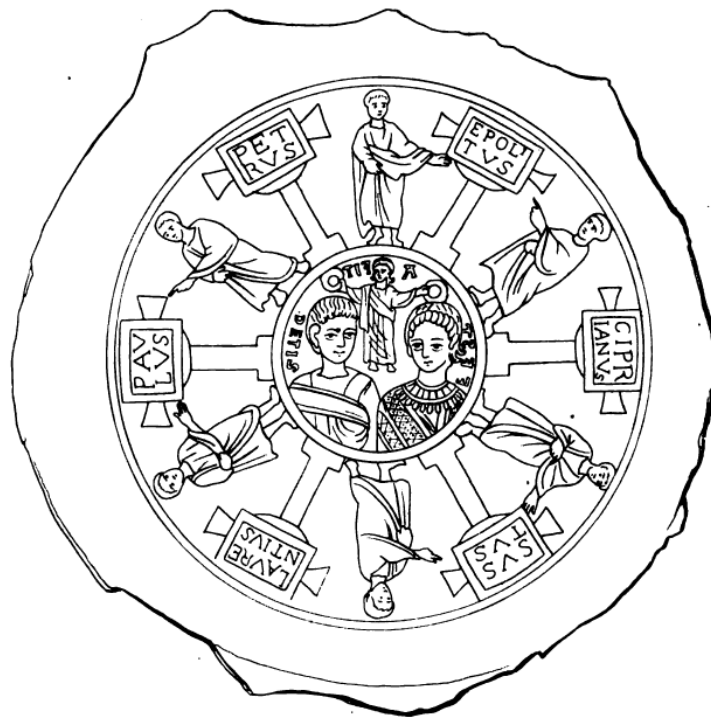


Fig. 39. Drawing of a gold glass medallion depicting couple at center being crowned by Christ, surrounded by six saints. Drawing from Raffaele Garrucci, *Vetri ornati di figure in oro trovanti nei cimiteri dei cristiani primitivi di Roma* (Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1858), Pl. 19, no. 7. Note: Garrucci's drawing is in reverse, except (oddly) for the *tabulae* inscriptions, which read forward.

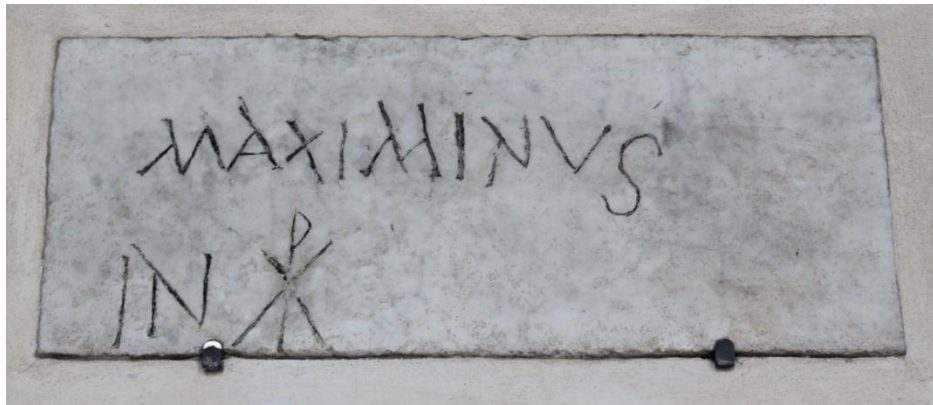


Fig. 40. Grave slab inscribed MAXIMINUS IN ✠, Sta. Maria in Trastevere, Rome. Photo: author.

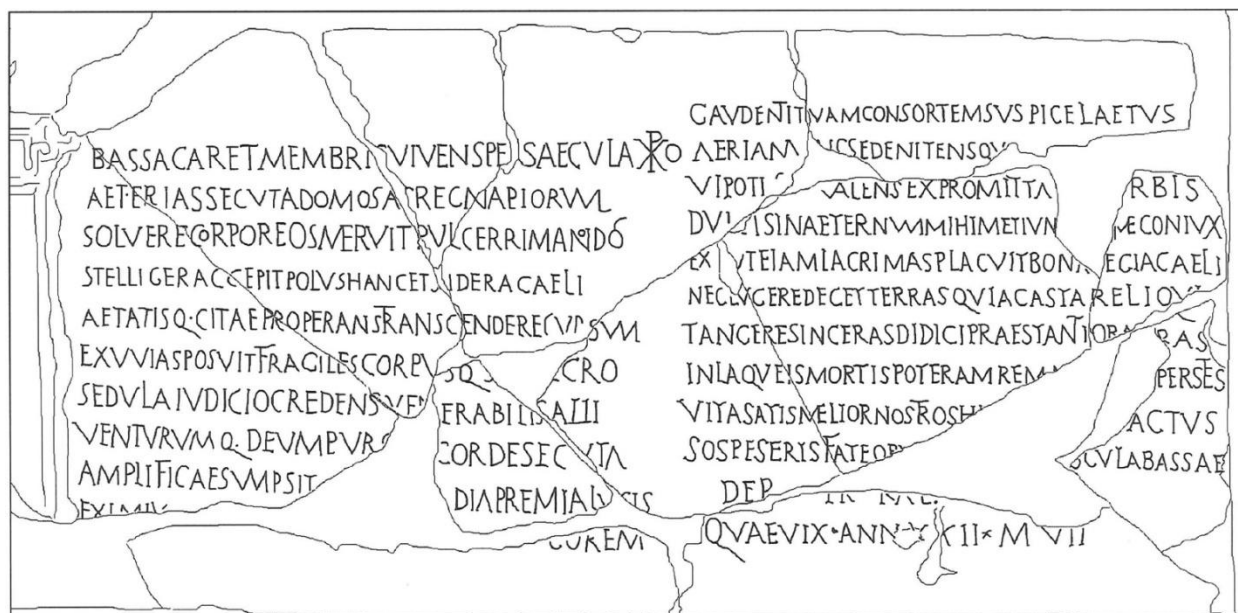


Fig. 41. Apograph of the verse epitaph on the sarcophagus of Bassa, late 4th century CE. Apograph by B. Mazzei. Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Photo Archive.



Fig. 42. Unfinished portrait of a man with a scroll and philosopher attendant, detail from a marble columnar sarcophagus, 300–310 CE, Ostia Antica. Photo: author.



Fig.43. Philosopher and woman in Polyhymnia pose, detail from a marble strigillated sarcophagus, 3rd century CE, Capitoline Museum, Rome, no. MC2414. Photo: author.



Fig. 44. Strigillated sarcophagus with woman and man holding scrolls in left and right corner fields, Capitoline Museum, Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 45. “Lycian motif” sarcophagus with seated woman with musical instrument, seated man with scroll, eight muses. Museo Pio Clementino. Photo: David Macchi, romapedia.blogspot.it, used with permission.

