

**PRAYER AND PIETY: THE *ORANS*-FIGURE IN THE  
CHRISTIAN CATACOMBS OF ROME**

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## Abstract

The *orans*, although a gesture with a long ‘pagan’ past, was easily adopted by Christians for its symbolic meanings of prayer and piety and quickly attained a number of other more nuanced meanings as it was refined and reused. By restricting the scope of this thesis to the *orans* in the Christian catacombs of Rome, it becomes possible to approach the figure from a multi-directional perspective, not merely concerned with what the gesture meant to the Christian, but with its literary and material pedigrees, its transition to Christian art, and its cultural significance.

To this end, chapter one examines ‘pagan’ precursors of the Christian *orans* through an examination of coins, sculptures, inscriptions, and reliefs, as well as by looking at the two figures whose appearance most influences that of the *orans* – the goddess Pietas, and the Artemisia-*Adorans* funerary portrait type. Chapter two addresses the importance of the *orans* in the Christian literary community, and examines not only the actual usage of prayer with raised hands by the Christian faithful, but also examines the aesthetic and theological reasons for the popularity of the gesture – the parallel between the spread arms of the *orans* and the posture of the crucified Christ. Finally, chapter three presents a spatial-thematic analysis of the usage of the *orans* in the Roman Christian catacombs, using a corpus of 158 *orantes*. This chapter enables the reader to draw conclusions about the veracity of the academic theories presented in the previous chapters, as it compares the usage of the *orans* against its scholarly interpretation.

## General Introduction

### *Introduction*

*Orare* is the Latin verb ‘to pray’.<sup>1</sup> ‘*Orans*’ is a modern term devised by scholars for a figure which appeared in Graeco-Roman art.<sup>2</sup> This figure is usually female in form and appears with its arms spread wide. The name ‘*orans*’ suggests an interpretation of the figure as one of prayer – the literal image of a praying person, representing either the concept of prayer or being a stock position in which to present a praying worshipper.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this is not precisely the case. While the *orans* is an image associated with religious faith or being a worshipper, it has a much more complex history and interpretation.

Firstly, while this image is most prevalently associated with Christianity, it is by no means a ‘Christian’ image. Christianity is a religion which owes an obvious debt of content, tradition, form, and practice to both its Jewish forbearers and its Graeco-Roman neighbours. The early

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<sup>1</sup> Wagenvoort 1980: 197-206. In this chapter, Wagenvoort traces the roots of the verb ‘*orare*’. He concludes that ancient prayers were generally spoken aloud, with silent prayers being reserved for either magical rituals or particular wishes of which the worshipper was either ashamed or afraid to mention. He suggests that this changed in the Christian period, when prayers became more popularly said silently, possibly as an interpretation of Mat 6:6 (“But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”). (All Bible quotations and abbreviations of Bible books are taken from the NRSV.) *Orare* is a word with a questionable origin. He cites Varro’s assertion that *oro* derived from *ore*, but follows the work of Ernout-Meillet and Walde-Hoffman in believing this to be a folk etymology created by the Romans. He notes that despite the uncertainty of the word’s origins, it frequently appeared in conjunction with *precari* (to beg, pray, beseech, or supplicate) and that the base meaning of *orare* is “to make words”. He argues that ancient Romans idealised men who were gifted in speaking, and points to the role of the orator in both legal and divine matters, explaining that in the Twelve Tables *orare* was a synonym for *agere in iudici* (to plead a case at law) and that *orator* (speaker) often meant something like diplomatic envoy. He further notes that *orare* is an intransitive verb which developed a connection with praying because it was frequently used in conjunction with *precari* in such sentences as Ennius’ *tum face vero quod tecum precibus pater ora* (‘then do as your father with prayers implores you’), Horace’s *hac prece te oro* (‘with this prayer I beg you’), and Plautus’ *nunc te oro per precem* (‘now I do beg and pray you’). He believes this usage of the two verbs together indicates that the Romans did not believe that *orare* really meant “to pray” and had to be reinforced by another verb. He believes that the word *orare* is connected intrinsically with the notion of *pietas* (see chapter one) because *orare* was the appropriate and conventional way in which people were to pray, while silent prayer was associated with magic, of which people were suspicious.

<sup>2</sup> It is notable that while the ancients did not refer to these type of figures as *orantes*, they did refer to similar figures (discussed in chapter one) as *adorantes*, a name which derives from the verb *adorare*, meaning ‘to worship or reverence’. In this thesis, I will use the term *orans* to refer to the figures called *orantes* by modern scholars for the sake of clarity and differentiation.

<sup>3</sup> Seib 1971: 351-354.

Christians were either converts from ‘paganism’<sup>4</sup> or were Jews of a particular sect. While they did create many things, like new religious texts and dogmas, they still existed in an existing cultural framework and continued to use the majority of the things that framework produced. For example, early Christians did not wear clothing that was distinct from their neighbours. The clothes of the Roman saint were the same as the clothes of the ‘pagan’ *matrona* or *pater familias*. Christians built churches in buildings called basilicas, which previously existed as a type of ‘pagan’ town hall.<sup>5</sup> Given this *milieu*, it would be naïve to say that the *orans*, this gesture of prayer with raised hands, then, is a uniquely Christian image.

Further undercutting the name ‘*orans*’ is the fact that the ‘*orans*-posture’ was not the only type of prayer recognized by the Christian Church, and, in fact, was not the *de facto* method of prayer in either Judaism or ‘paganism’. The Christian Bible records people praying in a variety of positions, including sitting,<sup>6</sup> standing,<sup>7</sup> standing looking upwards,<sup>8</sup> raising the hands,<sup>9</sup> bowing the head,<sup>10</sup> kneeling,<sup>11</sup> or lying prostrate.<sup>12</sup> None of these various postures are recorded as remarkable or unusual. In fact, the only unusual remark about the manner of a person’s prayer is recorded in 1 Samuel 1:9-17, where Hannah, a childless woman, is accused of drunkenly and inappropriately praying to God because the priest can see her mouth moving, but not hear her speaking, suggesting that praying audibly was normal in Judaism. Hannah identifies herself in

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘pagan’ is often rejected by scholars as a dogmatic, polemical, and pro-Christian term; however, given as this paper addresses the usage of Christian artistic images, I feel that taking a term from a Christian perspective is acceptable. Nevertheless, I qualify that the term ‘pagan’ will refer solely to practitioners of traditional Graeco-Roman cults and practices, and other religious groups, like Jews or Zoroastrians, will be separately identified.

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent overview of the development of early Christianity and early Christians, see Rousseau 2002.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. 2 Sam 7:18.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. 1 Sam 1:26; 2 Kings 6:20; 2 Chr 19:5-6; Lk 9:28-32.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Jn 17:11.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. 1 Kings 8:22; 1 Kings 8:42; 1 Tim 2:8.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. 2 Kings 20:2; Lk 18:10-13.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. 1 Kings 8:54; Mt 18:26; Lk 22:41-44. NB: Some examples of kneeling prayer also record raising the hands, like Ezra 9:5.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. 1 Kings 1:47-48; Mt 36:38-39.

1:26 as “the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord”, marking her posture as unremarkable. Fyntikoglou and Voutrias (2006: 162-164) discuss the Roman postures of prayer, showing that Romans prayed in various ways as well, including with hands raised,<sup>13</sup> with a hand outstretched over the earth,<sup>14</sup> covering the head,<sup>15</sup> rotating the body clockwise (as a way of ending a prayer),<sup>16</sup> and through rhythmic motions or dances.<sup>17</sup>

These gestures of prayer, then, were inherited by Christians from their forbearers. Many other postures of prayer both existed and were recognised as ‘appropriate’ by all three of the aforementioned groups, among them standing with arms raised, standing with hands extended, standing with bowed heads, or in some communities with the initiates raising their eyes to heaven and the catechumens looking towards the ground. Non-standing postures were also common and accepted, including lying prostrate on the ground, kneeling, performing some sort of obeisance like a genuflection, or performing violent acts to mark penitence, such as hitting the body were all considered properly reverent postures for public or private prayer.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the *orans* is not notable because it reveals the sole image of Christian prayer, but rather because of its representative or symbolic meaning. In fact, it is especially fascinating to the study of early Christian art because it does not continue to be used in Christian sacred iconography. Unlike many of its contemporary images, like the *traditio legis*, the palm branch,

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<sup>13</sup> Vergil *Aen.* 1.92-94, 2.688-689; Sallust *Cat.* 31.3; Pliny *Epist.* 6.20.15.

<sup>14</sup> Servius *Ad Aen.* 4.205; Livy 7.5.

<sup>15</sup> Ovid *Fast.* 3.363.

<sup>16</sup> Plutarch *Cam.* 5.7-9.

<sup>17</sup> Vergil *Aen.* 8.285-288; Livy 1.20.

<sup>18</sup> Hamman 1980: 1212-1219, who describes the types of Christian prayer as standing with raised hands, with extended arms, the sign of the cross, beating the breast, kneeling, and prostrate. These positions are attested in Greek, Roman, Biblical, and Christian sources. The practice of striking oneself may arise from Jewish postures of grief, such as tearing one’s clothes, wearing sackcloth, and pouring ashes on one’s head. It may also have been another acceptable way for Jews to pray. Cf. Lk 18:13, where a tax collector goes to the temple to pray: “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’”.

and the Good Shepherd, which are all ancient but retained Christian images, the *orans* appears 158 times in the Christian catacombs of Rome and over 200 times on Christian sarcophagi from Rome and Ostia but is virtually absent from modern churches (refer to chapter three). The obscurity of this image is enticing to the student of art history, and prompts me to ask what was the *orans*, what are its origins, and how was it employed by the Christians. To answer these questions, I will investigate the origins of Christian art, the precursors which inspired this image, the religious and secular literary evidence for the *orans*-posture, and physical remains of the *orans*-figure. I hope that this inquiry may help suggest why the image did not continue in later Christian imagery.

The inquiry is complicated, however, because of the difficulties associated with studying a specific gesture in antiquity. Because of the great size of the Roman Empire and the great amount of time which it spanned, scholars must be wary of drawing inferences based on images which are greatly removed from one another in both location and time, for example, a second-century image from Alexandria and a sixth-century image from Trier. Although there was a great deal of cultural continuity between these times and places, especially influenced by the literary culture, there are obvious regional differences across the Empire and over time. For example, one can easily say, without being contested, that the types of art produced in first-century Alexandria differ from those produced in sixth-century in the same city as tastes and styles, as well as dominant religion, political, and social mores shifted. One can equally say that the art produced in first-century Alexandria differed from art produced in first-century Britain or first-century Spain. While many of the same themes would be present and many of the same scenes would be represented, it is easy to see regional variations caused by the differing amalgam of Roman and

local culture, by the availability of materials, and by the socio-economic status of the producing community.

This presents a challenge when examining the *orans*-figure, as the figure was used in a variety of Roman provinces, in a number of contexts, and over several centuries. For this reason, I have restricted my focus to a corpus of *orantes* that appear in the frescoes of the Roman Christian catacombs. These 158 *orantes*, which are recorded in Nestori's 1995 catalogue, have been selected because they are unambiguously Christian in most cases, because they are early in date, and because Rome's size and prominence makes it an ideal location from which to find *comparanda*. Images on sarcophagi, coins, friezes, and in statuary will be referred to when appropriate to create a broader perspective on the use of the gesture. I will also address the origins of Christian art and of catacomb decoration in order to provide a more thorough explanation of the role of the *orans* in these decorative schemes.

### *The Development of Christian Art: Origins of the Genre*

Understanding a figure in early Christian funerary art requires understanding the history of early Christian art, the history of Roman funerary art, and the development of Christian burial practices. In this introduction, I hope to provide the reader with enough of a foundation in these background issues to more specifically address the *orans* in the following chapters. The earliest Christian images appeared around the year 200. This means that for about 150 years, there was no explicit Christian religious imagery. Modern scholarship, represented by the work of Murray (1981: 13-37), Miles (1985: 43-8), Finney (1994), Jensen (2000: 13-20), and Rutgers (2000: 82-118), argues that this dearth of evidence does not mean that Christians did not produce images.

Finney (1994: 99-132) begins his argument by stating that there are five possible theories for the dearth of images before 200 CE. First, he advances three theories which argue that Christians did not produce images for a variety of reasons: it is possible that early Christians, being an offshoot of Judaism, maintained the Jewish opposition to visual representation and that Christians did not produce images until the movement separated from Judaism and adopted 'gentile' visual viewpoints. It is also possible that the early Christians were very anti-materialistic and spiritual, as they believed in the imminent return of Christ, and thus did not produce artistic works. Another interpretation suggests that early Christians were focused so much on the heavenly realm that they did not produce anything significant in the physical realm, including art.

He concludes with two more theories which he considers more credible answers to the problem of the absence of images. Firstly, that because of there were not very many Christians prior to 200, any images they produced may not have been visually distinct from their surrounding culture and thus have not been identified as Christian, or secondly that they may simply not have survived. Finney contrasts the study of early Christianity with the study of prehistory, in which we have a multitude of physical sources and a lack of literary sources which force us to extrapolate the beliefs and traditions of a group based solely on their physical remains, while early Christianity leaves a wealth of literary sources, but a lack of physical evidence which challenges us in our interpretation of the daily application of the lofty philosophical and theological treatises they left behind.

Rutgers (2000: 82-118) believes that Christian art can be evaluated in terms of three categories: stylistic, technical, and iconographic. He notes that Christians use identical methods of style and technique to their 'pagan' and Jewish counterparts, so it is only in regard to the iconography that there would be any noticeable variation in Christian art. He also divides the

catacomb art into three stages: an early phase (second to third centuries), an Old Testament phase (third century), and a New Testament phase (fourth to fifth centuries). He argues that before the introduction of the Old Testament phase in the absence of an overt inscription, Christian art is identical in form and iconography to its non-Christian counterparts. Rutgers makes mention of the sarcophagus of Marcus Aurelius Prosones, which is decorated with *putti*, *cornucopia*, and garlands and bears a plaque detailing the political career of the decedent. Only a small inscription on the side reads that in 217 CE he was “led back to God”. Rutgers concludes that only the inscription reveals the Christian status of this otherwise entirely iconographically ‘pagan’ sarcophagus, and therefore there may be many other Christian artefacts which are not known to be Christian. That is to say, before a Christian schema of decoration was developed, there was no way to determine the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian artefact because the Christians had not yet developed ways to identify their objects as Christian.

Another excellent example of this free mixing of ‘pagan’ and Christian appears on the Proiecta casket in the mid-fourth century Esquiline Treasure.<sup>19</sup> This casket, probably used to hold a woman’s clothing and jewellery, is decorated with scenes of Venus at her bath and at her mirror, applying her makeup surrounded by her retinue. Overtop of this ‘pagan’ image is an inscription exhorting the woman and her husband, “Proiecta and Secundus, live in Christ”. Shelton (1981: 25-31) declines to interpret this pairing of image and text as a sort of ‘pagan revival’, but rather argues that the Venus figure is an allegory for beauty and that the image of Venus at her toilette stands in direct parallel to an image of Proiecta at her toilette. This casket, while using ‘pagan’ imagery, forms part of the household goods of a Christian couple and the

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<sup>19</sup> This hoard of treasure contains a Tyche of Constantinople wearing a mural crown. Constantinople was not personified by a Tyche prior to 330 CE and was depicted wearing a helmet rather than a mural crown after 380 CE, giving a more specific date-range to the treasure. See Shelton 1981: 53-68 and Cameron 1985: 140-141.

‘pagan’ goddess Venus, who appears unchanged in form, is understood by the users as an allegorical symbol rather than a figure of worship. In this way, we can observe the progression of the Christian use of images. Were the inscription lost, this image would be understood as a ‘pagan’ piece. With the inscription intact, we see a Christian reuse of images prevalent in their culture.

By contrast, Barasch (1992: 95-157) expounds on the anti-art and image role of several early Church writers, presenting an image of an early Christian intellectual class which sought to avoid the use of images to avoid confusion with ‘paganism’ and idolatry. One such writer, Aristides of Athens (c. 140 CE), wrote a denunciation of the ‘pagan’ religion, specifically related to idols and the worship of idols. He observed the key difference between ‘pagans’ and Christians is that the ‘pagans’ worship images, while the Christians do not.<sup>20</sup> Barasch notes that idolatry was a pressing concern for early Christians, and so Aristides not only condemns the worship of idols, but the very possession of images of the gods, as they might tempt a person towards idolatry. Barasch remarks that in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr’s problem with images arose from a desire to avoid confusion with the ‘pagans’ who did produce images, something that did not bear remarking upon to the iconoclast Jews. He concludes that images were not Justin Martyr’s theological imperative, but rather the avoidance of ‘paganism’ and idolatry.

Elsner (2003: 71-99) calls attention to the rising trend in scholarship to assume that the early Christians were pro-iconic and questions it. In this article, he traces the role of early Christian art in inventing the Christian city of Rome, and he notes that the earliest Christians

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<sup>20</sup> Robinson and Harris 1893: 63, 93. Aristides of Athens is the earliest surviving Christian apologist. His *Apology* was for a long time believed to be lost, but was rediscovered in both Syriac and revised Greek versions as part of the legend of Saints Barlaam and Joasaph.

were Jews who were uncomfortable with images and did not produce religious images in the sense that we as scholars understand 'early Christian art'. By our modern standards, he argues, the early Christians were iconoclasts. Elsner argues that not until Christianity became Hellenized or Romanized did it resort to images as part of what he calls a political and didactic battle for control of the city of Rome. He paints a picture of early Christian art as a tool of the Church, a learned device gleaned from their Graeco-Roman neighbours. He also notes that the early Christians used art not only to express a Christian faith visually in the face of 'paganism', but also as an expression of various forms of Christianity, as at this time there was still no authoritative doctrine. Elsner points to the catacomb art created by the two schools of Callistus and Hippolytus as examples of art used as a propaganda tool of the various and competing branches of the church.<sup>21</sup> He argues that the catacomb art was produced under the approval and sanction of religious authorities and that it expresses not only personal pieties and beliefs of the deceased, but also promotes the religious values which were deemed to be most important by the supervising community.

The issue of negative evidence aside, the oldest paintings are Christian catacomb images (c. 200-230) and the oldest recognisably Christian sculptures appear on sarcophagi around 230.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, important to note that the dates of these early pieces are quite fluid because they rely on relative dating, that is, dating in relation to other objects because their own chronology is impossible to internally establish.<sup>23</sup>

Christian art did not develop overnight. Elsner (1995: 19) also discusses this phenomenon of the reinterpretation of 'pagan' images, beginning by asking whether the act of looking at art

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<sup>21</sup> For more information on the Callistus and Hippolytus schools of Christianity, see Brent 1995: 398-457.

<sup>22</sup> For more information about dating the catacombs, see chapter three.

<sup>23</sup> Grabar 1968: 7; Finney 1994: 146-160.

conditions individuals, or contributes to the creation of their identity. He concludes that Roman art was beginning to change and reinterpret itself before the rise of Christianity, as images became less naturalistic and more aware of their role as images, where the artist was concerned with a type of mysticism rather than a straight depiction. Nevertheless, by the time of Christianity, Christians used ‘pagan’ art to make theological or cultural points.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150- c. 215) wrote in his treatise *Paedagogos* 3.11 that Christians should be free to purchase finger-rings or seals because they were necessary for conducting household business, but that they should be careful of what sorts of images they portrayed thereon: “For we are not to delineate the faces of idols, we who are prohibited to cleave to them; nor a sword, nor a bow, following as we do, peace; nor drinking-cups, being temperate. Many of the licentious have their lovers engraved, or their mistresses.”<sup>24</sup> Clement states, however, that some symbols were appropriate for Christian usage, such as the dove, the fish, a sailing ship, a lyre, an anchor, or a fisherman. It is notable that these are not special Christian designs. These were designs which were commercially available for purchase, likely from a ‘pagan’ seller, and it is only to the Christian that these images bear any special significance, such as when Clement says, “and if there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water.”<sup>25</sup> This is an excellent example of the kind of art which corresponds to Rutgers’ ‘early phase’, in that the art is not distinctive in any form from the ‘pagan’ art which surrounds it, but it is beginning to develop a distinct theological meaning for the Christian community.

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<sup>24</sup> Trans. Wilson 1885: 285.

<sup>25</sup> Trans. Wilson 1885: 285.

There are many excellent examples of the Christian development of its own unique iconography. Rutgers (2000: 87-89) discusses the early third-century tomb stone of Licinia Amias from the Vatican Necropolis, and currently in the Museo Nazionale Romano. This tombstone features the inscription “DM” (*Dis Manibus*) as well as two fish, an anchor, the motto “ΙΧΘΥC ΖΩΝΤΩΝ”, and the inscription “LICINIAE AMIATI BE NEMERENTI VIXIT”. Rutgers believes that “ΙΧΘΥC” (fish) stands for the acronym “Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Ὑιὸς Σωτῆρ”, which translates to “Jesus Christ the son of God saviour”, and he interprets the Greek motto as referring to Jesus Christ’s power to save the living, an idea reinforced by the anchor, which was a symbol of hope.<sup>26</sup> This funerary inscription is exemplary of the transition toward a Christian self-consciousness and a developing Christian art form, especially because it combines both ‘pagan’ and Christian motifs.

The Good Shepherd motif is another example of this growing Christian approach to iconography and self-identification. The image of the shepherd and his sheep is not unique to Christianity.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it would be miraculous were that true, given that Christianity arose in an agricultural society! The image of the shepherd was common in pastoral scenes, as the Romans had highly romanticized the notion of country life.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the image was also common in the type called ‘*Kriophoros*’, or ‘sheep-bearer’.<sup>29</sup> This image, which began in ancient Greece

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Heb 6:19-20: “We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>27</sup> The most common type of shepherd is the one carrying a sheep on his shoulders, an image derived from the *Kriophoros*; a male figure who carries an animal on his shoulders which is taken to be sacrificed. The shepherd is usually depicted as a youthful figure in a short tunic with a sheep on his shoulders and sometimes two on either side of him. The motif of the *Kriophoros* was known in the 7th century B.C.; throughout this time, statues, paintings, pottery, lamps and glass objects have been made with this decoration. In the first centuries of Christianity both Christians and pagans relied on the same workshops. (Oberman 1911:49)

<sup>28</sup> Krisak 2010: vii-xvii. The introduction to Krisak’s volume, by Gregson Davis, gives an excellent overview of the nature of bucolic poetry and the relationship between Theocritus and Vergil’s *Georgics*.

<sup>29</sup> Oberman 1911: 49 - The most common type of shepherd appearing in Christian art is the one carrying a sheep on his shoulders, an image derived from the *Kriophoros*, a male figure who carries an animal on his shoulders which is

in the seventh century BCE, appears on sarcophagi, in frescoes, and in statuary and is attested in over 200 *exempla*. This image of the shepherd and sheep could, in addition to glorifying country life, represent philanthropy, for, as the shepherd is the care-giver of the sheep, so too is the person dedicating the image the care-giver of his dependents, family, and household.<sup>30</sup> The title *Kriophoros* was often applied to the god Hermes, who served as the Psychopompos as well, lending the figure an appropriate funerary aspect, as it was associated with the divine care of the deceased in the afterlife.<sup>31</sup>

Christians used this image widely in their own art, making associations between the *Kriophoros* figure and their own scriptures. For example, Psalm 23:1 proclaims that “The Lord is my shepherd”. In John 10, Jesus tells a parable about true and false teachers, using an example of a true shepherd and a robber, who attempt to access the sheep pen in different ways. (The true shepherd uses the front door and the sheep follow him, because he is known to the gate keeper and the sheep, while the robber is unknown to both and the sheep flee from him.) In verse 11, Jesus says of himself, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Jesus also tells a story in Matthew 25:31-33 about a shepherd who searches for his lost sheep, and, in Luke 15:4-7, he describes the divine separation of believers and non-believers as separating sheep from goats. These metaphors used by Jesus are understandable and indeed appropriate when one considers that Jesus’ audience was agrarian; however, it is equally understandable that Christians would see the image of their god as a shepherd as one illustrating his care for them.

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taken to be sacrificed. The shepherd is usually depicted as a youthful figure in a short tunic with a sheep on his shoulders and sometimes two on either side of him.

<sup>30</sup> Jensen 2000: 37; Rutgers 2000: 89-93. Hermes Kriophoros is a guide who leads a dead soul on its journey to the next world acting as a *psychopompos* (the guider of souls). He is often depicted with a sheep on his shoulders. In Late Antiquity this was a symbol for philanthropy or humanitarianism in both Christian and pagan interpretations.

<sup>31</sup> Hermes is called *Kriophoros* in Pausanias’ *Description of Greece* 4.33.4 and 9.22.1-2.

This logic was carried into the work of the patristic writers, like Tertullian's *De Pudicitia*

7.1. Tertullian comments on the wares available in his time with images of the shepherd and sheep, and says, "You shall have leave to begin with the parables, where you have the lost ewe re-sought by the Lord, and carried back on His shoulders. Let the very paintings upon your cups come forward to show whether even in them the figurative meaning of that sheep will shine through [...] "But a 'sheep' properly means a Christian, and the Lord's 'flock' is the people of the Church, and the 'good shepherd' is Christ; and hence in the 'sheep' we must understand a Christian who has erred from the Church's 'flock.'"<sup>32</sup> This passage highlights the similarity of the Christian understanding of the 'Good Shepherd' and the 'pagan' Shepherd figure.<sup>33</sup> Using the image of the *Kriophoros* to symbolize Christ, the 'Good Shepherd' who would care for his flock (the church) in the afterlife, was then fully appropriate, and thus used widely as a Christian funerary decorative motif.<sup>34</sup>

By the third century, Christians had developed enough self-awareness about their separate status as Christians to use uniquely Christian images in their funerary art, albeit highly influenced in both form and theme by their 'pagan' contemporaries. Images such as Endymion, Orpheus, Hercules, and Deucalion were popular choices among the 'pagans' because they were connected with immortality. Endymion's sleep represented eternal life, Deucalion and Pyrrha survived a flood, Hercules was a famous hero and demi-god, and Orpheus represented pastoralism. These myths were adopted and adapted by Christians, who had biblical stories with similar premises and themes. In many cases, Christians did not significantly change the imagery

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<sup>32</sup> Trans. Thewall 1885: 80.

<sup>33</sup> Snyder (2003: 11) comments that, while the first Christian portrayals of the Good Shepherd may not have referred to Jesus, they quickly developed into an enduring Christological symbol. Nevertheless, Snyder is cautious in assuming that all very early shepherds are the Christ.

<sup>34</sup> Nestori 1995: 195, who records 85 appearances of the Good Shepherd in the catacombs, with the figure appearing in 15 separate catacombs.

of the ‘pagan’ story when portraying it visually, thus producing images of Jonah in repose like Endymion, a muscular nude Daniel among the lions, Noah’s ark depicted in similar style to Deucalion’s, and Orpheus eventually became fused with Christ, the Good Shepherd, after passing through the intermediary Jewish adoption of Orpheus as David, the shepherd king of Israel.<sup>35</sup>

According to Rutgers’ model, the third century was characterized by Old Testament scenes, with New Testament scenes gaining prominence in the fourth and fifth centuries. This seems somewhat odd to the modern reader, who instinctively associates Christianity with the New Testament canon, especially the gospels. Rutgers (2000: 100-118) also advances the development of the doctrine of the *verus Israel*, whereby Christians understood themselves as the receivers of the promises of the Old Testament and that the prophesies of the Old Testament were not fulfilled until the coming of Christ, making them the inheritors of the promises of the Old Testament. By portraying these Old Testament scenes, they may have been visually identifying themselves with the saving power of God promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled through the person of Jesus Christ. Rutgers also points to the extreme growth of Christianity in the fourth century, culminating in it being declared the state religion in 380 via the *Cunctos Populos* edict. He posits that this new political promise may have been the reason for the creation of uniquely Christian artistic motifs.

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<sup>35</sup> Lowrie 1965: 60-61, 83; Pépin 1992: 165-166; Hachlili 1998: 247-249; Balch 2008: *passim*; Jensen 2008: 576-581.

## *Towards a Philosophy of Images*

Although we have just considered the origins of Christian art as a genre, we are not yet able to draw any conclusions about it. It is not sufficient to understand only the way Christian art developed. It is also important to understand what factors influence our modern interpretation of these images. Art is, unfortunately, extremely hard to interpret without a detailed key from its producer. This is even more difficult when dealing with ancient art, as the modern viewer invariably forces onto the images his or her<sup>36</sup> own preconceptions and interpretations. He may not even be aware that the interpretation to which he has come is anachronistic and incorrect. An excellent example of this mistaken interpretation comes from the famous figurine the Woman of Willendorf.

When this figurine was discovered in 1908, it was given the name ‘Venus of Willendorf’ because it was believed by the art and archaeological communities to represent a fertility goddess. They cited its distended breasts and belly as examples of valued sexual traits in a paleolithic community, referring to the value of fecundity in primitive cultures. Witcombe identifies this name as an extreme projection of modern values onto an ancient work of art. He believes the name ‘Venus’ makes a particular value judgement about women, sexuality, and the perception of beauty in ancient cultures, as well as the value of ‘primitive art’. The figurine is set up to ‘fail’ against the images of the classical Venus and is seen as unattractive, barbaric, and primitive, thereby making judgements about the religion, art, and social norms of the culture which produced the ‘Venus of Willendorf’.<sup>37</sup> A new naming trend refers to the figurine as the Woman of Willendorf, not only because of the inappropriateness of the original name, but

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<sup>36</sup> For ease and clarity, the masculine pronoun will be hereon used to speak of an unspecified viewer.

<sup>37</sup> Witcombe 2003: *passim*.

because of new research which suggests these gravid figurines may well have been self-portraits.<sup>38</sup>

The study of Christian art falls prey to many of the same ideological issues. Thinking of art as ‘Christian’, ‘Jewish’, or ‘pagan’ as though these cultures or belief systems exist in a vacuum is an extremely modern way of conceiving of art and religion. Thus, any attempt to force classifications of ‘Christian’ or ‘non-Christian’ on *orantes* is somewhat challenging if the figure does not appear in conjunction with an obvious New Testament scene. For example, Figure 1 is a central scene of a shepherd surrounded by two male and female *orantes*, birds, the Seasons, and several scenes of Jonah. There is no obvious Christian imagery here – there is no Christogram or New Testament imagery, which might lead the viewer to question the image’s categorization as a Christian image. While the system of artistic progression put forth by Rutgers (see previous section on origins) might cause the viewer to presume the image belongs to the ‘Old Testament phase’, the viewer could as easily conclude that the image is Jewish in origin.