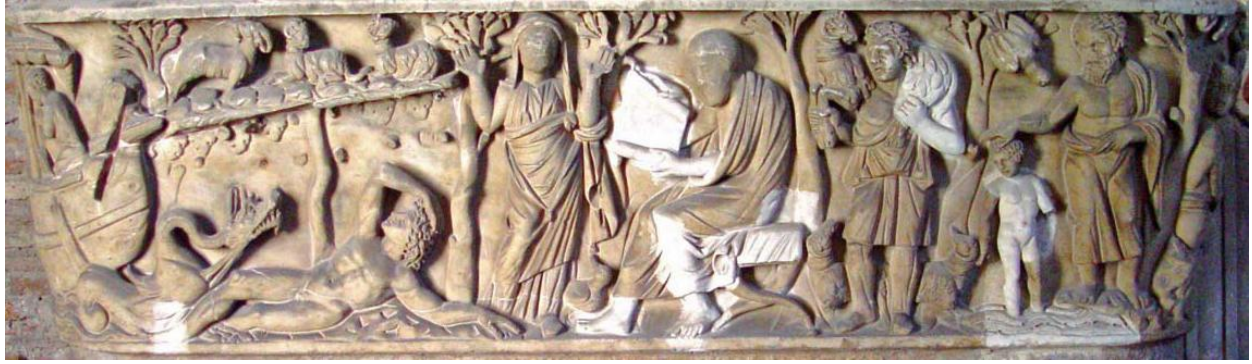


Fig. 46. Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus, c. 250–275 CE. Photo: Robin M. Jensen.



Fig. 47. Sarcophagus with seated philosopher-type portrait and woman in Polyhymnia pose framed by a *parapetasma*. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. II.2.



Fig. 48. Strigillated sarcophagus with philosopher and Polyhymnia Muse in center panel. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. II.3.



Fig. 49. Via Salaria sarcophagus, c. 250–275 CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 50. Lid of a stars and crowns sarcophagus with separate *clipeus* portraits of wife and husband, last third of 4th century CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 51. Gold glass medallion with double portrait of spouses, wife holding a scroll and husband making a speaking gesture, 4th century. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: Andreas Praefcke, Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 52. Fragment of sarcophagus of Eugenia with portraits of a male *orant* and a woman holding a scroll beside an inscribed *tabula*, early 4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 53. Front of sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, c. 390 CE. Cattedrale di San Catervo, Tolentino, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 54. Two doves facing wreathed christogram, right side of gabled lid, sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, c. 390 CE. Cattedrale di San Catervo, Tolentino, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 55. Two lambs facing a staurogram, left side of gabled lid, sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, c. 390 CE. Cattedrale di San Catervo, Tolentino, Italy. Photo: author.

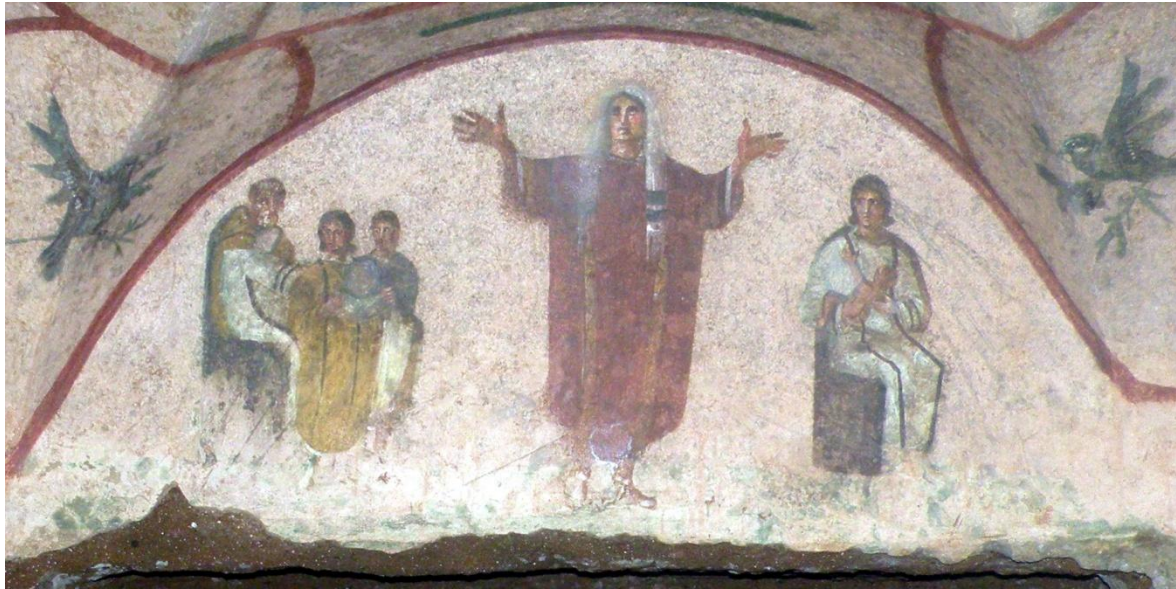


Fig. 56. *Donna Velata* fresco, 3rd century CE. Priscilla catacomb, Rome. Photo: Robin M. Jensen.



Fig. 57. *Donna Velata* fresco and surrounding frescoes in the *Velata* cubiculum, 3rd century. Priscilla catacomb, Rome. Photo: Robin M. Jensen.



Fig. 58. Marble relief of a Roman marriage ceremony from the front of a sarcophagus, 2nd century CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 59. Lid of Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, L to R: seated woman (facial features unfinished) with attendants bathing a child, reading scene with young woman and adult attendants, marriage scene (at center) with wife and husband (facial features unfinished) in *dextrarum iunctio* with Concordia and Hymenaeus, *clementia* scene with conquered barbarians and seated general, c. 180–190 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.

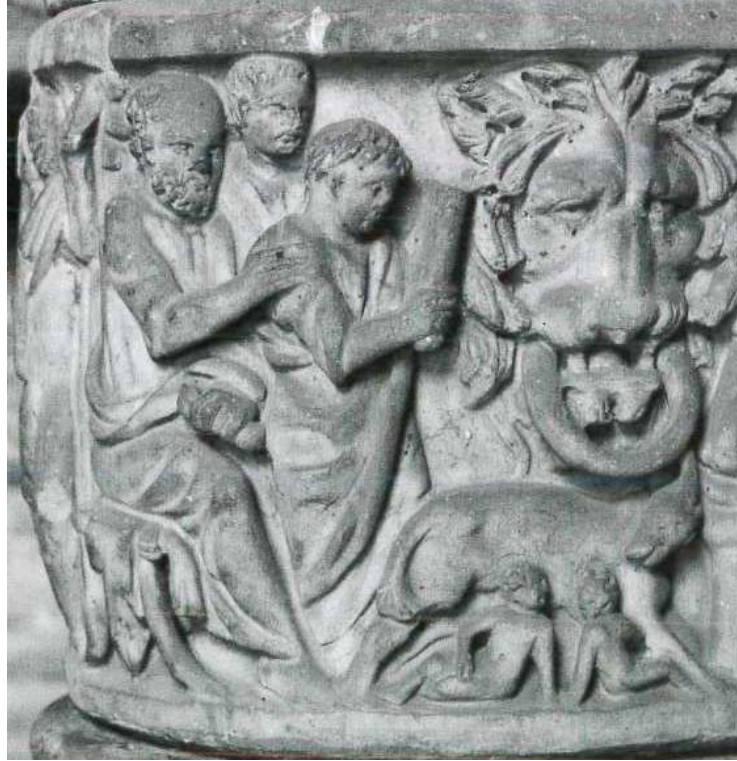


Fig. 60. Reading scene from a child's sarcophagus, 210–220 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 535. Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Köln.



Fig. 61. Reading scene, detail of wall painting in the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii. Photo: author.

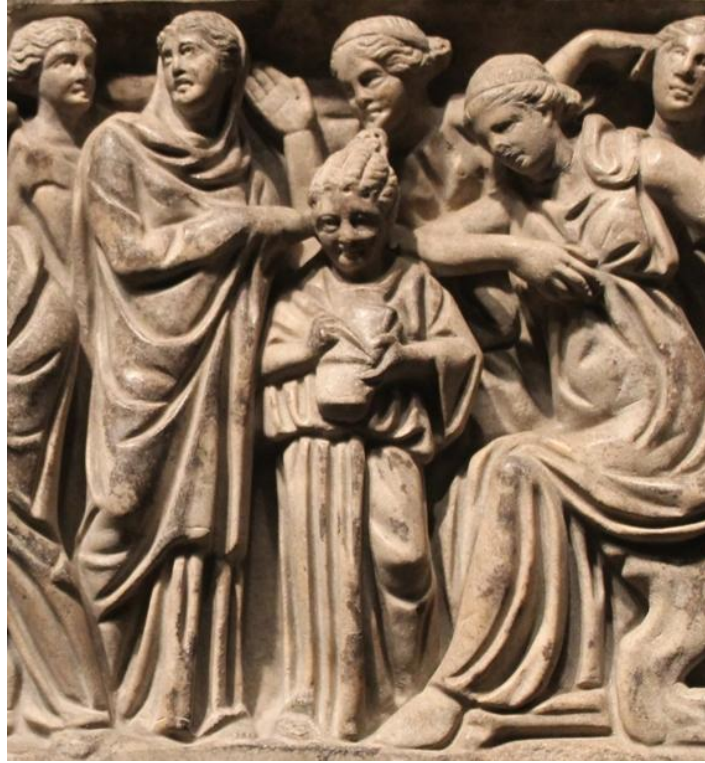


Fig. 62. Reading scene, detail, lid of Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, c. 180–190 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 63. Teaching scene with bearded teacher and two reading students in high-backed chairs, detail from a funerary relief, late 2nd/early 3rd century. Photo: Th. Zühmer, inv. 9921 © GDKE / Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.



Fig. 64. Sarcophagus of Marcus Cornelius Staius, mid 2nd century. Inv. no. Ma 659, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 65. Fresco of the family of Teotecnus, catacomb of San Gennaro, Naples, late 5th/early 6th century. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, creative commons license.



Fig. 66. Front panel of a seasons sarcophagus with a *clipeus* double-portrait of a married couple. Ostia Antica. Photo: author.



Fig. 67. Gilded silver shield portrait of Augustus, 1st century BCE. Toledo Museum of Art, inv. no. 2007.11, purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, by exchange.



Fig. 68. Cinerary urn with shell portrait of a married couple, 1st century CE. Carlos Museum, Atlanta. Photo: author.



Fig. 69. Fragment of sarcophagus with unfinished double-portrait of a married couple in a shell held by ichthyocentaurs and Nereids, early 3rd century. Rome, Sant' Agnese fuori le mura. Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom.



Fig. 70. Front panel of a double-register sarcophagus with a shell portrait of a married couple, first third of the 4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31551. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig.71. Front of a seasons sarcophagus with a *clipeus* portrait of a married couple, c. 330–335 CE. Dumbarton Oaks. Photo: © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.



Fig. 72. Shell portrait protruding from front of double-frieze sarcophagus. Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31535. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 73. Projecta Casket top front panel and rim with Venus scene and inscription, 380s CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 74. Projecta Casket top left panel with Nereid riding a *ketos*, 380s CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 75. Projecta Casket top rear panel with baths scene. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 76. Projecta Casket front bottom panel with “Projecta” posed like Venus in the panel above. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 77. Front panel, sarcophagus of Titus Flavius Gorgonius, with Christ giving the law, 10 processing apostles, and diminutive depictions of Gorgonius and his wife kneeling at Jesus's feet. 380s CE. Museo Diocesano, Ancona, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 78. *Liberalitas* panel, Arch of Constantine, 315 CE. Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 79. *Clementia* scene, lid of Portonaccio battle sarcophagus, c. 180–190 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 80. Relief with woman healed by Jesus, detail from front of a figured marble sarcophagus, 4th century. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.

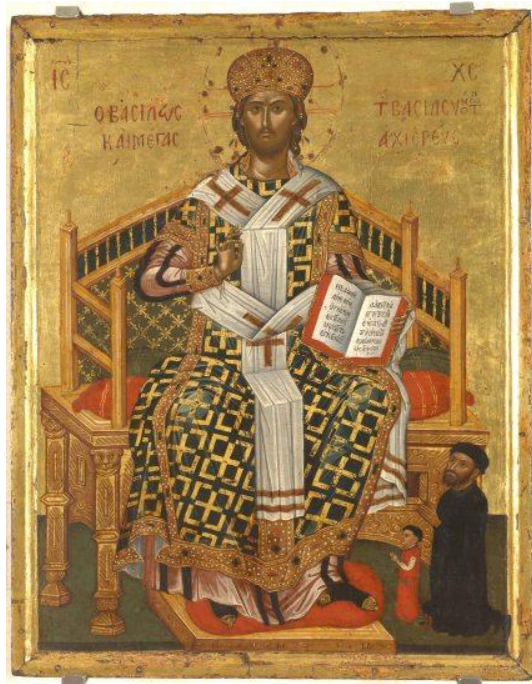


Fig. 81. Icon of Christ the Great Hierophant with donor portraits, 16th century, Candia. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 82. Apse mosaic, Basilica of Cosmas and Damian, c. 527 CE. Rome. Photo: author.

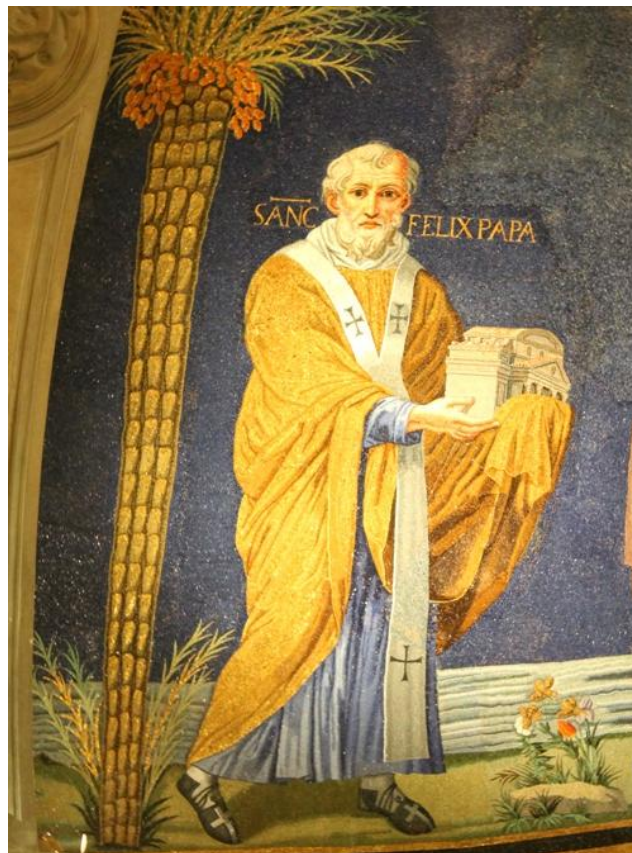


Fig. 83. Portrait of Pope Felix, detail, apse mosaic, Basilica of Cosmas and Damian, c. 527 CE. Rome. Photo: author.