How then, are we to determine what really constitutes ‘Christian’ art? This is an important parameter to establish early on this thesis because it by necessity includes or excludes certain images. With certitude, we can include all scenes incorporating a New Testament scene, a Christogram, or a Christian inscription. But what of those images which are not so neatly defined?

When studying so-called ‘pagan elements in Jewish magical amulets’, Dijkstra and de Bruyn (2011: 170-173) observe that it is impossible to imagine whether these were manufactured by Jewish magicians who thought they were making ‘pagan’ amulets, ‘pagan’ magicians who

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<sup>38</sup> McDermott 1996: 227-275.

thought they were making Jewish amulets, or Jewish magicians who thought they were making Jewish amulets. They deny the makers would have had a deep self-conception as ‘Jewish’ or ‘pagan’, but that the people merely thought they were magicians making amulets, without thought to an religious label. By the same logic, and as previously discussed, in the early centuries of Christianity, there was likely not enough self-conceptualization on the part of artists or patrons to imagine themselves as Christians making Christian art. Instead, they made art using the exact same symbols and images used in the art of their contemporaries, whether Jewish or ‘pagan’. Since we are not able to view the inner thoughts of the patrons, then, the definition of ‘Christian’ can be nearly impossible. Identifying early *orantes* as ‘Christian’ is therefore somewhat difficult.

Since this thesis looks at so-called Christian *orantes*, it is necessary to establish what criteria will be used to choose the data used in these comparisons. I have decided to follow the three-stage model set forth by Rutgers. As Nestori’s catalogue indicated that there are no *orantes* appearing in the Jewish catacombs, all *orantes* appearing in conjunction with either an Old Testament or New Testament scene will be considered Christian (second- and third-phase). Any *orantes* appearing without these images will be considered Christian if they have any other accompanying Christian imagery (*chi-rho*, inscription, image of Christ, fish, anchor, etc.), and, barring that, will be considered first-phase Christian merely because they appear in a Christian catacomb.

## *Outline of Work*

As previously discussed in this introduction, the wide variety of *orantes* which appear throughout the Roman Empire over various media make it necessary to restrict the scope of this work. The *orans*, although a gesture with a long ‘pagan’ past, was easily adopted by Christians for its symbolic meanings of piety and quickly attained a number of other more nuanced meanings as it was refined and reused. As this image was used over a long period of time, it is difficult to assign the parameters of this thesis, but it is my intention to restrict the discussion to the frescoes of the Roman catacombs. The 158 images which I am using as my point of reference are derived from the 1995 catalogue *Repertorio Topografico della Pitture della Catacombe Romane* by Nestori. This catalogue includes detailed maps of each catacomb and descriptions of the decorative schemes of each room. This catalogue may not contain every *orans* which appears in the catacomb frescoes, either because of my translation error, new discoveries, or omissions by the author, but is the best and most straightforward resource available to those who wish to examine the spatial and thematic arrangements of these burial sites.

I approached this thesis with a number of questions in mind which relate to the origins, meanings, and usages of the *orans*-figure in the Roman catacombs. While there are many scholarly articles addressing the *orans* from various viewpoints – art history, classics, or theology, for example – the image is often mentioned as one figure among many in a wider discussion of Christian images.<sup>39</sup> Other scholarly articles address only one aspect of the *orans* – its origins, its usage on a particular object, or its interpretation from a single scholarly point of view.<sup>40</sup> What is missing is a general synthesis of the *orans*, which examines the origins of the

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Lowrie 1965; Jensen 2000; Viladesau 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Leclercq 1907; Wessel 1955; Bisconti 2000, 2002.

figure from both literary and material perspectives, its transition to Christian art, its Christian interpretation, the methods in which it was used, and its cultural significance. In this thesis, I hope to touch upon each of these topics to provide a broader sketch of this enigmatic symbol. Furthermore, because I have restricted my discussion to the frescoes of the Roman catacombs, I will examine the location of the *orans* and its funerary purpose.

To this end, chapter one will examine the ‘pagan’ precursors of the Christian *orans* through an examination of the coins, sculptures, inscriptions, and reliefs that they left behind. This chapter will look for the earliest examples of female figures with raised hands associated with worship and trace their usage from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus to the coins and statuary of ancient Rome. This chapter will also examine the Roman virtue of *pietas* and its role in both art and life, as well as the Christian adoption of the virtue of *pietas*. This will be done for a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it will help explain what the *orans* may symbolise. Secondly, it will help explain how and why this gesture became so popular in funerary contexts.

Chapter two will attempt to address the importance of the *orans* in the Christian community. It will attempt to do this by analysing writings about the *orans*-posture, or about prayer, religion, and piety in the Christian community, and what these texts illustrate regarding Christian interpretation of this type of gesture. Texts will also be examined in the light of aesthetic theology, a method of interpreting religious art which blends principles from art history, theology, and philosophy. This chapter will address the interplay of everyday art and religious writings as well, hoping to discover whether the art created the theology or the theology the art. This chapter will lean heavily on the patristic writings about the image of God as a conduit for interpreting images of worshipper or indeed of piety itself. This chapter will examine religious and secular writings by ‘pagans’ and Christians.

Finally, chapter three will present a more traditional type of analysis of the *orans*, as it will form a spatial and thematic analysis of the *orantes* in the Christian catacombs. This chapter will attempt to glean detailed information about the interpretation of the *orans* by examining with which images it is paired and in what frequency, in which locations it appears, and what patterns begin to emerge when the corpus of 158 images is considered at the same time. This chapter will hopefully enable the reader to draw some conclusions about the veracity of the academic theories presented in the previous chapters, as the reader will be able to compare the theory against the evidence.

## Chapter One: The Precursors of the *Orans*

### *Introduction*

Trying to determine the artistic origin of a gesture, image type, or artistic convention is extremely difficult. Firstly, there are only so many permutations of images available to artists. Secondly, artists in very different times and parts of the world have often independently developed the same ideas, so it is foolish to speak of one group being inspired by the other unless it is possible to see clear evidence of artistic transmission. Thirdly, gestures and meanings may not always be apparent to the modern viewer, who may project his or her own interpretations onto the images. The only way of finding a satisfactory answer is to find ancient writings describing the meaning or source of an image, for example, explaining that it was imported from another land, thereby creating a link between the ‘sponsoring’ and ‘receiving’ cultures, or by finding a sequence of works of art which show a transition from one style to another.

For this reason, in this chapter I will examine the precursors of the *orans* in hope of discovering what types of earlier art inspired the Christian *orans* in both form and meaning. To do this, I will examine the art of the ancient Mediterranean and look for pre-Christian examples of female figures with raised hands. I hope that discovering in what contexts these figures appeared will help to suggest their meaning for ‘pagan’ cultures and provide insight into the iconographic transition from ‘pagan’ to Christian image. This section attempts to convey the stylistic debt of the Christian artist, while also stressing the inherited thematic attitudes and postures and hopes to discover how Christians adapted images that were already relevant within their own culture. In order to answer these questions, I will look at cultic imagery, funerary art, religious art, coins, votives, and reliefs. Although this thesis is restricted to examining *orantes* in

Christian funerary art, this broad group of image types is necessary to find necessary *comparanda* and to identify the transition between the ‘pagan’ and the Christian.

Although referenced in many ‘pagan’ literary works without appearing to carry any religious significance,<sup>41</sup> the *orans*-figure does appear in several specific contexts throughout ‘pagan’ art, many of which were later adopted by Christian art. The *orans* is certainly not a new thing to the field of Christian or even Roman art. Female cultic images with raised hands appeared regularly across the ancient Mediterranean in Egypt, Crete, Mycenae, and various other contexts. It would be foolish to assume that these images were directly inspired by one another, but it is possible to see some telling interpretations of these pieces. One of the earliest of these pieces is a pre-dynastic Egyptian figurine from a burial at Ma’*’*mariya Egypt, dated to c. 3600-3300 BCE (Fig. 2). This figurine, one of sixteen, features a woman, identified as either a goddess or a priestess, with arms raised performing a dance or a mourning ritual as part of a funerary rite.<sup>42</sup> This image may be associated with the early Egyptian cow goddess Bat, whose attribute was high curving cows’ horns.<sup>43</sup>

Similar images also appeared in Minoan settlements. An excellent example from the Minoan period is the so-called ‘Poppy Goddess’, c. 1400-1100 BCE (Fig. 3). Like the image from Egypt, it is nearly impossible to tell whether this image is meant to represent a goddess, a priestess, or a worshipper, but its presence in a shrine suggests that it had a religious or funerary aspect. Historically, this type of statue was believed to represent a goddess, hence these types of statues were given names like ‘Dove Goddess’ or ‘Poppy Goddess’. The Poppy Goddess, which is in the collection of the Heraklion Museum, is believed to represent a goddess giving a greeting

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<sup>41</sup> See chapter two for a discussion of the usage of *orantes* in literary sources. For a list of Roman references to prayer, see Fyntikoglou and Voutrias 2006: 151-179.

<sup>42</sup> Brooklyn Museum catalogue - Item accession number 07.447.502.

<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson 2003: 172.

or a blessing, or perhaps representative of a theophany, where the goddess appears in human form.<sup>44</sup> This argumentation is supported by discoveries of goddess imagery featuring this ‘Poppy Goddess’ on a seal at Mycenae (Fig. 4). This seal, dating to *c.* 1400 BCE, depicts a female figure holding a sheaf of poppies seated beside a sacred double-axe and approached by worshippers or priestesses. Later, the attribute of poppies would be associated with the goddess Demeter, which is present both in literature, as in Theocritus’ *Idyll 7*, and in art, as in Figure 5, a plate in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, which depicts an enthroned Demeter holding a sheaf of poppies. Burkert (1985: 23, 30) believes that these images, whether on seals or in statuary, represented goddesses. He argues that the raised hands of the woman indicate the posture of a deity regarding the worshipper, and that the gesture of two upraised hands with open palms is an “epiphany gesture” of the goddess.

This is certainly not an exhaustive examination of early imagery of female figures with raised hands from the ancient Mediterranean: However, I hope that this discussion helps to establish the antiquity of the gesture, as well as its early association with goddess imagery, worship, and benediction. These particular characteristics will remain constant with the *orans*-style figure until the Christian transformation of the gesture. At this point, however, it seems prudent to mention that the *orans* forms part of a great corpus of feminist literature and scholarship addressing goddess-imagery, including the figure of the *orans*.<sup>45</sup> These works represent a significant inquiry by feminist scholars into the meaning and origin of the *orans*-figure, especially as it relates to women and women’s history. I have decided not to engage with this material in my present work, as it is not relevant to my particular discussion.

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<sup>44</sup> Sakellarakis 1987: 91.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Sjöo and Mor (1987: *passim*), but for *orans*, 83-85, Gimbutas (1996: *passim*), but for the *orans*, 15-17, and Abrahamsen (2002:1-15).

With this background in mind, let us turn to a consideration of the *adorans* and *pietas* imagery which directly contributed to the development of the Christian *orans*.

### *The 'Adorans'*

The first figure that I will discuss is the *adorans* image, a type of praying female figure which likely originated in Graeco-Carian sculpture on the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. This structure was built in the mid-fourth century BCE by Queen Artemisia II of Caria in honour of her deceased husband, the Persian satrap Mausolus. The monument was designed by Artemisia to show her extreme piety by celebrating her husband's funerary rituals in grand style. Artemisia did not long outlive her husband, and the mausoleum was completed after her death. Although located in Carian territory, the Mausoleum was designed by two Greek architects, Satyros and Pythius of Pirene. The major sculptures were also designed by Greek artists Leochares, Bryaxis, Timotheus (or Praxiteles, depending on the source), and Scopas of Paros. Some ancient sources mention a fifth sculptor called Pythis.<sup>46</sup>

One of the sculptures which decorates the Mausoleum is identified by Mussche (1980: 43-45) as the 'Artemisia *adorans*' type. This sculpture (Fig. 6), now in the British Museum, is 2.66 meters in height and represents Artemisia as a tall, veiled woman wearing a *himation* and chiton. Interestingly, although the statue is damaged and the forearms are no longer extant, their position can be deduced to have been raised in front of the body. Mussche connects this statue with ideals of piety, reverence, and funerary observance and identifies it as an important figure-type which was eventually adopted by the Romans as the *orans*-posture, although he notes that while the

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<sup>46</sup> Smith 1870: 744-745; Gloag 1969: 362.

figure is “similar to that of prayer, and can be confused with it”, it has some differences of interpretation. Neumann (1965: 78-85) describes the difference between the two postures, although they are very minute. The *adorans* represents an image of a worshipper, the hands raised in a gesture of beseeching. The *orans*, however, represents the attitude or posture of a divinity, with the hands raised as a benediction. Neumann also indicates that the hands were positioned differently in the two gestures, with the divinity’s hands being held over the head, while the worshipper’s hands are raised in front of the body, and likely bent at the elbows.

Most importantly, Mussche believes that the *orans* is at its core an image of divinity, representing a divinity of some sort, while the *adorans* represents a worshipper, particularly in relation to funerary rituals. On the other hand, Jongkees (1948: 31) suggests that the *orans*, by contrast, did not originate with the Artemisia *adorans* because the *orans*-type already appears on Attic reliefs dating to 360-350 BCE, and suggests that the *orans* therefore originates some time before that date in Attica rather than in Caria. That the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus was executed by Greek sculptors may explain the introduction of the *adorans* in Caria and it may indeed derive from the Attic figure.

Whichever image may have come first, this *adorans* image was popular in Greek art. Mussche (1980: 43) refers to Pausanias 5.25.5, where the *periegete* describes a bronze statue group of praying boys erected at Olympia by the Akragantines after the war with the Motyans, and Mussche believes that these statues were ‘*adorantes*’. He also refers to Pliny, who describes various Greek statues, now lost, which he believes to have been *adorantes*. These include a statue group by Sthenis of mourning, sacrificing, and worshipping matrons, wherein the ‘worshipping’ group likely contained *adorantes*. Furthermore, an *adorans* of uncertain sex by

Boedas, a female *adorans* by Euphranor, and a painting of an *adorans* by Aristeides are also listed by Pliny. Mussche records many other *adorans* figures which were likely inspired by the Artemisia statue, including carved reliefs at Halicarnassos and Tegea (Fig. 7) and bronze and stone statues (see Table 1).

This Artemisia *adorans* has been demonstrated to be a source for many images. They all (with one exception) wear a large *himation* over a *chiton*. The *himation* covers the shoulders and sometimes the head. The left side of the *himation* hangs loose by the left hand. The stance is common as well, with the right leg free, the head bent in its direction, and the right hand is raised in a gesture of adoration and prayer. The feet are level.

Table 1 makes it possible to see that the *adorans* reflects a human being, often a priestess or worshipper, rather than the supposed goddess discussed in early Mediterranean art. This may seem odd, as the ‘pagan’ and Christian *orantes* are commonly understood to have their roots in depictions of divinities, especially, as will be discussed in the next section, images of Pietas. This suggests that, while the meaning of the *adorans* changed significantly, that the particular form of the figure was significant and, in fact, became the template on which the Pietas and Christian *orans* were created, and the association with Pietas became the method by which the *adorans* type of statue was transmitted to the Roman world of political and religious art. This table illustrates the transmission of the Artemisia-type *adorans* and demonstrates the transition from the Graeco-Carian funerary figure to depictions of Roman Vestal Virgins, and then a transition to an *orans*-type. It is for this reason, then, that we next turn to a discussion of the history of *pietas* in the Roman world, where we can observe the means by which the *adorans* figure changed from the role of funerary image to the role of divine image.

Table 1 - From *Adorans* to *Orans*<sup>47</sup>

<p><b>A. Artemisia Type</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Artemisia, British Museum 1001. Height 2.66m. Although fragmentary, it is extremely similar to the Tegea relief (B1), and the arms can be deduced from the fragments to have been raised.</li><li>2. Relief from Halikarnassos, American Academy in Rome. This relief produces A1 with almost no variation.</li></ol> <p><b>B. So-called <i>Orans</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Relief from Tegea, British Museum 1914.7-14.1. Relief of Zeus Stratiotes with Ada and Idrieus (heirs of Mausolus and Artemisia) worshipping. Jongkees (1948: 29) lists 13 copies of this type and believes the original was a bronze.</li></ol> <p><b>C. Close to an <i>Adorans</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stele of Mnesarete, Athens National Museum 826. C. 360-50BCE, from Salamis.</li><li>2. Proxeny relief of Lachares of Apollonia, 355/4 BCE, Palermo. Has bent left leg, rather than level feet.</li></ol> <p><b>D. Transitional Figure?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Torso of a woman. Delphi 1817. From the <i>exedra</i> of 14 statues. Differs from other <i>adorantes</i> because she wears a <i>peplos</i> instead of a chiton and draws back her right foot instead of having level feet. Last quarter of 4th c BCE. Although there was a bronze of Ada (by Satyros) at Delphi at the same time this statue was commissioned, there is no evidence of influence</li></ol> <p><b>E. Terme Vestal-Type</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Roman statue of a Vestal. Terme 16. The girdle of her chiton is visible, unlike previous examples.</li><li>2. Relief, Akropolis 3013.</li><li>3. Later version in a shorter <i>himation</i>.</li></ol> <p><b>F. <i>Orans</i> Type?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Roman statue of a priestess. British Museum 1988. First century CE.</li><li>2. Portrait statue of Agrippina the Younger, signed by Dionysios, son of Apollodoros of Athens. At Olympia.</li></ol> <p><b>G. “<i>Orans</i>” type B</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Roman statue. Naples 5583.</li><li>2. Roman statue. Louvre 483.</li></ol> <p><b>H. <i>Orans</i> Type?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Roman statue. Naples 5609.</li></ol>
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### *The Pietas Orans*

Neuss (1926: 133) writes that the *orans* was a standard figure among ‘pagans’ and that its appearance in Christian art was in no way new, because nearly identical images appeared in side-by-side biblical and non-biblical contexts. He argues that its very familiarity to its audience acted as a ‘starting point’ for understanding the image through the new Christian lens. Klauser (1959:

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<sup>47</sup> Mussche 1980: 43-45.

115-145) supports this viewpoint and asserts that the Christian *orans* was virtually indistinguishable from the pagan *orans* in its early incarnations because both used a veiled female figure representing *pietas* (virtue or piety) on coins, in statues, and in funerary contexts.

*Pietas* was one of the most important Roman virtues. While the term is obviously the root of the modern word ‘piety’, the Roman virtue is perhaps better translated by such terms as ‘duty’, ‘loyalty’, ‘devotion’, or ‘correct religious behaviour’. The concept of filial piety (*pietas erga parentes*), or devotion to one’s parents, was one of the most notable virtues of the Roman hero Aeneas (often called *pius* Aeneas by Vergil). Aeneas famously carried his elderly father on his back out of a burning Troy. In fact, while his father and young son were saved by his actions, Aeneas’ wife Creusa became separated from the group and burned to death.<sup>48</sup> In *De Inventione* 2.22, Cicero described *pietas* as that “which admonishes us to do our duty to our country or our parents or other blood relations”. *Pietas* also took the form of loyalty to one’s country.<sup>49</sup>

The concept of loyalty to one’s country was often associated with a gesture similar to the *orans* which featured a figure, often in military regalia, raising one arm in a gesture of loyalty to his country. By the time of the rise of Christianity, both gestures had a basic meaning of ‘*pietas*’, whether of the civil, religious, or filial nature.<sup>50</sup> An *orans*-type figure with one arm raised appears in the Great Cameo of France (Fig. 8), on which the heir-apparent of Emperor Tiberius, Nero Drusus, appears with one arm raised in a gesture of piety. An *orans* with one raised arm appears on the base of the column of Antoninus Pius as Roma (the personification of the city of Rome), in a gesture of piety towards the emperor and his wife Faustina. This gesture would be reused by Christian artists in the *Hypogeum of the Aurelii*, where a figure identified as an apostle raises one

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<sup>48</sup> Mosley 1925: 387-400.

<sup>49</sup> Jensen 2000: 35-36.

<sup>50</sup> Grabar 1968: 58.

arm in a gesture of piety (Fig. 9). This idea of *pietas* would also be used in narrative biblical scenes, albeit with two raised arms, in order to communicate the piety of the character.

*Pietas* was so important to the Romans that it even became incorporated into personal names as the cognomen 'Pius'. This tradition seems to have arisen in the Late Republic with Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius, who gained the name because of his efforts to recall his father from exile.<sup>51</sup> *Pietas* was not only restricted to care for one's living parents, but also involved care for one's ancestors and was expressed as care for the dead. This care for the dead is the source of many Roman funerary rituals, such as the concept of *refrigerium*, the ritual meal and offering performed at the dead person's place of burial.<sup>52</sup>

*Pietas* was such an important Roman virtue that it was frequently depicted in art. While it could be represented more abstractly, for example by a stork, which the author Petronius called the *pietaticultrix* (cultivator of *pietas*), or as a poured libation, it was often presented as a type of goddess.<sup>53</sup> Roman religion had many deified virtues like *Salus* (health) and *Iustas* (justice).<sup>54</sup> These were usually depicted as women. The goddess *Pietas* was a divine presence who attempted to preserve the correct order of things by cautioning people to avoid offending the gods.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Fears 1981: 880.

<sup>52</sup> Heid 2008: 408.

<sup>53</sup> Connors 1998: 59; Clark 2007: 154-155. The Romans believed that storks were especially pious because they returned year after year to the same nests, thus showing an interest in family. They were also believed to care for their aged parents.

<sup>54</sup> Clark (2007: 26-17) objects to the identification of the cult of *Pietas* as one of a deified abstract idea. She suggests instead the interpretation of Fears, namely that *Pietas*, *Salus*, *Virtus*, *Clementia*, *Victoria*, and other such figures are gods, but that they are also representatives of qualities which are integral to human relations and generally conceived of as god-given. Clark suggests the term 'divine quality' to refer to these peculiar deities, a term which avoids the modern desire to differentiate between deity and quality.

<sup>55</sup> Belayche 2008: 286, who summarizes Cicero's *De Legibus* 2.2, a work which discusses law, natural law, and harmony.

Deviation from the correct way to behave and practice religion required an expiatory ritual called a *piaculum*.<sup>56</sup>

A bust of the goddess Pietas appears on Roman coinage beginning in 108/107 BCE on the *denarii* of Marcus Herennius.<sup>57</sup> On this coin, Pietas appears on the obverse, and a representation of *pietas*, a son carrying his father on his back, appears on the reverse (Fig. 10). This image represented a popular Roman story about *pietas*. Amphionomus and Anapias were Roman heroes who, when a volcano erupted and lava was sweeping Catana, rescued their elderly parents rather than their treasure. The lava stream split and left them unscathed. This was considered a testament to their extreme filial piety.<sup>58</sup> In fact, all known Republican images of Pietas are images of filial piety, usually represented by a stork, Aeneas, or the Catana brothers. There are seemingly no known images of *pietas* or, indeed, Pietas, as a virtue directed towards the gods.<sup>59</sup>

Later Imperial coinage would replace these illustrations of filial piety on the obverses with images of the goddess. In fact, the goddess Pietas frequently appeared on Roman imperial coinage and was especially popular on the coinage of Hadrian (Fig. 11).<sup>60</sup> In the imperial period, it became popular for the women of the imperial family to appear on the obverse of coinage with Pietas on the reverse, and also frequently for the women to be depicted dressed as the goddess (Fig. 12). This was a type of propaganda which attempted to ascribe the virtues of *pietas* to these important figures. The coins were often inscribed “PIETAS PUBLICA” or “PIETAS AUG” (Fig. 13), a reference to the emperor’s piety towards his deified predecessor and an ascription of this

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<sup>56</sup> Belayche 2008: 279.

<sup>57</sup> Crawford 1974: 317; Evans 1992: 37-39.

<sup>58</sup> Strabo *Geography* 6.2.3.

<sup>59</sup> Clark 2007: 154-156.

<sup>60</sup> Fears 1981: 819.

virtue to the State, of whom the emperor was the father.<sup>61</sup> Prigent (1992: 143-145) describes the variety of coins depicting Pietas as follows: Of the 157 coins which mention Pietas. 24 portray an *orans*, and 11 a 'semi-*orans*', with one arm raised. In 9 cases, the figure is not accompanied by any inscription referencing Pietas. This is interesting, as it shows that the cult of the goddess Pietas is relatively late, a fact which is supported by the relatively late arrival of a temple to Pietas in Rome – the only such temple did not appear until 191-181 BCE, but was originally dedicated to the concept of filial *pietas*.<sup>62</sup>

Pietas was depicted in a variety of ways on the coins, and it is interesting to observe the development of the goddess' iconographic representation. As seen before, the earliest representation of Pietas on coinage depicts her as a portrait bust (Figs. 10, 12). As she became more popularly employed, however, she was depicted in more specific ways: on some coins, as a woman standing at an altar, others as a woman with a child, and still others as a woman with her hands raised (Figs. 11, 13-14).<sup>63</sup> This last posture, which is identical in form to both the Graeco-Carian *adorans* gesture and to the Christian *orans* gesture is fascinating because it shares many of the same meanings associated with the Christian *orans*, but is employed in a different medium and has a different religious significance.

How, then, did this gesture of raised hands become associated with *pietas*? It is possible to observe a connection between the two when examining Roman portraiture. As previously discussed, the *adorans* posture did not remain restricted to Greece or Caria, but was adopted and adapted by Roman portraiture. Livia, the wife of Augustus, often appeared in the posture of the

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<sup>61</sup> Jensen 2000: 35-36.

<sup>62</sup> Clark 2007: 30, 69-71.

<sup>63</sup> Stevenson 1889: 626-629.

*orans* or *adorans* in statuary, as did many other imperial women (Figs. 15-16).<sup>64</sup> This association formed part of imperial visual propaganda and sought to associate the women of the imperial family with the virtue of *pietas*.<sup>65</sup> It is fascinating to see that in a time when imperial women were associating themselves with *Pietas* they were also associating themselves with this Artemisia *adorans* figure-type. In fact, it is possible to see how the two figures have become somewhat fused, as the raised arm posture of the *orans* becomes transferred to *Pietas* on imperial coinage. At this point, *Pietas* became depicted as an *orans* and the *orans* became associated with *Pietas*. As discussed in this section, these connections are understandable because of *Pietas*' association with religious rituals and because of the *adorans*' association with funerary rituals, prayer, and worship.

At the same time that this gesture and deity was appearing on public coinage and statuary, it was also appearing in private contexts in the form of sarcophagus art. This figure, which appears in Rome and Ostia's sarcophagi in excess of 180 times, shares many of the same features as the virtue *Pietas* and can be said to be representative of the same figure. This creates a Roman *orans* who expresses all of the characteristics discussed previously – a female figure, often veiled, with raised arms, associated with worship and funerary rituals. This, then, is the figure which appears in Roman catacomb art. The *orans*, whose meaning is prayer and piety, expresses a Christianised version of these traditional Roman virtues.<sup>66</sup> This makes the later association of the *adorans/ orans* figure with the goddess *Pietas* extremely appropriate, as *Pietas* was the goddess of correct religious behaviour, which extended to behaviour towards and for the dead.

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<sup>64</sup> It is worth noting that these statues have been repaired.

<sup>65</sup> For more information on the portrayal of Roman women in art, see Trimble 2011.

<sup>66</sup> For more information, see Neuss 1926: 130-135 and Klauser 1959: 115-145.

Nevertheless, this inquiry naturally raises the question as to what the Christian understood by the term *pietas*. This question is most easily addressed through an examination of the works of the contemporary patristic writers. John Chrysostom, in *Homilies on Matthew*, attacked the prevalent Roman notion of *pietas* towards the parents, arguing, “it is holy to render to [one’s parents] every other honor; but when they demand more than is owed to them, you must not obey. On this account Luke says, ‘If someone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple’. This does not command us simply to hate them, since this is very much against the law. Rather [it is as if he were saying]: ‘If he wants to be loved more than me, hate him for it. For this destroys both the beloved himself as well as the lover’.”<sup>67</sup> Jacobs (2003: 271) concludes that Chrysostom believed that familial *pietas* was preserved, so long as members acknowledged the supremacy of the love for Christ, which suggests that Christians had much the same conception of familial *pietas* as did Cicero.

Ambrose, in his *Expositio in Lucam* 7.146, wrote similarly that, “Indeed even according to the simple mode of understanding, the child who follows Christ sets him before his gentile parents, and religion is set before the duties of family loyalty [*pietatis officii*].”<sup>68</sup> This establishes that Christians and ‘pagans’ held nearly identical views of the role of familial *pietas*. Any differences of interpretation, therefore, must lie in the Christian interpretation of *pietas* towards the gods.

Francese (2007: 222-224) explains that the word *pietas* underwent many important changes in Christian Latin, especially in that it began to hold as a central element the confession of faith

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<sup>67</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 35.3. Quoted in Jacobs 2003: 270.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Jacobs 2003: 272.

(*pietatis professio* or *confessio*), and not just the performance of proper ritual action and prayer, as in the pagan variety of *pietas* towards the gods. It also demands an attitude of humility and obedience to God more complete even than that of a Roman son to his father. This notion is supported by various patristic writings, including Augustine's *City of God* 10.3, "This is the worship of God, this is true religion, this is right devotion [*pietas*], this is the service owed to God."<sup>69</sup> In Jerome's *Letters* 14.2.3, he urges his friend Heliodorus to become a monk, even if he has to trample his resisting father underfoot as he leaves the house, arguing that, "Cruelty is a kind of dutiful conduct [*pietas*] in these circumstances."<sup>70</sup> This advice seems to be modeled on the saying of Jesus in Matthew 8:22, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead." In fact, Jerome himself commented on this biblical passage, and concluded, "Hatred toward one's own is *pietas* towards God."<sup>71</sup>

Christian writer Lactantius also commented on the definition of *pietas* in a piece criticising the attribution of the title 'Pius' to Aeneas. "At this point someone will say, What then is piety? Where is it? What is it like? It exists where people know nothing of war, live in concord with all, are friendly even to enemies, love all men like brothers, know how to curb their anger and how to soothe all strong emotions with a tranquillizing control."<sup>72</sup> Through this inquiry, it is possible to see the way in which the word *pietas* was handed down from 'pagan' to Christian, and the manner in which it was reinterpreted by the Christian to refer specifically towards a particular type of adorer-adored relationship between the worshipper and his God. While *pietas* retained its application as a word describing the ways in which a person ought to behave towards his family,

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<sup>69</sup> Trans. Bettenson 2003: 376.