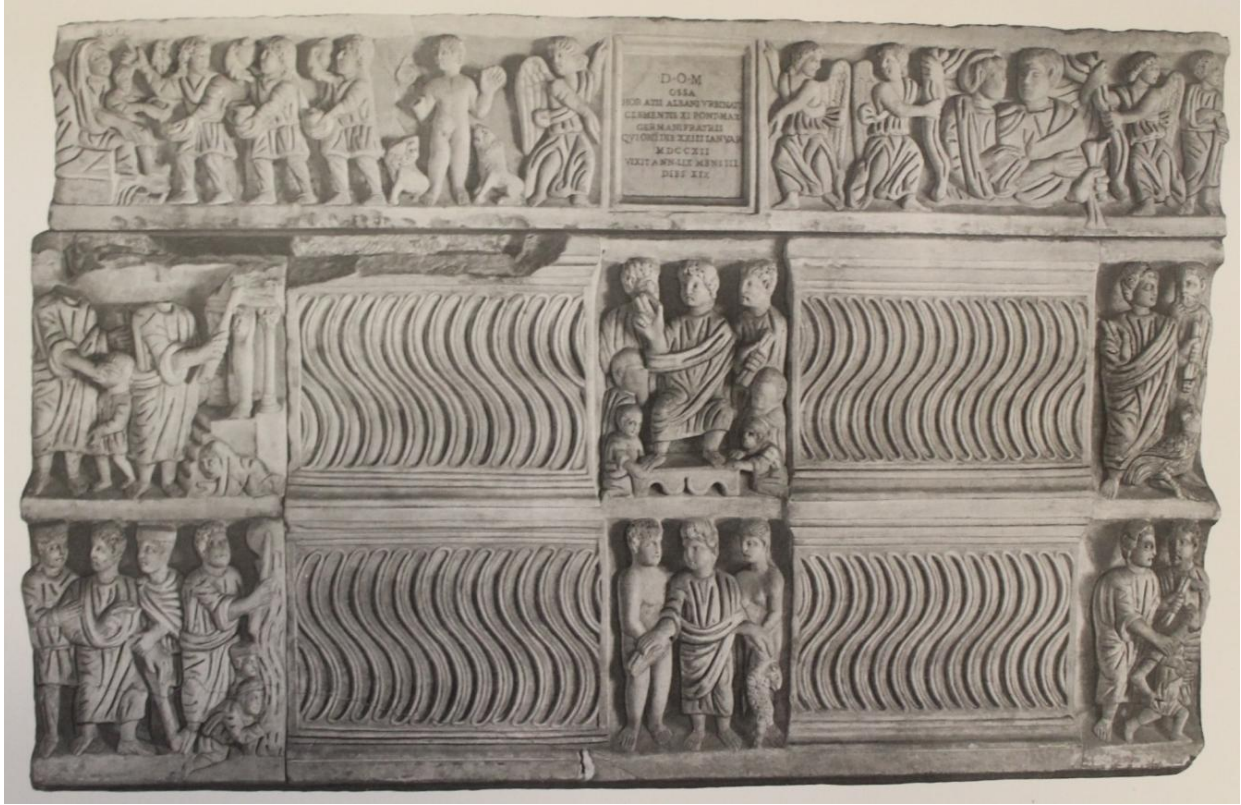


Fig. 84. Double-register strigillated sarcophagus with two pairs of kneeling figures in the top center scene. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. XL.



Fig.85. Strigillated sarcophagus with a center scene featuring Christ standing with elongated jeweled cross, a man and woman kneeling at his feet, end of 4th century. Musée de l'Arles antique. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 37.4.



Fig. 86. Strigillated sarcophagus with a center scene featuring Christ standing with elongated jeweled cross, a man and woman worshipping at his feet, end of 4th century. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 87. Detail of man and woman worshipping at Jesus's feet, front panel of a strigillated sarcophagus, end of 4th century. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 88. Drawing of a five-niche columnar sarcophagus with a diminutive man and woman standing and bowing slightly at Christ's feet, last third of 4th century. Photo: Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana* vol. 5 (1879), Tav. 335.4.

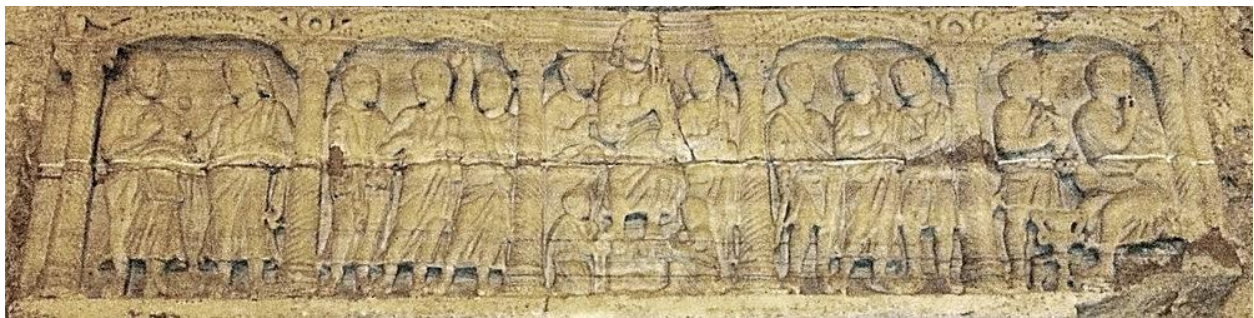


Fig. 89. Five-niche columnar sarcophagus with diminutive man and woman kneeling at Jesus's feet, end of 4th century CE. Saint-Victor, Marseille, France Photo: Roy King, used with permission.



Fig. 90. City-gate sarcophagus at Aix-en-Provence with apostles processing toward Christ and spouses kneeling at Christ's feet, end of 4th century. Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur, Aix-en-Provence. Photo: author.



Fig. 91. Drawing of sarcophagus in the Colonna Chapel of St. Peter's basilica, with ten apostles processing toward Christ and diminutive spouses kneeling at Christ's feet, end of 4th century. Photo: Raffaele Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana* vol. 5 (1879), Tav. 327.2.



Fig. 92. City-gate sarcophagus in Basilica of S. Ambrogio, 380–400 CE. Milan, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 93. Spouses kneeling at Jesus's feet, detail, front of sarcophagus in Basilica of S. Ambrogio, 380–400 CE. Milan, Italy. Photo: author.