<sup>70</sup> Trans. Mierow 1963: 60.

<sup>71</sup> *Commentary on Matthew* 1.10.37 Trans. Scheck 2008: 125.

<sup>72</sup> *Div. inst.* 5.10.10 Trans. Bowen and Garnsey 2003: 302.

it also narrowed in conception to refer only to the worshipper's relationship with God; in other word, it came to mean 'piety'.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has been essential to establish the origins and meaning of the *orans* gesture, to understand the means by which the figure was transmitted first to Rome and then to the Christians, and to better understand what it meant in a Christian funerary context. What can be determined is that the gesture of raised hands derives both from images of goddesses and from images of worshippers. The gesture clearly had a ritualistic and a funerary aspect, and over time the two gestures became fused into one image which represented an expression of piety for the deceased, or on the part of the deceased. This gesture would then be translated into Roman portraiture where it was used to represent the personified virtue or 'divine quality' *Pietas*, whose cult concerned itself with the correct execution of religious rituals and the observance of the rituals of the dead.

While Christians did not worship the goddess *Pietas*, it is possible to see how they adapted the 'pagan' figure to be representative of the pious Christian believer, observing the correct religious rituals for his deceased fellow, and also for the deceased Christian, whose virtue assured him of a place in heaven.<sup>73</sup> Despite differences of theology, the *adorans* or *orans* figure maintained its core interpretations of prayer and piety for the Christian as it came to symbolise the *pietas* of the Christian believer. And, seemingly, the *adorans* supplied the form, while *pietas* provided the meaning, and Christianity added the significance.

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<sup>73</sup> For more on the Christian use of the *orans*, see chapter three.

## Chapter Two: Literary Evidence of the *Orans*

### *Introduction*

Discussions of the *orans*-figure, its precursors, and its interpretation can lead one to wonder whether the *orans* was merely a visual symbol or religious icon with no real-life equivalent. Certainly, the posture of prayer with raised hands has not survived among the Christian faithful. For this reason, it is necessary to examine both the prayer postures of both the ‘pagans’ and the Jews, as well as Christian literary evidence to determine whether Christians may have prayed with their hands raised to the heavens.

The Greeks certainly believed that the gesture of prayer with raised hands was universal, as stated by Aristotle in *De Mundo* 400a16 – “All of us human beings stretch out our hands to the sky when praying”. Pulleyn (1997: 185-195) describes the postures of prayer of the ancient Greeks, especially by looking at the gestures preserved in statues, and observes that the hands were often raised above the head, with the palms upturned towards heaven, and bent at a 45 degree angle to the arms. Variations on this pose, as derived from material evidence, include placing the palms at right angles to the arm, holding them straight out in front of the body, or holding them at the level of the shoulder, rather than over the head. Often, only one arm was raised, and held straight out front the body. The palms were usually oriented toward the ground when addressing a chthonic deity, and towards the heavens if addressing an Olympian. Plato, in *The Laws* 717a, describes a practice whereby a worshipper, if only elevating one hand, would raise the right hand to address the Olympian gods and the left hand to address the chthonic deities.

The same principle was also used by ‘pagan’ authors. There are 23 instances of prayer in Greek literature, including, but not limited to, the works of Homer, Hesiod, Sappho, Pindar,

Aeschylus, and Herodotus.<sup>74</sup> Of these, several mention prayer with raised hands. For example, Homer's crying Trojan priestesses "lifted their hands to Athene".<sup>75</sup> Later, in the Greek camp "the troops raised their hands to the gods and prayed. 'Father Zeus,' they said, looking up into the broad sky, 'let it be Aias or Diomedes or the King of golden Mycenae himself'".<sup>76</sup>

Finally, as Priam and Hecuba discuss a strategy for the return of Hector's body: "'My dear,' said the godlike Priam, 'I will surely do as you suggest. It is a good thing to lift one's hands to Zeus and ask for his blessing.'"<sup>77</sup> These early quotations show that the gesture of prayer with raised hands was an old and accepted practice as early as the time of Homer; however, many of these quotations do not mention prayer with raised hands, and either suggest that the worshipper was kneeling, was walking, or was not in a specified position.

Later, in the Roman material, there are 24 quotations referring to prayer, including Livy, Cato, Macrobius, and Pliny.<sup>78</sup> These mention prayer in several positions as well, ranging from prayer on one's knees, while standing, while lying prostrate, or in an unspecified position. However, second-century writer Apuleius, of *Golden Ass* fame, wrote in his *De Mundo* that *namque habitus orantium sic est, ut manibus extensis ad coelum precemur* ("therefore, it is always the habit of praying people, that we extend our hands to heaven").<sup>79</sup> Although Apuleius commonly wrote about various mystery cults and may have been involved in magical practices, this quotation assigns no deeper meaning to the posture of prayer. It is only 'the habit of praying people' that makes them lift their hands towards heaven.

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<sup>74</sup> Jakov and Voutrias 2006: 105-141.

<sup>75</sup> *Il.* 6. 301, Trans. Rieu 1950: 125.

<sup>76</sup> *Il.* 7. 177-180, Trans. Rieu 1950 : 136.

<sup>77</sup> *Il.* 24. 299-301, Trans. Rieu 1950: 445.

<sup>78</sup> Fyntikoglou and Voutrias 2006: 151-179

<sup>79</sup> Apuleius, *De mundo* 33 (my translation).

The *De Mundo* is a reworking of the *Peri Kosmou*, a work by Pseudo-Aristotle, which is also influenced by the works of Aulus Gellius (Conte 1994: 555-556).

However, this is not to say that the posture of prayer with raised hands is an ethnically Graeco-Roman thing. Standing prayer with hands raised occurs several times in the Old Testament (as in 1 Kings 8:22 and 8:42) and also occurs in the New (as in 1 Timothy 2:8). Christians adopted or inherited three Jewish postures of prayer which were common during the time of the Christ – standing, kneeling, and prostration. These gestures have a long history in Judaism. Standing was, however, the most common, and was likely adapted from the Jewish Eighteen Benedictions. Outspread hands and east-turned faces also correspond with the Jewish customs of praying towards Israel, which for Jews in the Diaspora was in the east, and placing the ark in the synagogue's east wall.<sup>80</sup>

The spreading of the hands at prayer, frequently mentioned in the older portions of Scripture (Isaiah. 1:15 or Exodus 9:29) is likely derived from Assyrian traditions, and communicating the notion of standing before and entreating a superior. The oldest form of adoration in the Bible, as in Job 1:20, appears to be lying prone on the ground. Raising the hands is a gesture seen in Assyrian art (for example, a bas-relief of Jews before Sennacherib) directed towards a king, and could have been easily applied to a deity.<sup>81</sup>

The gesture of prayer with raised hands can certainly be traced back to the Old Testament. In Lamentations 3:41, the writer implores his audience to “lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven”. Later, a psalmist would write, “I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes”.<sup>82</sup> Another would ask God, “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice”.<sup>83</sup> In the New Testament, Paul writes, “I desire then that in every place the men should

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<sup>80</sup> Ginsberg 1906: 208-211.

<sup>81</sup> Ginsberg 1906: 208-211.

<sup>82</sup> Ps 119:48

<sup>83</sup> Ps 141:2

pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling”.<sup>84</sup> These gestures, while certainly contained in a religious text, are not theological references. Rather than describing the gesture of prayer as something significant, which symbolises a theological truth or expresses something of a sacred nature, it is merely the gesture in which people ought to pray.

This reviewed evidence suggests that while the gesture was ancient and common throughout Graeco-Roman and Jewish history, it was not necessarily *significant* beyond its accepted usage as one of many appropriate prayer-gestures. Whatever the first origins of prayer with raised hands, by the time of the rise of Christianity, the gesture was merely one of a list of stock positions in which prayer might occur.

Therefore, it is possible to see that both of the groups from which Christians emerged practiced prayer with raised hands. And, in fact, literary evidence from the Christian authors confirms this practice. Ambrose, in *De virginibus* II.4.27, describes the case of a young woman who was sent to a brothel as punishment for her Christian faith. While confined in the brothel, and awaiting her fate, he describes that, “she, with her hands raised to heaven, as though she had come to a house of prayer, not to a resort of lust, says: O Christ, Who tamed the fierce lions for the virgin Daniel, You can also tame the fierce minds of men. [...] Let Your Name be now again glorified in that I who came here for shame, may go away a virgin!”<sup>85</sup>

Eusebius relates a similar account, describing the Phoenician martyrs, describing that, “You could have seen a youth not twenty years of age standing unbound and stretching out his hands in the form of a cross, with unterrified and untrembling mind, engaged earnestly in prayer

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<sup>84</sup> I Tim 2:8

<sup>85</sup> Trans. P. Schaff 1895: 377.

to God, and not in the least going back or retreating from the place where he stood, while bears and leopards, breathing rage and death, almost touched his flesh.”<sup>86</sup>

While this evidence is not exhaustive, it does describe several different scenarios, involving people of various sexes and living in various parts of the Empire. This suggests that the gesture of prayer with raised hands was, indeed, one of the many postures of prayer available to the Christian, and that it could be used in a variety of scenarios in different types of prayers.

This seeming normalcy of the *orans*-posture in the daily life of the Christian might, then, lead one to wonder why the gesture of the *orans* was used in the catacombs to express seemingly specific meanings related to *pietas*. Might it not, then, have been a generic gesture representing a worshipper? This interpretation is challenged by statements like those of Tertullian, in *De oratione* 14, who, describing the guilt of the Jews in the death of Christ, describes their inability to pray or lift their hands to heaven. He contrasts this with the Christian advantage, stating that, “We however not only lift them up, but also spread them out, and, modulating them by the Lord’s passion, in our prayers also express our faith in Christ.”<sup>87</sup> This quotation demonstrates that Christians had assigned special significance of the *orans*-figure, as they observed the spread hands and compared them to the spread arms of the crucified Christ, through whom they found salvation. Even at this early date, Christians identified the significant gesture of prayer as one with hands raised.

So where, then, does the significance lie? Neither in the Old Testament nor in the traditions of the ‘pagans’. The answer, however, can be found in the words of Tertullian, who expressed the point of view of the patristic writers. In his opinion, the *orans* did not only symbolise prayer but also represented the crucifixion of Christ, with his arms spread wide. Thus,

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<sup>86</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* VIII.7.4 Trans. Oulton 1932: 273.

<sup>87</sup> Trans. Arbesmann, Daly, and Quain 1962: 46.

whenever people lifted their arms to pray, or saw images of the same scene, they were not simply praying but were seeing a ‘visual signal’ that would remind them of the atoning work of Christ on the cross.<sup>88</sup> At this point, the *orans* ceased to be one gesture of prayer among many and became a theologically charged image: a status which would follow the image through several centuries as the gesture was used in religious and funerary art by the Christian faithful.

### *Using Theological Aesthetics to Understand Christian Art*

The term ‘theological aesthetics’ or ‘aesthetic theology’ is not prominently known in any of the circles it touches upon, whether art history, history, philosophy, or theology.<sup>89</sup> This relative obscurity, likely the result of being a multi-disciplinary field, has prevented scholars on the intersection of Christian art and religious writing from using a fascinating wealth of research and interpretation to allow them to better understand the relationship between object and religious significance, whether the object be an early crucifix, a renaissance masterpiece, or a modern sculpture. In this case, the model of aesthetic theology will be applied to the figure of the *orans*.

Theological aesthetics figures closely in the development of the early church’s perception of the divine. In fact, the vision of God and his glory and the image of God as reflected by the Christ and the people were among the most prevalent themes of the early Christian thinkers. Justin Martyr was the first to make the vision of God a theme in his theology. For Justin, God was glory because God “sometimes appears in visions” and he compares God’s power to the sun’s light.<sup>90</sup> Irenaeus and Origen express similar views about the relationship between the image

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<sup>88</sup> Viladeseau 2008: 19-55.

<sup>89</sup> Viladeseau 2008: 1-18.

<sup>90</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 128.

of God and eternal life.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, these authors do not refer to a physical seeing, but rather to a metaphorical or spiritual method of seeing. To see God, then, is what Thiessen (2004: 9-10) calls “aesthetic, spiritual, intellectual, ethical, and even ascetical” and only able to be realised in “the context of faith and through contemplation”.

These ideas were highly influential on Christian philosophers and theologians like Justin Martyr, Origen, and Lactantius. Influences include ideas about the purification of the heart and soul as requirements to see God, the search for the beautiful through the intellect, the symbolism of light associated with the divine, and the notion of pure or perfect seeing being possible through union with the divine.<sup>92</sup> This produces a change regarding the vision of the divine in Christianity, which is the development of the dogma of the revelation of God in the incarnate Son and the dogma of the Trinity, which are both central in the theology which emerged in the first centuries after Christ. For these early Christians, Jesus was the perfect image of God.<sup>93</sup>

The theme of the vision of the visible image of God is explored in many early Christian writers. Irenaeus and Origen explore this theme, seeking to discover how the believer, the image of the divine, can be assimilated into the divine. Origen refers to Christ, the image of God, as “the light through whom we know the father”.<sup>94</sup> This image of Christ as the sun is repeated in both art and literature, like the works of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose, and Augustine, all of whom use the symbolism of light to describe and praise Christ as the light of truth and the beautiful image of the invisible God.<sup>95</sup> While the Holy Spirit had not yet been ascribed creative powers, as

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<sup>91</sup> Thiessen 2004: 9-14.

<sup>92</sup> Bredin and Santoro-Brienza 2000: 47-53; Thiessen 2004: 9-14.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; 2 Cor 4:4-7.

<sup>94</sup> *De Principiis* 1.2, Trans. Donaldson and Roberts 1869: 22.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Hilary, *De Trinitate* 8.48, 11.49; Ambrose, *De spiritu sancto* 100-102A, 140-141, 143-144, 149; Augustine, *De ordine* 51.

these were seemingly restricted to Christ as the *Imago Dei*, the Spirit was revered for his role as communicator of divine beauty, goodness, and truth on earth.<sup>96</sup>

This preoccupation with Christ as the image of God is perhaps responsible for the obsessive concern the early Christians had about idolatry. Early Christians were obviously forced to address various forms of idol worship prevalent in their culture, whether of Greek, Roman, Semitic, or other gods. They usually addressed this issue by contrasting the worship of idols with the worship of their true God and his Image, the Christ.<sup>97</sup> This attitude can be seen in the letters of Paul, as in his speech to the Areopagus where he deconstructs Greek religion in the light of his worship of the Christ, his God made physically manifest.<sup>98</sup> This preoccupation is repeated in the early Christian writers, who not only address specific non-Christian beliefs, but also speak out against the use of images of the Christ or the holy Christian figures, lest people be tempted to idolise the images rather than the transcendent and invisible God.<sup>99</sup> Early Christians affirmed the superiority of the spiritual life, soul, and intellect over the material, sensuous existence, which they viewed with suspicion. This suspicion helped shape Christian anthropology, faith, and theology, helping to form a Christian perception of the senses and the role of the body.<sup>100</sup> Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both wrote against idol worship, and their remarks are echoed by Lactantius, who added “there can be no religion anywhere there is an image”.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of their seeming negative perception of the flesh, Christian writers’ language is flush with a great variety of sensuous symbols and metaphors. Thiessen (2004: 11-

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<sup>96</sup> Ambrose, *De spiritu sancto*, 100-102A.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.25; 2.13; 5.16.

<sup>98</sup> Acts 17:16-34.

<sup>99</sup> See Besançon 2009 for information on the development of iconoclasm and the histories of Byzantine and modern iconoclasms.

<sup>100</sup> Martin 1990: 17-18.

<sup>101</sup> *Div. inst.* 2.18.1, Trans. Bowen and Garnsey 2003: 166.

13) described theological language as “naturally anagogical”, using symbols, metaphors, and imagery, when speaking of the invisible and the unnameable, especially God, because it is naturally confined to human language. In fact, only by physical perception of the Christ, the incarnate Image, are we able to speak in any other form than analogy. This Christian style echoes the sayings of Jesus, who also spoke in symbols when he told his parables to explain theological concepts. It is this sort of anagogical language which “founds, limits, and enriches” theology and which is highly relevant to the field of theological aesthetics, which is “often sensuous, emotional, aesthetic, and, at times, erotic.” This type of writing is noticeable in the works of Origen, Ephrem, Ambrose, and Augustine. In fact, while most of these writers were somewhat suspicious of the bodily sphere and focused solely on the spiritual life, their methods of describing the divine and communicating the faith use language that is sensuous and intimate.

The early patristic writings not only speak of the creative powers of God and the role of the Holy Spirit and the Christ as the Image and inspiration, but they also speak of God as an artist. In the writings of Ambrose and Augustine, God is depicted as the supreme artist.<sup>102</sup> In Paulinus of Nola and Augustine, God is called the musician and the craftsman.<sup>103</sup> In the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Christ is called the prototype and perfect image in whose image we paint our own lives.<sup>104</sup>

These intimate references to God and this intimate way to addressing him contrasts a “holistic” way of speaking about God against more detached and scientific language that she calls prevalent in later Christianity, especially beginning in the Renaissance. In fact, she believes that the modern development of theological aesthetics and the greater interest in mysticism as

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<sup>102</sup> Ambrose, *Hexameron* 47; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 11.22.

<sup>103</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 2; Augustine *De civitate Dei* 12.24.

<sup>104</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De perfection* 194-197.

part of theology have been a response to the paucity of art, especially poetry, in modern theology.<sup>105</sup>

### *Applying Aesthetic Theology to the Orans*

This more academic discussion of the principles of theological aesthetics has not yet considered the actual *orans* gesture, nor its real-life counterpart considered in the introduction of this chapter. However, a key difference exists between the three categories – the *orans* is a physical image. It is not a literary work, nor is it a real-life gesture.<sup>106</sup> not a literary work, but is a physical image. Interpreting the *orans* in the light of aesthetic theology should rather be derived from patristic writings about the *orans* than from an actual analysis of the image.

An excellent example of this type of application was discussed in the introduction in regard to Clement of Alexandria's writings about a Christian's seal-ring.<sup>107</sup> To summarize, Clement wrote that Christians should be at liberty to buy seals or rings, but that they should pay special attention to the imagery of the seal rings. First, he cautioned against images of idols, war, drunkenness, and adultery. But then he remarks on images which he did consider appropriate, namely doves, fish, ships, lyres, or anchors. These remarks about the appropriate images for the seal ring neatly reflect the kind of aesthetic theology discussed earlier in this chapter, as Clement concludes that these images hold a special significance for the Christian, recalling truths about God or biblical precepts, such as the fish recalling the apostles.

This reflects the views of aesthetic theology, as Clement is able to see these small artisan crafts, produced by 'pagans', as reflective of the image of God. Through their purchases,

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<sup>105</sup> Thiessen 2004: 9-11.

<sup>106</sup> It is my opinion that the *orans* is a stylised gesture with particular qualities that is found only in art. While Christians did pray with raised hands in some circumstances, they were not 'acting out' the *orans* gesture.

<sup>107</sup> *Paedagogos* 3.1.

Christians were able to see the transcendent God revealed in the ‘pagan’ creation, with the created image being a reflection of the truth and promises of the divine Image. This also speaks to the power of the image to encourage either vice or virtue, as Christians were encouraged to choose seals which would cultivate divine truth and reflection on the scriptures rather than the worldly values which Christians were to avoid. In summary, for the Christian, images had the power to encourage certain sets of values and Christians needed to be careful which values they would depict and therefore nurture in their lives. This status is what Grabar might refer to as an ‘image-sign’ and serves as both a spiritual conduit and a conveyer of divine promises.<sup>108</sup>

How, then, does the *orans* feature in this study? Once again, it is necessary to look at the works of the patristic writers, where one sees that the Christians associated the ‘pagan’ image of the *orans* with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ with his arms spread wide. Thus, whenever people lifted their arms to pray, or saw images of the same scene, they were not simply praying but were seeing a ‘visual signal’ that would remind them of the atoning work of Christ on the cross. At this point, the *orans* ceased to be one gesture of prayer among many and became a theologically charged image: a status which would follow the image through several centuries as the gesture was used in religious and funerary art by the Christian faithful.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, second-century writer Justin Martyr (c. 103-165) is the earliest writer to express this sort of viewpoint:

Justin: Listen, therefore, to what follows; for Moses first exhibited this seeming curse of Christ’s by the signs which he made.

Trypho: Of what [signs] do you speak?

Justin: When the people waged war with Amalek, and the son of Nave by name Jesus [Joshua], led the fight, *Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both*

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<sup>77</sup> Grabar 1968: 58, who refers to “image-signs” as visual symbols which are representative of a truth for the viewing community and would communicate a specific and somewhat secret message to those who had the key to interpret it. It was also a brief and obviously recognisable way of conveying specific beliefs.

*hands*, and Hur with Aaron supported them during the whole day, so that they might not hang down when he got wearied. *For if he gave up any part of this sign, which was an imitation of the cross, the people were beaten*, as is recorded in the writings of Moses; but if he remained in this form, Amalek was proportionally defeated, and he who prevailed prevailed by the cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus [Joshua] was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross. For who of you knows not that the prayer of one who accompanies it with lamentation and tears, with the body prostrate, or with bended knees, propitiates God most of all? But in such a manner neither he nor any other one, while sitting on a stone, prayed. Nor even the stone symbolized Christ, as I have shown.<sup>109</sup>

While Justin Martyr also makes reference to a posture of prayer with knees bent, the modern and familiar gesture of prayer, it is the *orans*-gesture which he finds significant. In recalling the story of the Israelites fighting the Amalakites, he interprets the sign of Moses as a prophetic use of the sign of the cross. For this reason, he looks to this sign of prayer as having intercessory properties, as Moses' prayer saved the people, much as Jesus' crucifixion saved the people's souls.

Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220), in his *De oratione*, wrote extensively on how people ought to pray. He mentioned arguments for and against wearing veils, whether one ought to pray in a certain position or location, and what people ought to ask God for. One interesting remark Tertullian makes is in section 14, where he remarks that,

Though Israel wash every day, in all his members, yet is he never clean. His hands at all events are always unclean, crusted over for ever with the blood of the prophets and of the Lord himself: and therefore being, through consciousness of their fathers' guilt, criminals by inheritance, they dare not lift them up to the Lord, lest some Isaiah cry out, lest Christ be horrified. We however not only lift them up, but also spread them out, and, modulating them by the Lord's passion, in our prayers also express our faith in Christ.<sup>110</sup>

While this passage comes in the midst of a discussion of the differences between the situation of Jews and Christians in divine grace (because of the perception that the Jews were to blame for

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<sup>109</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 90 (emphasis added). Trans. Falls 2003: 140-141.

<sup>110</sup> Trans. Arbesmann, Daly, and Quain 1962: 46.

the crucifixion of Jesus), it is notable that Tertullian identifies the ‘posture’ of the Christian believer as the position of the *orans* – with arms raised and spread. As well, Tertullian identifies this posture with the posture of the crucified Christ, attaching theological significance to the gesture.

In his *Stromata* (7.7) Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c.215) expresses similar views when he writes that prayer is “to converse with God”.<sup>111</sup> He describes the process of prayer as “though whispering, consequently, and not opening the lips, we speak in silence, yet we cry inwardly. For God hears continually all the inward converse. So also we raise the head and lift the hands to heaven”.<sup>112</sup> This quotation suggests that the gesture of raised hands is significant to the state of conversing with God, marking it as a visual signal of some divine status. Even at this early date, Christians identified the significant gesture of prayer as one with hands raised.

It is clear that the patristic writers saw something significant about the gesture of the *orans* even though it was a ‘pagan’ symbol. Just as in the example of Clement and the seal-rings, these patristic writers saw the beautiful artistic creations of humanity as the mirror of the divine beauty and as reflections of the divine Image, the Christ, able to mutely convey truths and promises to the observer. In fact, the *orans* could be seen as one of the most significant ‘pagan’ images for these early Christians, as it communicated not only ideas about prayer, which was the intimate communication with the divine, but was evocative of the ultimate moment of the Christian life – the salutary crucifixion. In a period before physical representation of the cross, this image could be placed among the most important images for the Christian, especially as his comfort and consolation in death.

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<sup>111</sup> Trans. Roberts and Donaldson 1885: 534.

<sup>112</sup> Trans. Roberts and Donaldson 1885: 534.

In death, the Christian believer, because of his faith, would be translated from the world of reflection to the world of the Image through the atoning work of the Christ on his cross. The *orans*, as an image reflecting both of these concepts of faith and salvation, made a perfect decoration for the ‘sleeping chamber’ of the Christian<sup>113</sup>, who awaited his physical resurrection into the world of the perfect Image. For this reason, the *orans* appears more than 90 times in the catacomb frescoes and more than 150 times in the sarcophagi from Rome and Ostia (see chapter three).

In *The Art of the Sacred*, Adams (2007: 6-28) presents the works of Tillich as a barometer by which to measure so-called ‘religious art’ and from this definition he develops a framework to evaluation art’s relationship to religion. This framework includes four categories of art. The first category is free of religious subject matter and the style expresses no religious concern. The second category is religious in style, but non-religious in subject matter. An excellent example of this category is Picasso’s *Guernica*, which uses religious symbols and staging in a painting depicting a military bombing of Guernica. In this style, the religious symbols lend pathos and tragedy to the bombing by their association with religious images of suffering and loss.

The third category is non-religious in style, but religious in subject matter. An example of this category is Raphael’s *Madonna and Child*, in which the figures are religious figures, but they are involved in everyday, domestic activities which belie their holy or elevated status. An uneducated view of this painting might lead one to believe that it is a study of a regular woman and her child, rather than depicting biblical figures.

The final category is religious in style and also religious in subject. An excellent example of this category is Grunewald’s *Crucifixion* in the Isenheim Altarpiece. In this scene, which is

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<sup>113</sup> See chapter three for the change from ‘*necropolis*’ to ‘*coemeterium*’.

obviously a religious painting, the subject matter and the style in which it is presented depict human finitude and cause contemplation in the observer.

To which of these four categories may we assign the *orans*? This is a difficult question to answer because the *orans* might fit into any of the last three categories. Because Pietas was not a goddess for the Christian, one might be tempted to identify the *orans* as an image with a religious appearance, but a non-religious meaning (category two). One might also interpret the image itself as religious because it represented Christian beliefs about the afterlife and the immortal hope of the Christian, but was depicted in a style which was merely culturally prevalent. One could argue that the Pietas image ceased to have a specifically religious appearance when it began to be used in diverse, non-religious functions, as on coins and in statues (category three). Finally, one could argue that the *orans* represents the union of a ‘pagan’ religious image with a Christian religious belief and assign it to category four. Category one is impossible to argue because there is clearly some religious element to the imagery, whether in form or function.

It is my belief that the *orans* best corresponds to category four, religious depiction of a religious scene. The *orans* represents the goddess Pietas and draws many of its interpretations from her cult, as in care for the dead and observance of proper religious rituals. The *orans*, despite being Christian, preserves the method of presentation used by ‘pagan’ images of Pietas and creates a new kind of religious image which uses the imagery of the ‘pagans’ to convey a Christian theological belief visually.

### *Conclusion*

The *orans* is a complicated image because it held a significant theological meaning for the Christian in a time when Christians were beginning to develop their own theories of image and divinity. It is further complicated by the relationship between image (the *orans*-figure which appears in the catacombs and in other art media) and reality (the fact that Christians did pray in a posture with raised hands). Ultimately, one must remember that the patristic authors were theologians who sought to instill Christian theological meanings in the extant circumstances of the Christian faithful. Interpreting an extant image used in funerary art and a posture used in prayer in the light of the crucifixion and the Image of God would serve to create ‘visual signals’ for the Christian faithful. From this perspective, it is possible to see the *orans* as part of a Christian reinterpretation of and its inclusion in the catacombs as partially artistic convention and cultural memory, but also partially new theological truth and promise. Even as Christians clung to the old images of the afterlife which their ‘pagan’ ancestors used, they also enjoyed the new promise of the Christian *orans* – association with Christ and in Christ.

## Chapter Three: The *Orans*-Figure in the Roman Catacombs:

### A Thematic and Spatial Analysis

#### *Introduction*

What is so important about these catacombs? Not only are they the earliest location for confirmed Christian art, they reveal a great deal about Christian social practices, as they are a source for information about burials and a centre of veneration for the developing cult of saints. This also allows us to see the ways in which the Christian use of images was both the same and different from its 'pagan' contemporaries. This allows us to see the architectural and artistic developments of the catacombs and compare them to contemporary 'pagan' arts and it redefines our conception of something as uniquely Christian.

What we see is that Christians were developing their own decorative schemes and becoming more self-aware of their divergent beliefs about the afterlife, the nature of the soul, or holy books, but do not abandon the mythological scenes, decorative styles, or even the method of internment used by their 'pagan' neighbours. This is a critical time in the slowly developing self-identity of Christianity, a time in which Christians begin to become distinct from 'pagans' and Jews and forge a new identity with new beliefs, while also developing new ways of expressing those beliefs visually. This being the earliest place to observe these new Christian values and ideas, it is an ideal place to study the image of the *orans* and to observe its integration into the Christian visual schema and theology.

Visual art is often difficult to discuss because it is subjective. An image can be approached from many different perspectives and therefore yield many different interpretations. For this reason, there is no 'one' way to approach and interpret images, especially ancient images. This is

especially complicated because ancient images are often not classified as ‘art’, but rather as ‘artefact’, with their value ascribed to their ability to enrich the scholarly view of the period from which they are derived rather than for their artistic merit. The *orans* is a particularly good example of this tension between art and artefact, as it appears in many different media, such as sculpture, frescos, and coins, but is usually approached as either a religious icon, and therefore a window into theology, or as a funerary artefact, and therefore an explanation of the afterlife-related rituals of an ancient people.

Images are not just images. This may seem like a tautology, but is actually the best way to communicate the power of the visual. A single drawing may simply be a piece of decoration, intended only to bring enjoyment to a viewer. It may also be a complicated series of symbols, which attempt to communicate an idea or belief to an initiated viewer who can interpret the symbol. The image may be intended to stand alone, or it may be part of a series, and form an elaborate scheme when in combination. This is not abstract artistic rhetoric, but is rather the crux of the problem of interpreting the *orans* in the catacombs because the *orans* is one image among many in a parade of decorations which span corridors and centuries.