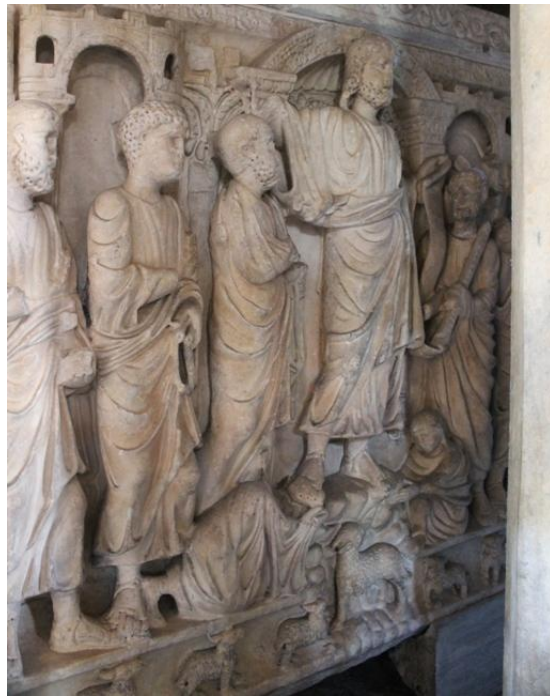


Fig. 94. Spouses kneeling at Jesus's feet, detail, back of sarcophagus of S. Ambrogio, 380–400 CE. Milan, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 95. City-gate sarcophagus with apostles processing toward Christ and spouses (now damaged) kneeling at Christ's feet, end of 4th century. Louvre Museum, Paris. Photo © RMN Musée du Louvre / Hervé Lewandowski.



Fig. 96. Apse mosaic with enthroned Christ before cityscape of the heavenly Jerusalem, Basilica of Santa Pudenziana, Rome, late 4th/early 5th century CE. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 97. Psyche and Cupid, detail, lid of marble sarcophagus with the myth of Selene and Endymion, early 3rd century CE. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Rogers Fund, 1947.



Fig. 98. Sarcophagus relief with Achilles and Penthesileia bearing portrait features. Vatican Museums. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 99. Sarcophagus with myth of Pelops, embrace of Pelops and Hippodamia at far right, 4th century CE. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. Photo: author.

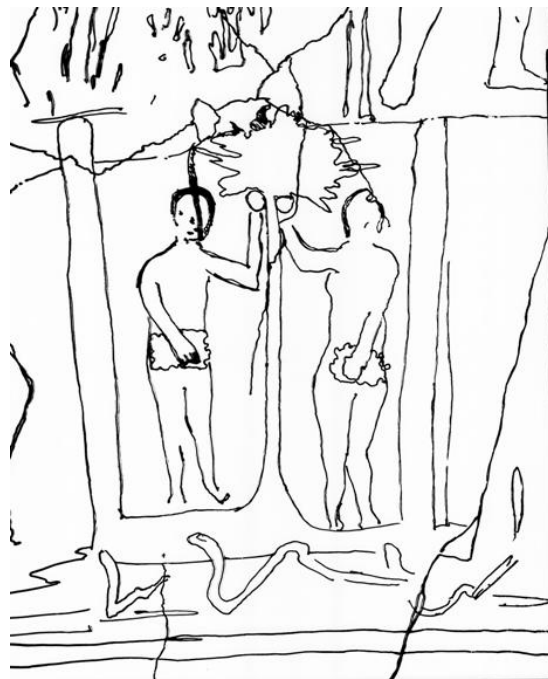


Fig. 100. Outline drawing of Adam and Eve vignette, detail, lunette fresco above the font in the baptistery at Dura-Europos, 240s CE. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection.



Fig. 101. Entrance to cubiculum 14 with scene of Adam and Eve at lower left, catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus, Rome, second half of 3rd century. Photo: Watercolor by Josef Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (Freiburg: Herder, 1903), Taf. 101.



Fig. 102. Adam and Eve at the tree, detail, Mas d'Aire sarcophagus, Aire-sur-l'Adour, France, late 3rd/early 4th century CE. Photo: author.



Fig. 103. Creation of Eve and Adam by the Trinity (with Paul), detail, Arles “Trinity” sarcophagus, c. 325 CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 104. Adam and Eve in *dextrarum iunctio*, detail, Velletri plaque, c. 300 CE. Museo Civico Archaeologico, Velletri, Italy. Photo: Author.

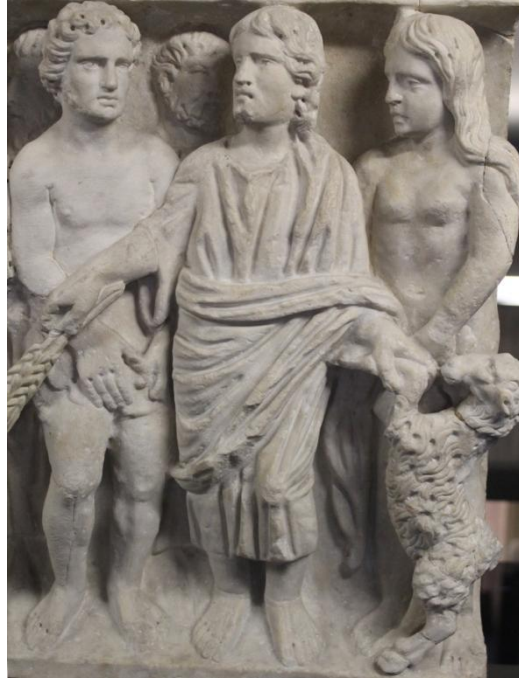


Fig. 105. The Allocation of Labors to Adam and Eve, detail, double-frieze sarcophagus, second quarter of the 4th century CE. Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31535. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 106. The Fall of Adam and Eve with symbols of labor (wheat, sheep) in the background, detail, plaster cast of sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, 359 CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 107. Adam and Eve at the tree with baskets of fruit, detail, side panel of sarcophagus at San Giovanni in Valle, Verona, late 4th/early 5th century CE. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 190.7.



Fig. 108. Sarcophagus of Adelfia, Syracuse, Sicily, with Allocation of Labors (top register, far left) and the Fall (lower register, right of center), second quarter of 4th century CE. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig.109. Arles “Trinity” sarcophagus, with Fall of Adam and Eve on the lid, creation of Adam and Eve in top register, far left, c. 325 CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 110. “Dogmatic” sarcophagus with creation of Adam and Eve, Allocation of Labors in the upper register left of the *clipeus* portrait, second quarter of 4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano, inv. no. 31427. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 111. Gold glass vessel base with portrait of a married couple surrounded by radiating biblical and apocryphal motifs (clockwise from top): healing of the paralytic, raising of Lazarus, Adam and Eve at the tree with Christ, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the water miracle of Peter or Moses. 4th century. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