In this chapter, I attempt to interpret the *orans* as both image and artefact through a thematic and spatial analysis. This method examines the entire scheme of a room’s decoration and attempts to observe what the role of the image may be in the scheme. I hope to examine the *orantes* in the catacombs through the lenses of location and theme and compare the findings from the data against the traditional interpretations of scholars to see how the interpretations hold up.

## *A Background to the Catacombs*

Marucchi (1903: 4-5) called the Roman catacombs “the cradle of Christianity and the archives of the primitive Church”, a viewpoint which underscored the importance of the paintings, inscriptions, and sculptural materials therein in our quest to understand the customs and practices of the early Church.<sup>114</sup> In fact, though many Christian sites exist, there is no site so early and so large as the catacombs of Rome, which create an immediate image of early Christianity from historical, artistic, and religious viewpoints. Because archaeology has yet to discover any such expansive record of the behaviour and habits of these early Christians elsewhere, the site is invaluable to our understanding of the development of early Christian art.<sup>115</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, the catacombs were not used as hiding places for the persecuted Christian faithful and they did not serve as churches. This latter misunderstanding is understandable because Christians did conduct services in the catacombs to commemorate the feast days of early saints (usually on the anniversary of the saint’s martyrdom).<sup>116</sup> These catacombs, which were located outside of the walls of Rome in accordance with the cultural touchstone which forbade burial of the dead inside the walls of the city to prevent the spread of their taint in terms of both sanitation and ritual purity (For the locations of the catacombs, see Fig. 17.).<sup>117</sup> In fact, the catacombs were, like all Roman burial sites, protected under the *res religiosa*, so, despite anti-Christian sentiments, they were not disturbed under the third-century

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<sup>114</sup> English translation taken from Baruffa 1993: 19.

<sup>115</sup> See introduction for more on the dearth of early Christian imagery.

<sup>116</sup> Stevenson 1985: 13; Claridge 1998: 408; Lançon 2000: 126.

<sup>117</sup> Rutgers 1992: 101-118.

persecutions of Christians.<sup>118</sup> Christian sites were in a similar situation to ‘pagan’ ones, both in their preservation and in their location.

The Roman catacombs were underground structures containing many passageways and burial chambers. They varied in size, from the large two-storey catacomb of Priscilla to the smaller *hypogea*.<sup>119</sup> In total, there are estimated to be about 60 Christian catacombs in Rome, although only some 42 of these have been excavated. Some of the others are in known locations, while some have yet to be confidently identified and excavated.<sup>120</sup> These catacombs are located on the roads exiting the city, generally at a distance of two to three miles. These catacombs contained various types of rooms, including *cubicula*, *arcosolia*, and niches. *Cubiculum* is the Roman word for ‘bedroom’, but in a funerary context it was a room carved out of the wall of a catacomb used for interment of remains and as a mortuary chapel. *Cubicula* could be quite large and contain multiple burials, often of people in the same family. An *arcosolium* was a type of niche, carved with a large recessed arch above a ‘bench’ type area for the interment of the deceased. There were often *arcosolia* within *cubicula*. Niches were less architecturally ornate than *arcosolia*, but were still often decorated.<sup>121</sup>

Catacomb is itself a modern term, which derives from the Greek term *κατὰ κῦμβας*, meaning ‘near the hollows’, which was translated into Latin as *ad catacumbas*. Although in modern parlance, this term is used to refer to all underground burial complexes, the Romans probably restricted this term to the specific catacomb of St Sebastian, which was located in an area surrounded by quarries, and may itself have been excavated from an old quarry.<sup>122</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Stevenson 1985: 29, 42-43.

<sup>119</sup> For some excellent scale drawings of various catacombs, see Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni 2009: 14-15.

<sup>120</sup> Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni 2009: 9-10.

<sup>121</sup> Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni 2009: 9, 13-15, 31-32.

<sup>122</sup> Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni 2009: 9.

Romans differentiated their burial structures more than we do. For example, a small, private, family tomb was referred to as a *hypogeum*, while the larger more public burial site was referred to as a *cemeteryum* or a *necropolis*.<sup>123</sup> *Necropolis*, or ‘city of the dead’, was the regular Latin term used to refer to a burial site. *Cemeteryum*, root of our modern ‘cemetery’, derives from the Greek term κοιμητήριον, which can be translated as a ‘sleeping place’ or a ‘burial place’. This word may have been specially chosen by Christians to reflect their belief in immortality of the soul and life after death,<sup>124</sup> as echoed in the writings of Paul, where he refers to the hope of the dead Christian as the opportunity to live again in Christ.<sup>125</sup>

The catacombs are notoriously difficult to date, and the comprehensive article addressing these problems remains Février’s 1989 article, in which he summarizes the arguments, scholarship, and challenges associated with dating the Roman catacombs. Nevertheless, some features about the Roman catacombs’ construction and dating are observable. Firstly, Christians began burying their dead in Christian catacombs beginning around the late second century and continued until the fifth century. The majority of the large-scale catacomb construction took place in the late third century and the fourth century because of the economic expansion of the Christians and the Church.<sup>126</sup>

As the images of *orantes* examined in this chapter are all fresco paintings, it is prudent to examine the genre of fresco painting. Frescoes are created not as later ornamentation to a wall, but as an integral part of it, as they are applied directly to the wet stucco used to cover walls, which were often made of stone, bricks, or concrete. In the case of the Roman catacombs, the

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<sup>123</sup> Stevenson 1985: 7; Rutgers 2000: 43.

<sup>124</sup> Baruffa 1993: 17; Rutgers 2000: 42.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:51, “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”, which refers to those who have died before the return of Jesus, and 1 Thess 4:13-16 where he refers to the dead as “those who are asleep”, but “the dead in Christ shall rise first” from their slumber (i.e. death) upon the return of Christ.

<sup>126</sup> Février 1989: *passim*.

structures were excavated from the local stone, called tuff. Tuff has several applications in construction and building (certain varieties could be crushed and used to make bricks), but the type from which the catacombs were dug was an undesirable stone with no building applications.<sup>127</sup>

Once the stone was cut, layers of stucco (a type of plaster) were applied to the walls in layers of decreasing thickness, at an average application of three layers. In the majority of cases, an artist would paint images, colours, or designs on the still-wet last layer of stucco, in a technique called *buon fresco*. In the *buon fresco* technique, the stucco dried and sealed in the artwork. In a minority of cases, the stucco would be allowed to dry first and the paintings applied to the dry stucco in a technique called *a secco*. This technique necessitated the use of a binding medium, such as tempera (egg) or oil. In general, *buon fresco* is more durable than *a secco* and less prone to flaking. The notable exception to this trend occurs when the wall being decorated is coated with roughened stucco and not smooth stucco. If the wall remains rough, the *a secco* technique is more durable.<sup>128</sup>

The earliest surviving Christian frescoes most likely date from the late second to early third centuries, which form part of the Severan period (193-235 CE). This period was popularized by the usage of a variant style influenced by the third Pompeian style, also known as the ‘red-green’ style. This style is characterized by the usage of linear ‘blocks’ or registers to divide the walls. These registers are ornamented by separated motifs, often of animals and *putti*. Because Roman garden decoration was so popular, the garden art of this time differed from the art used inside homes and largely featured garlands, geometric figures, floral motifs, and designs featuring

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<sup>127</sup> Claridge 1998: 408; Rutgers 2000: 9, 45-46, 68. Some catacombs were excavated from sandstone, but the majority were excavated from this otherwise useless tuff.

<sup>128</sup> Stokstad 2005: 100, 344, 411, 488, 569.

gardens (a variety of landscape painting). As well, the lower parts of these walls were decorated with stucco painted to resemble marble.<sup>129</sup>

The following period is characterized by an artistic stagnancy and lack of change. Throughout the third century, there was extensive political and economic instability in the Empire (this period is usually known as the ‘Third Century Crisis’) and this upheaval is reflected in the lack of artistic innovation native to this period. The notable changes include the extended usage of the ornamental marble painting and the pre-eminence of pastoral scenes. As well, the use of registers continued, but the ‘inset’ images began to be placed in the centre of the wall and the register in order to command the attention of the viewers.<sup>130</sup> As Constantine restored stability after the Third Century Crisis, the art began to change again. Constantinian art was influenced by classicizing trends, as well as a tendency to simplified forms, shapes, and lines. Under Constantine, art adopted a more rigid frontality, as well as making use of simplified backgrounds and thick lines.<sup>131</sup> Constantinian artistic ideals gave way to Theodosian art, which continued the use of the somewhat stilted forms of the Constantinian period, such as empty backgrounds, hieratic or rigidly frontal figures, and adjurations of the size and perspective of scenes to highlight the ‘important’ figures.<sup>132</sup>

In the fifth century, the trend shifted from subterranean to urban cemeteries and the catacombs were no longer expanded for the reception of new dead persons. Instead, the dead were buried in church cemeteries; however, there was still some usage of the catacombs and some new artworks appear as late as the seventh century. The veneration of the interred saints and martyrs continued in the catacombs, though. By the ninth century, the relics of the saints had

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<sup>129</sup> Liversidge 1983: 108-109; Ling 1991: 178-186.

<sup>130</sup> Liversidge 1983: 10; Jensen 2000: 16-17.

<sup>131</sup> Reece 1983: 234-248; Ling 1991: 186-197.

<sup>132</sup> Reece 1983: 240-241.

been entirely removed from their underground resting places and were relocated to churches and shrines and the rituals originally conducted at the underground burial sites of these saints were transferred to the churches above ground, which removed the final reasons for the Christian faithful to visit the catacombs. It is at this point that the catacombs can be described as entirely abandoned.<sup>133</sup>

The catacombs were discovered on and off throughout their period of closure, such as in an incident from 1485 recorded by Lanciani (1967: 298-301) wherein the body of a young woman covered in preservative resins was discovered, looted, and disposed of in the 15th century. However, the most important person to the rediscovery of the catacombs is Italian scholar Antonio Bosio (1575-1629) who conducted a systematic exploration of the catacombs, the results of which are recorded in *Roma Sotteranea* (1632). Bosio was later followed by Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-1894) who published the first extensive studies of the Roman catacombs. Unfortunately, the discovery of the catacombs also resulted in some damage to the site as the images therein were exposed to air, moisture, and people. This damage limits the breadth of our understanding of the usage and form of the catacombs, as we are not working with an entire set of data, but we are able to refer to many excellent drawings done by the early explorers and archaeologists when the images are no longer extant.<sup>134</sup>

### *Spatial Analysis*

The first thing to be considered in this study of the *orans* in the catacombs is the number of the images. Nestori's catalogue details 158 *orantes* spread over 16 separate catacombs (Fig.

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<sup>133</sup> Lanciani 1967: 322-324.

<sup>134</sup> For the best record of early paintings of the catacombs, see Wilpert 1903.

18).<sup>135</sup> These *orantes* are both male and female, though some are recorded as ‘unknown’ because they are either too damaged to determine their sex or are indistinct, as in the case of Domatilla 70, where the *orantes* are described as children. Additionally, Nestori’s study differentiates between female *orantes* with veils and female orates without veils. Because this is so specifically noted with each entry, I have subdivided the category of female *orans* into ‘veiled’ and ‘unveiled’. This data reveals that of the 158 *orantes* recorded by Nestori, there are 36 male *orantes*, or 22.7%. Female *orantes* account for 67.7%, as there are 107. Of that 107, 19 are veiled (17.7%) and 85 are unveiled (79.4%). This is very unusual, as the precursor images discussed in chapter one all feature veiled female figures. This usage of the unveiled female over the veiled female can be understood as a Christian innovation to the *orans* figure. *Orantes* of unknown or indeterminate sex account for 9.4% of the total, as there are 15 (see Tables 2-5).

The following tables reveal a breakdown of these categories in each of the 16 catacombs containing at least 1 *orans*. In the second chart, which presents the data from the first chart as percentages, the percentages of ‘veiled’ and ‘unveiled’ female *orans* are calculated as a percentage of the total female *orantes*, rather than as a percentage of the total *orantes*. Thus, in Callixtus, the 3 veiled female *orantes* are listed as 25%, or 3 out of the 12 total female *orantes*, rather than being calculated from the total of 15. Because of rounding, all totals may not equal 100%.

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<sup>135</sup> A catalogue of these *orantes*, including their sex, location, and accompanying imagery, can be found in the second appendix.

Table 2 – Categorical Breakdown of the *Orantes* in the Christian Catacombs of Rome

TOTAL

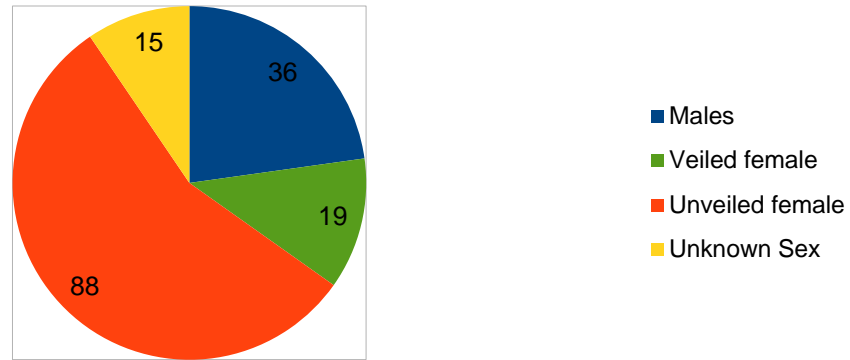


Table 3 – Number of *Orantes* Contained in the Christian Catacombs of Rome

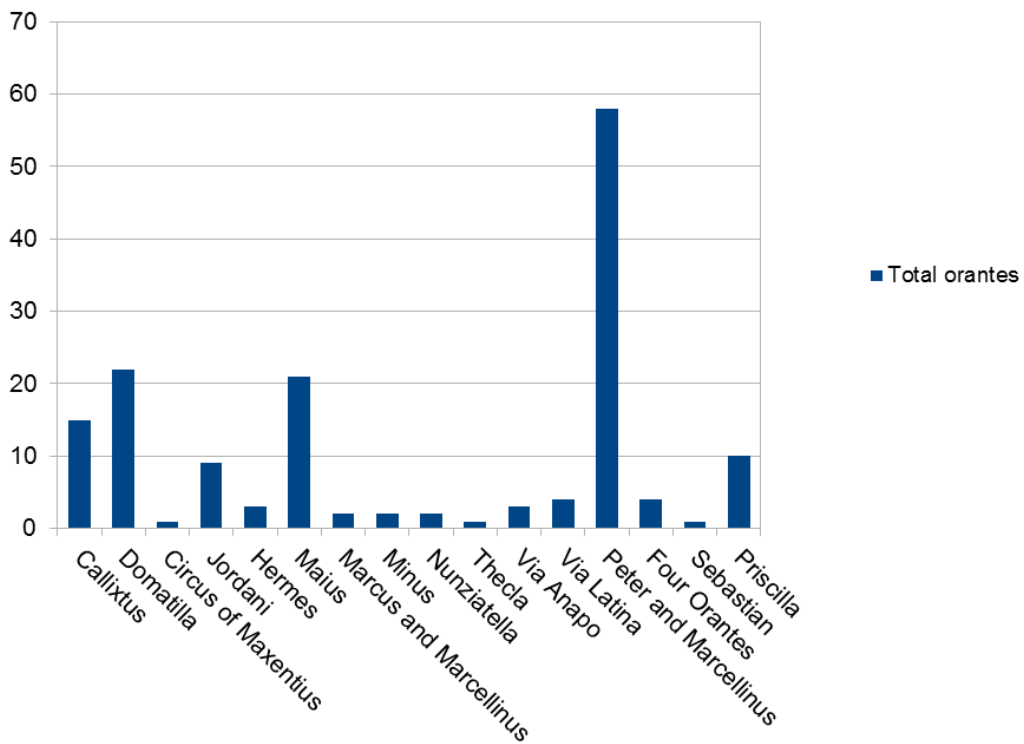


Table 4 – Total Number of *Orantes* in the Catacombs Subdivided by Category

	<b>Total <i>Orantes</i></b>		<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Unknown</b>		<b>Veiled Female</b>	<b>Unveiled Female</b>
<b>Callixtus</b>	15		2	12	1		3	9
<b>Domatilla</b>	22		2	15	5		4	11
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	1		0	1	0		0	1
<b>Jordani</b>	9		1	7	1		2	5
<b>Hermes</b>	3		0	3	0		0	3
<b>Maius</b>	21		4	13	4		4	9
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	2		1	1	0		0	1
<b>Minus</b>	2		0	0	2		0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	2		1	1	0		0	1
<b>Thecla</b>	1		0	1	0		0	1
<b>Via Anapo</b>	3		1	2	0		0	2
<b>Via Latina</b>	4		1	3	0		1	2
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	58		20	36	2		1	35
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	4		2	2	0		0	2
<b>Sebastian</b>	1		0	1	0		1	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	10		1	9	0		3	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	158		36	107	15		19	88