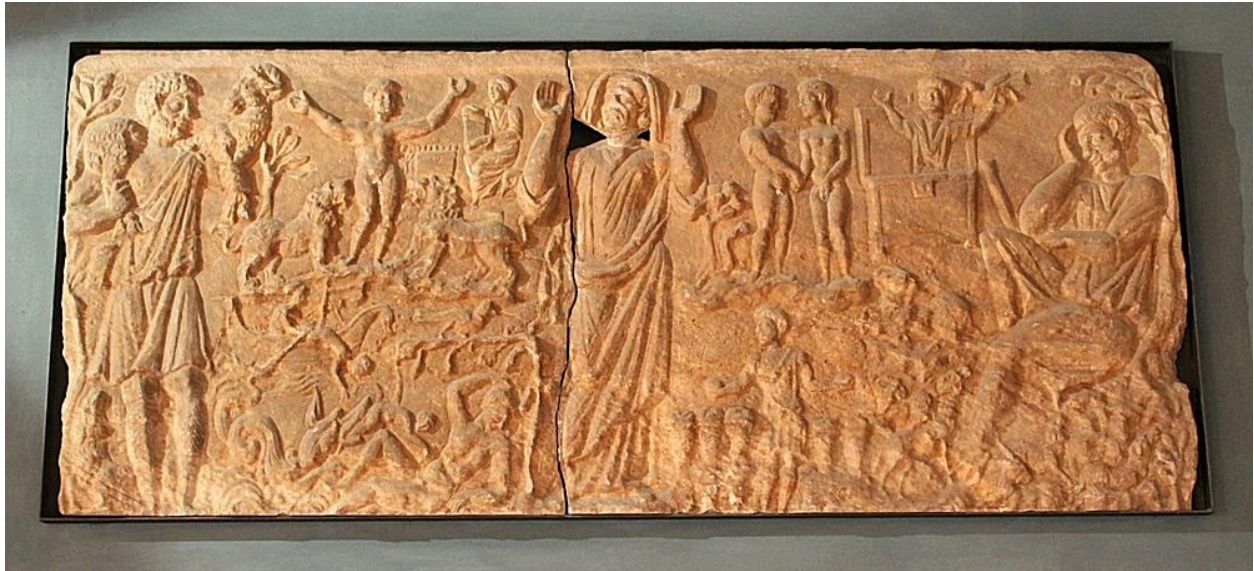


Fig. 112. Loculus plaque or sarcophagus panel from Velletri with central *orant* portrait surrounded by biblical and bucolic images, c. 300 CE. Museo Civico Archaeologico, Velletri, Italy. Photo: Author.



Fig. 113. Fragments of a glass bowl (the "Saint Severin bowl") with gold-glass medallions, late fourth century. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 114. Adam and Eve (damaged) at the tree with symbols of labor (Eve's sheep damaged), a male figure speaking to Eve and another speaking to Adam, detail, Arles "trinity" sarcophagus, c. 325 CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig.115. Cain and Abel's offerings, detail, Arles "trinity" sarcophagus, c. 325 CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 116. Right side panel, plaster cast of Milan city-gate sarcophagus, with small Adam and Eve scene at bottom center and Noah in the ark to the immediate right, 380s CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 117. Miniature of Adam and Eve at work, with children, Regensburg, Bavaria, Germany, 1400–1410 CE. Photo: J. Paul Getty Museum Ms. 33, fol. 6, Creative Commons License.



Fig. 118. The multiplication of the loaves, detail, “Dogmatic” sarcophagus, second quarter of 4th century CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.

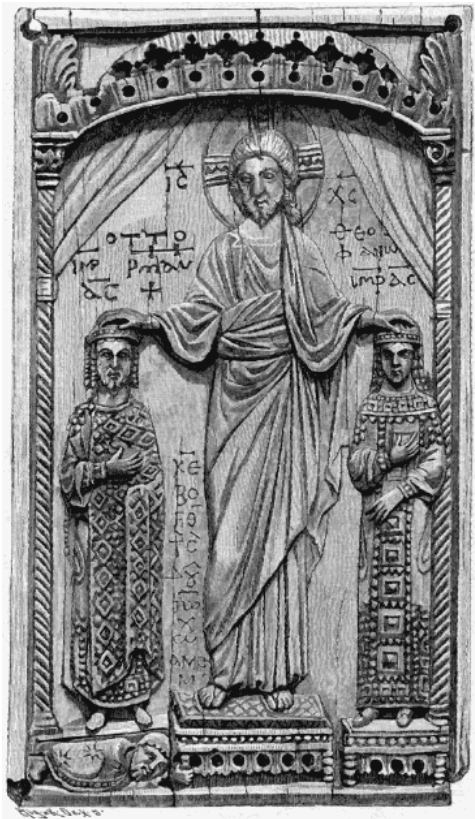


Fig. 119. Ivory of Otto II and Theophanu with Christ between them placing crowns on their heads, c. 982 CE. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 120. Anastasis fresco, Chora church, Istanbul/Constantinople, 14th century CE. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 121. Mosaic of the separation of the sheep and goats, 6th century CE. Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 122. Columnar sarcophagus with central *dextrarum iunctio* scene, wife with attendant and cosmetics box in left architrave, husband with philosopher in right architrave. Early 4th century. Ostia Antica. Photo: author.



Fig. 123. Gold glass vessel base with portrait of a married couple, legend *SEMPER GAVDEAT[IS] IN NOMINE DEI*. Dunaszekcső, Hungary. 4th century. Photo: Hungarian National Museum.



Fig. 124. Personifications of Summer and Fall with attributes, detail, Dionysus sarcophagus, 260–270 CE. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1955.



Fig. 125. Front panel of a seasons sarcophagus, mid-3rd century. Capitoline Museum, Rome. Photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen, Wikimedia Commons.

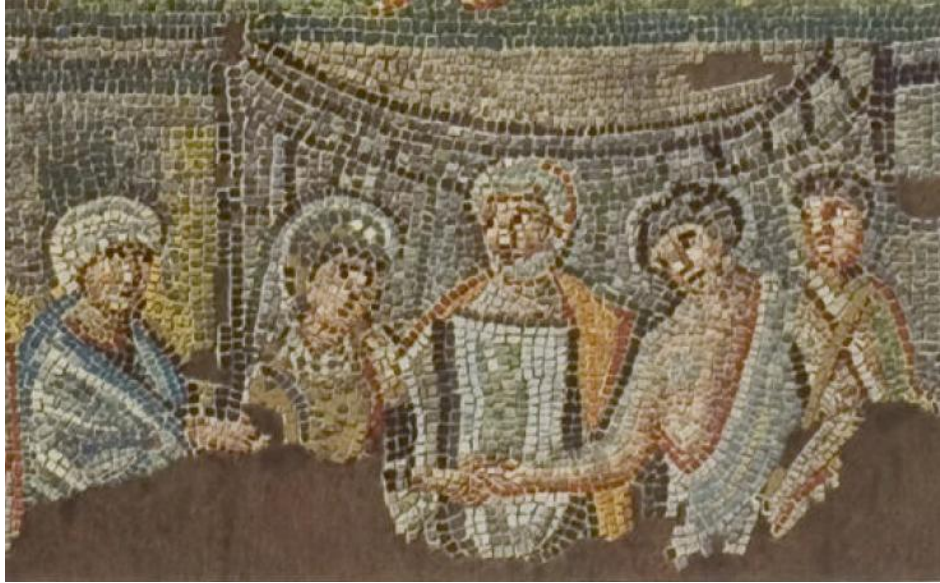


Fig. 126. Fragment of mosaic depicting the wedding of Jacob and Rachel, with Laban acting as *pronubus*, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome, 5th century. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1916), Vol. 3, 12.



Fig. 127. Mosaic depicting the wedding of Moses and Zipporah, with Jethro acting as *pronubus*, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome, 5th century. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1916), Vol. 3, 17.



Fig. 128. Mosaic depicting the marriage of Joseph and Mary, Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome, 5th century. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1916), Vol. 3, 57–58.



Fig. 129. Grave stele of Philoxenos with his wife, Philoumene, c. 400 BCE. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California. Photo: J. Paul Getty Museum.



Fig. 130. Lid of Etruscan sarcophagus with husband and wife in embrace, late 4th/early 3rd century BCE, Vulci. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Fig. 131. Etruscan sarcophagus with husband and wife in *dextrarum iunctio* at center, late 4th/early 3rd century BCE, Vulci. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



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Fig. 132. Portrait busts of Gratidia Chrite and Marcus Gratidius Libanus, in *dextrarum iunctio*, 13 BCE–5 CE, Rome. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 133. Funerary relief with circus official and wife, scenes of circus, 2nd century CE, Ostia. Photo: © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 134. Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, detail, base of column of Antoninus Pius, c. 161 CE. Vatican Museums. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 135. Farewell scene on side panel of sarcophagus with myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, c. 170 CE. Vatican Museums. Photo: Dan Diffendale, flickr, creative commons license.



Fig. 136. Protesilaus fallen in battle, his shade meeting Hermes, detail, front panel of sarcophagus with the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, c. 170 CE. Vatican Museums. Photo: Dan Diffendale, flickr, creative commons license.



Fig. 137. Reunion of Laodamia and Protesilaus, detail, center of front panel of sarcophagus with myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, c. 170 CE. Vatican Museums. Photo: Dan Diffendale, flickr, creative commons license.

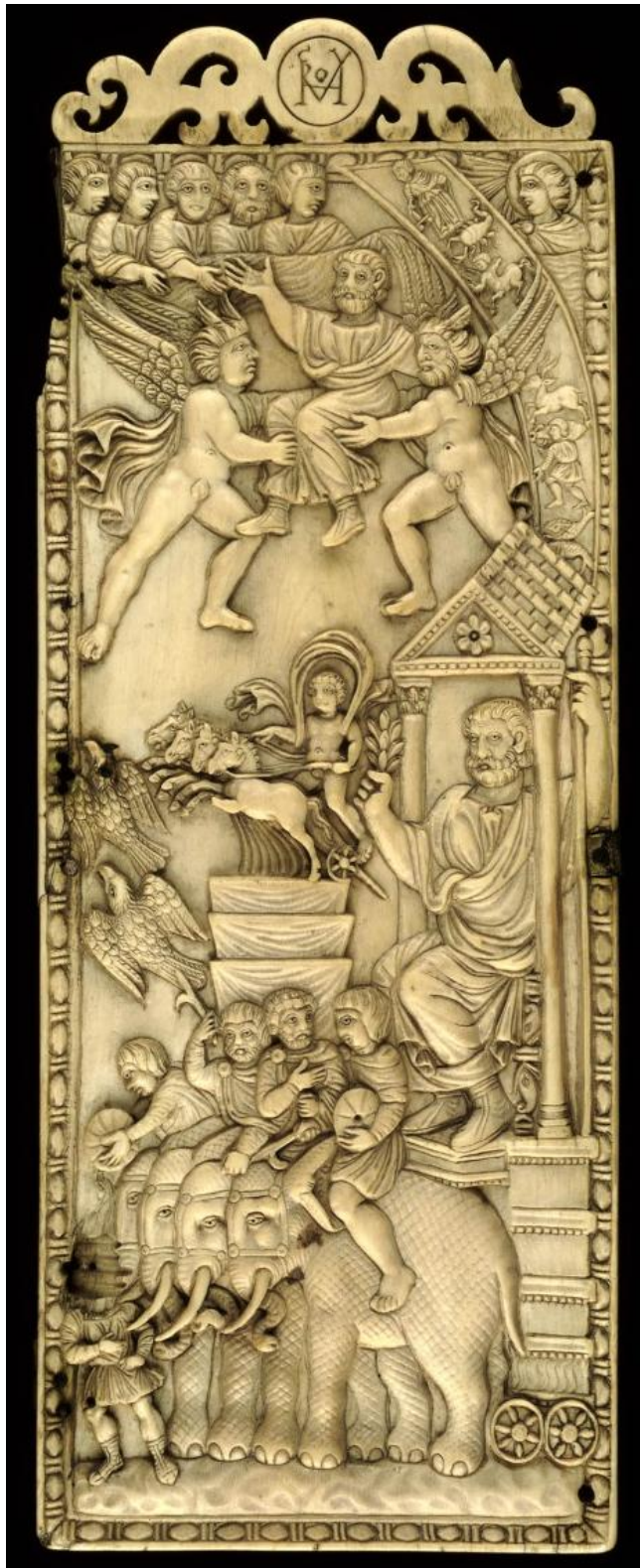


Fig. 138. "Symmachus" ivory, c.402 CE. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 139. *Clipeus* double-portrait with sub-*clipeus* pastoral image (a shepherd milking a goat, a shepherd standing with a donkey), detail from arcophagus of Faustinus, 353 CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 140. Shell double-portrait above abbreviated Jonah cycle (at left, Jonah cast out of the ship and swallowed by ketos; at right, ketos beside Jonah at rest beneath the vine), detail from a double-register sarcophagus, second quarter of the 4th century. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 141. *Clipeus* double-portrait above *crux invicta* scene with Sol and Luna, two birds at wreathed chi-rho, detail of sarcophagus of Julia Latronilla, c. 330 CE. Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem. Photo: Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. Photographer: David Harris.



Fig. 142. Two doves at christogram, flanked by *alpha* and *omega* and doves at baskets of fruit, lid pediment, plaster cast of Milan sarcophagus, 380s CE. Museo Pio Cristiano. Photo: author, © Governatorato S.C.V. – Direzione dei Musei.



Fig. 143. The three Hebrew youths refusing to worship the king's image (also evocative of the Magi before Herod), detail, right side panel, sarcophagus of Catervius and Severina, c.390 CE. Cattedrale di San Catervo, Tolentino, Italy. Photo: author.



Fig. 144. *Dextrarum iunctio* portrait set within architectural frame, columns topped by doves and baskets of fruit, detail, center panel, back of sarcophagus of Petronius Probus, late 4th century. Photo: Josef Wilpert, *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*, Vol. 1 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1929), Tav. 35.4.



Fig. 145. Bethesda-type sarcophagus, Tarragona cathedral, late 4th century. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 146. The sarcophagus of Bassa, late 4th century CE. Museo cristiano delle catacombe di Pretestato. Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Photo Archive.



Fig. 147. *Dextrarum iunctio scene*, detail, Arles spouses and Dioscuri sarcophagus, last third of the 4th century CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 148. Farewell scene, detail, Arles spouses and Dioscuri sarcophagus, last third of the 4th century CE. Musée départemental Arles Antique. Photo: author.



Fig. 149. Sarcophagus with wedding scene and Dioscuri, 240–260 CE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, with permission of the Ministry of goods and cultural activities and tourism, Special Superintendent for the Colosseum, the Museo Nazionale Romano, and the archaeological area of Rome. Photo: author.



Fig. 150. Gold glass medallion with portrait of a married couple and legend *MAXIMA VIVAS CVM DEXTRO* (“Maxima, may you live with Dextro”). Photo: Andrew Simsky, used with permission.



Fig. 151. Silver seal and imprint depicting confronted busts of a husband and wife, with their daughter between them, two doves and a ribboned wreath above their heads, encircled by the legend *MAXSENTI VIVAS TVIS F* (“Maxentius, may you live h[appily with] your [loved ones]”). Photo: Th. Zühmer, © GDKE / Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier.

ADAM AND EVE IMAGES AND MARITAL CONTEXTS ON CHRISTIAN SARCOPHAGI

<i>Artifact</i>	<i>Image type</i>	<i>Marriage context</i>
Rep 1.6	Fall	Yes, inscription on lid, but female orans on lid and casket, so some question whether lid and casket belong together, or what.
Rep 1.8	Fall	Uncertain. No lid. Next to multiplication.
Rep 1.12	Fall	Uncertain. No lid. Next to multiplication.
Rep 1.41	Fall	No, child's sarc.
Rep 1.77	Fall	No, parapetasma portrait of female orant, blank tabula.
Rep 1.95	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment.
Rep 1.145	Fall	Uncertain. Lid only.
Rep 1.167	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment.
Rep 1.338	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.380	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, feet only, drawing of hypothesized rest of image in Wilpert 2 Tav 187.9.
Rep 1.445	Fall	Uncertain. Fragments, scoring on bodies (leaves?)
Rep 1.467	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, just part of Eve, Wilpert 2, Tav 187.8.
Rep 1.468?	Fall?	Uncertain. Fragment, part of Adam's feet? Wilpert 2, Tav 187.7.
Rep 1.474	Fall?	Uncertain. Fragment (I don't see any part of an A&E scene in the pictured fragment)
Rep 1.505	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.508	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.515	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, part of lid
Rep 1.622	Fall	No, inscription indicates it's for a 9-year-old boy
Rep 1.636	Fall	Uncertain. Fragments, lid only, lid had a single parapetasma portrait (apparently) but no inscription to indicate whether there was spousal commemoration
Rep 1.637	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.638	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.662	Fall	No, inscription indicates for a 5-year-old boy
Rep 1.705	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.732	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.735	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, next to magi visiting Mary
Rep 1.745	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, next to magi visiting Mary
Rep 1.774	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.802	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.923	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.946 (U)	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, drawing only
Rep 1.987 (U)	Fall	Uncertain. Drawing only, no lid
Rep 2.11 Capua	Fall	No, no lid
Rep 2.30 New York	Fall (side)	No, no lid
Rep 2.49	Fall	No, fragment
Rep 2.59	Fall	No, no lid
Rep 2.88	Fall (only Eve)	No, fragment, pieced together?
Rep 2.117	Fall (A&E separate in corner fields)	No, fragment, no lid
Rep 2.150 Milan ("Stilicho")	Fall (side, diminutive)	Yes, clipeus portrait on lid
Rep 2.152 Verona	Fall (+ baskets of fruit)	No
Rep 2.164	Fall	No, fragment
Rep 2.180 Naples	Fall	Yes, inscription on border above: -aria Cyriace C F + mater filiae, "mother and daughter" ("mater" directly above Eve)
Rep 3.18 Mas d'Aire	Fall	No
Rep 3.40 Arles damaged	Fall + wheat	Yes, shell

<i>Artifact</i>	<i>Image type</i>	<i>Marriage context</i>
Rep 3.105	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.107	Fall	Yes, fragment of lid shown w/ Arles Susanna sarc, but inscription shows spousal commemoration
Rep 3.131	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.141	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.200	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.203	Fall	Yes, shell portrait, much damage, A&E on small side
Rep 3.228	Fall (actually Allocation next to creation)	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.243	Fall	No
Rep 3.271	Fall	No lid, A&E small side
Rep 3.282	Fall	No lid, A&E small side
Rep 3.338?	Fall?	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.382	Fall	Uncertain. No lid
Rep 3.437	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.481	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment, roughed in and unfinished
Rep 3.493	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.494	Fall	Uncertain. No, A&E on small side
Rep 3.514	Fall	Uncertain. No lid
Rep 3.584	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.619	Fall	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.625	Fall	Unfinished frieze sarc, beginning of A&E barely roughed in
Rep 1.21	Allocation	Uncertain. No lid
Rep 1.40	Allocation	Yes, shell portrait.
Rep 1.44	Allocation	Yes, shell portrait.
Rep 1.241	Allocation	Yes, parapetasma on lid + kneeling figures on casket, Allocation directly beneath
Rep 1.772	Allocation	Yes, separate tondo portraits on lid, Allocation on lid
Rep 1.840	Allocation	Uncertain. No lid
Rep 1.984	Allocation	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.999	Allocation	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 2.20 Adelfia	Allocation	Yes, shell portrait
Rep 2.22	Allocation	No, fragment
Rep 2.102 Julia Latronilla	Allocation	Yes, clipeus portrait
Rep 3.38 Arles trinity	Allocation	Yes, shell portrait
Rep 3.40	Allocation (actually Fall + wheat)	Yes, shell portrait
Rep 3.71	Allocation	Uncertain. Fragment, drawing only
Rep 3.107	Allocation (Fall + sheep + figure talking w/ Eve)	Yes, inscription (though pictured with Arles Susanna sarc)
Rep 3.228	Allocation	Uncertain. Fragment, but next to creation similar to Vatican trinity sarc, so perhaps a clipeus portrait originally?
Rep 3.437	Allocation	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.25	Fall + labors	Uncertain. No lid, Eve immediately next to & partly covered by center portrait of deceased woman with codex (but would lid have included commemorative inscription from a husband?) A&E + Logos with wheat to Adam's side (L), gesturing towards Cain and Abel offering scene to L.
Rep 1.43*	Fall + labors (Allocation + tree to side)	Yes, clipeus portrait

<i>Artifact</i>	<i>Image type</i>	<i>Marriage context</i>
Rep 1.52 Agape & Crescentianus	Fall + labors	Yes, inscription
Rep 1.146	Fall + labors	Uncertain. Lid only
Rep 1.337	Fall + labors	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.680 Junius Bassus	Fall + labors	No
Rep 1.734	Fall + labors	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.979 (U)	Fall + labors	Uncertain. Fragment, drawing only, Eve with sheep
Rep 1.176?	Fall + labors?	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.284?	Fall + labors?	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 2.20	Fall + labors (wheat)	Yes, shell portrait
Rep 3.38 Arles trinity	Fall + wheat and sheep (damaged) + attendants at both sides	Yes, shell, directly beneath A&E
Rep 1.23?	Fall + expulsion?	Uncertain. No lid, male figure seems to be pushing Adam forward
Rep 1.188	Expulsion	Yes, shell portrait, Logos speaks to Eve as she and Adam hold hands and Adam begins walking out of the scene towards a column; to the L Lot, daughters, and wife flee Sodom, Lot's wife looks back, mirroring Eve, but Eve looks back to listen to Christ-Logos.
Rep 1.43* dogmatic / trinity	Creation of Eve	Yes, clipeus portrait
Rep 1.86 Ludovisi Pronuba sarc	Creation of Eve (Adam present, too, reclining)	Yes, large central wedding scene w/ <i>dextrarum iunctio</i>
Rep 1.383?	Creation of Adam and Eve?	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 1.437?	Creation of Adam?	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 2.101	Creation of Eve	Yes, inscription mentions "to my wife" <i>tē gynaike mou</i>
Rep 3.18 Mas d'Aire	Creation of Adam	No
Rep 3.38 Arles trinity	Creation	Yes, shell portrait
Rep 3.228	Creation	Uncertain. Fragment, next to Allocation as on Vatican trinity sarc, so maybe originally with a clipeus portrait?
Rep 3.317	Creation	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.398	Creation	Uncertain. Fragment
Rep 3.456	Creation of Adam (center scene)	No
Rep 2.242 Velletri	Marriage	Yes, no commemoration of married patrons (no lid), but <i>dextrarum iunctio</i> shows "wedding" of A&E

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