Table 5 – Total Number of *Orantes* in the Christian Catacombs Subdivided by Category (Percentages)

	<b>Percent Male</b>	<b>Percent Female</b>	<b>Percent Unknown</b>		<b>Percent Veiled Female</b>	<b>Percent Unveiled Female</b>
<b>Callixtus</b>	13	80	6		25	75

<b>Domatilla</b>	9	68.2	22.7		26.7	73.3
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	100	0		0	100
<b>Jordani</b>	11.1	77.8	11.1		28.6	71.4
<b>Hermes</b>	0	100	0		0	100
<b>Maius</b>	19	61.9	19		30.8	69.2
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	50	50	0		0	100
<b>Minus</b>	0	0	100		0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	50	50	0		0	100
<b>Thecla</b>	0	100	0		0	100
<b>Via Anapo</b>	33.3	66.7	0		0	100
<b>Via Latina</b>	25	75	0		33.3	66.7
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	34.5	62.1	3.4		2.8	97.2
<b>Four Orantes</b>	50	50	0		0	100
<b>Sebastian</b>	0	100	0		100	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	10	90	0		33.3	66.7
<b>TOTALS</b>	22.8	67.7	9.5		17.8	82.2

These data are very helpful for reviewing the location and categorical breakdown of the 158 *orantes* recorded by Nestori; however, they also raise a number of questions. When

observing these two tables, it is possible to see that although *orantes* come in both male and female forms, the female forms outnumber in male forms 107 to 36. The 15 *orantes* of unknown sex are not very significant as they account for only 9.5% of the data. Were, for example, these 15 *orantes* to all be male, the female *orantes* would still outnumber the male *orantes* by more than three-to-one.

These four charts reveal that some catacombs contain only one or two *orantes* and some more than 20, and in one case more than 50; however, this information is somewhat meaningless unless the reader knows what percentage of the catacomb contains *orantes*. This is further complicated because in many instances one room may contain multiple *orantes*. For example, Jordani 7<sup>136</sup> contains one male *orans* and one female *orans* in the same *cubiculum*, and in Four *Orantes* 3, there are two male and two female *orantes*, but no *orantes* appear in the other 3 chambers. For this reason, table 6 details the numbers of individual rooms containing one or more *orans* as compared to the total number of rooms in the catacomb. For example, Callixtus contains 15 *orantes* in 11 separate rooms. As there are 52 rooms in the catacomb, this means that *orantes* appear in 21.2% of the rooms. Table 6 helps to illustrate what percentage of the persons or families interred therein were using this image.

**Table 6 – Number of Rooms Containing a *Orans* as Compared to Total Rooms**

	<b>Rooms with <i>Orans</i></b>	<b>Total Rooms in Catacomb</b>	<b>Percentage of Rooms with <i>Orans</i></b>
<b>Callixtus</b>	11	52	21.2
<b>Domatilla</b>	14	77	18.2
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	1	1	100

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<sup>136</sup> I will use this method of referencing to refer to a particular room in a catacomb. For example, Jordani 7 refers to room 7 in the catacomb of the Jordani in the catalogue in the appendix.

<b>Jordani</b>	7	12	58.3
<b>Hermes</b>	3	12	25
<b>Maius</b>	13	22	59.1
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	1	7	14.3
<b>Minus</b>	1	1	100
<b>Nunziatella</b>	1	4	25
<b>Thecla</b>	1	6	16.7
<b>Via Anapo</b>	3	19	15.8
<b>Via Latina</b>	3	13	23.1
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	29	85	34.1
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	1	4	25
<b>Sebastian</b>	1	7	14.3
<b>Priscilla</b>	6	40	15
<b>TOTALS</b>	96	362	26.5

The preceding chart demonstrates that the catacombs containing an *orans* range in size from one room to 85 rooms and account for percentages of rooms anywhere from 14% to 100%. This illustrates the diversity of the catacomb art – each *arcosolium* or *cubiculum* was used by an individual who had the freedom to commission any types of motifs that he or she felt appropriate. It is also noteworthy that, disregarding the catacombs with only one chamber, there is not a direct link between the number of rooms in a structure and the percentage of rooms containing *orantes*. For example, Peter and Marcellinus is the largest structure in this study and contains *orantes* in 34.1% of its chambers, while Domatilla, which has 77 rooms, contains *orantes* in only 18.2%. Looking at the smaller structures, we see that Thecla, with 6 rooms, has *orantes* in 16.7% of its rooms, while Maius, with 22 rooms, has 59.1%. The non-uniformity of

the decoration is intriguing because it suggests that the *orans* was a pointed choice on the part of the decedent, and likely had some meaning as a gesture. If all the catacombs displayed *orantes* in a high percentage of their chambers, it would be possible to dismiss this artistic choice as a convention. The disparity of the numbers instead highlights personal choice.

Another interesting variable to consider is the types of rooms which contain *orantes*. In Nestori’s catalogue, a “room” refers to a distinct and separately enclosed area in the survey maps. These rooms are of various types, including *arcosolia*, crypts, and *cubicula*. The following chart (Table 7) records a more specific classification of the 96 rooms containing at least one *orans*.

**Table 7 – Variety of “Rooms” Containing *Orantes***

	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Niche	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Other
<b>Callixtus</b>	5	1	4	1
<b>Domatilla</b>	5	5	4	0
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>Jordani</b>	2	3	2	0
<b>Hermes</b>	1	1	1	0
<b>Maius</b>	6	0	6	1
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Minus</b>	0	1	0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	0	0	1	0
<b>Thecla</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>Via Anapo</b>	1	2	0	0
<b>Via Latina</b>	0	0	2	1
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	2	1	25	1
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	0	0	1	0

<b>Sebastian</b>	0	0	1	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	1	1	4	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	24	15	51	6

This chart illustrates that *cubicula* form 53.1% of the rooms containing an *orans*, with *arcosolia* forming an additional 25%. Niches form 15.6% and the remaining 6.3% is divided among various categories. The data reveal 1 crypt, 1 pit burial, 1 pillar, 1 vestibule, and 2 rooms of unknown purpose. These numbers are not surprising, as the majority of the rooms listed in Nestori's catalogue are *cubicula*.

The thematic analysis reveals that a fairly large percentage of rooms contain *orantes* (X%), but that the percentage is not so high as to be formulaic or expected. This suggests a pointed decision on the part of the commissioner or the artist to use a specific image. It is also possible to see that *orantes* are attested in a variety of locations, but do not appear to be more popular in any sort of room.

### *Pietas Unveiled?*

This inquiry also raises an interesting as the division of the sexes was considered. Not only did female *orantes* greatly outnumber male *orantes*, but female unveiled *orantes* outnumbered their veiled counterparts by an even greater margin. This would certainly be scandalous to the Roman viewer if it reflected a real practice of Christian women refusing to wear veils. In fact, the veil, in some format, was part of the dress of the 'decent' Roman woman

from the time of her marriage to the time of her death.<sup>137</sup> Sebesta (1994: 48-49) relates various ancient viewpoints on the woman's veil, beginning with an anecdote from 166 BCE about consul Sulpicius Gallus, who divorced his wife after she left the house unveiled. Sebesta comments that this going about unveiled 'excluded' the wife from the rank of married woman, and that the divorce was the natural consequence of the action. She also quotes Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, in which a man attempts to bring a prostitute somewhere without being detected by having her adopt the distinctive dress of a *matrona*, which included a veil. She also includes sixth-century Christian author Isidore, who believed that the head represented authority, and that, as the man was the 'head' of the woman, and the veil was upon the woman's physical head, that the veil represented the male authority over the woman. If, then, the modest woman was veiled, why is the Christian *orans* unveiled in the majority of its appearances in the Christian catacombs?

Some early hints of an answer can be found in Ewald (2003: 568-569), whose review of Wrede's *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms*, describes the emergence of new philosophical ideals and artistic trends in the late second and early third centuries. He describes this new decorative scheme on Roman sarcophagi as the replacement of the previous Antonine style, as well as the successor to the use of "cruel" mythological scenes, like the death of the Niobids. This reflects the emergence of a philosophical ideal valuing control of the emotions and mastery of death. In this *milieu*, myths revolving around or merely including the deaths of the innocent would no longer be appropriate. This art shift represents not only a transformation of taste, but is also likely related to the way the elite experienced their own bodies. In keeping with this philosophical trend, Muses and philosophers began to appear on the short ends of sarcophagi in second century. This representation of the Muse and the philosopher together became necessary

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<sup>137</sup> Sebesta 1994: 48-51. Sebesta describes the various types of head coverings worn by women, including the *flammeum*, or bridal veil, the *palla*, or 'going out' veil of married woman, the *rica*, or 'staying in' veil of married women, and the *ricinium*, or purple-bordered widow's veil.

to express new ideas of spirituality which were no longer adequately expressed by the Muse alone.

At the same time, marriage began to play a prominent role in bucolic imagery, as this Muse and philosopher pair was frequently shown in conjunction with the *dextrarum iunctio* scenes. The philosopher and Muse together indicated the new ideal of partnership based on respect, friendship, and affection, rather than the dynastic ideal of marriage popular during the Late Republic and Augustan periods. In fact, children are largely absent from these later scenes, placing the emphasis on marital emotional closeness rather than on the social status attached to children. Some sarcophagi even depicted the husband and wife in the guises of the Muse and philosopher, illustrating an ideal of marriage based on philosophy and piety or morality.<sup>138</sup>

Ewald (2003: 459-561) also supports Wrede's theory that the wide diffusion of bucolic images is rooted in their role in 'escapism'. As the regular Roman had no villa to escape to, the afterlife could represent the 'rest' that he wanted. Bucolic scenes, then, replaced the older second-early third century Dionysiac and marine visions of felicity and bliss. Rather than the images of frolicking Nereids, we see images of male shepherds, seated philosophers, and orantes. These bucolic images respond to death with positive and idyllic images, making the grave itself a *locus amoenus*. Unlike the second century sarcophagi with their violent myths, the third century bucolic pieces create an image of a timeless and positive existence in the countryside. Rather than respond to death with scenes of loss, they act as "visual tranquilizers". Ewald believes that this distinction is important to our understanding of early Christian sarcophagi, for, as the bucolic imagery could be easily adopted and adapted to hold a variety of specific meanings, these scenes could be easily adapted to represent Christian theological truths about death and the afterlife.

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<sup>138</sup> Ewald 2003: 568-569.

As the Muse became a key component of the new plan of the sarcophagus, the figure was adapted over time into the form of the *orans*, which continued to be paired with the philosopher well into the fourth century.<sup>139</sup> The remnants of this fusing can be observed in that the Muse was normally depicted unveiled, sometimes wearing a feather or other hair ornament, or perhaps a mask, while Pietas was always depicted veiled on her coinage.<sup>140</sup> As the philosopher and Muse pair came to represent aspects of the afterlife of the deceased, the figure of Pietas was blended with the Muse and produced an amalgam figure composed of the posture of Pietas with the clothing of the Muse. It is for this reason that we may logically conclude that the *orans* so frequently appears unveiled in the Christian catacombs.

### *Thematic Analysis*

Now that we have considered the spatial aspect of the *orantes* in the catacombs, we turn our attention to the thematic categorization. It is interesting to note the scenes with which the *orans* appears in conjunction.<sup>141</sup> In the following table 8, as in the catalogue (Appendix 2), I have elected to list each scene which appears in conjunction with an *orans* separately. (For example, if an image of Lazarus and an inscription appear with the same *orans*, each category will be marked once. If an image of Lazarus and an image of the wedding at Cana appear in the same scene, New Testament will receive two marks.) I have also decided to exclude foliage, animals, or decorative items like borders, as I felt they did not significantly relate to the thematic analysis and were distracting from possible meaningful conclusions.

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<sup>139</sup> Jensen 2000: 7, 17, 33, 44-48; Bisconti 2002: 53-74.

<sup>140</sup> On the Muse: Hemelrijk 1999: 34.

On Pietas' coinage : Prigent 1992 : 143-145.

<sup>141</sup> Prigent (1992 : 259-287) contains an excellent overview of the various types of *orantes* found in the Christian catacombs, as well as examples and sketches illustrating each category.

Table 8 – Types of Scenes Appearing in Conjunction with an *Orans*

	Old Testament	New Testament	Eucharistic	Inscription	Pagan Motifs	Deceased as <i>Orans</i>	Good Shepherd
<b>Callixtus</b>	8	1	1	0	3	0	1
<b>Domatilla</b>	10	7	0	0	1	0	4
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Jordani</b>	9	2	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Hermes</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Maius</b>	13	11	0	0	0	1	4
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Minus</b>	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Thecla</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Anapo</b>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Latina</b>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	21	13	0	1	5	3	10
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Sebastian</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Priscilla</b>	2	0	0	0	1	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	72	38	1	1	10	5	22

The lack of certain images is intriguing. Leclercq argues that the most interesting and controversial category of *orans* is that which represents an individualised person rather than a stock ‘type’. This type represents the piety of an individual who is understood as currently in heaven and whose faith serves as an example of the saving power of God for the current faithful observers. These images became a type of funerary portrait in which both male and female

*orantes* appeared.<sup>142</sup> Lowrie (1965: 45-48) believes that, while there is not a single answer for the meaning of the *orans*, the most common representations stood for the soul in either a metaphorical sense or as a “spirit portrait” because the attitude of prayer was meant to express that the deceased had gone to heaven. Accompanying inscriptions of *in pace* (“in peace”) represented a declarative of a state of being, rather than precative (supplicative) – that is to say, stating that the deceased *was* at peace in heaven, rather than wishing for the deceased to be so.

Lowrie’s argument has much to commend it, as it seems to be reflecting the origins of the orant that are discussed in chapter one. It is a figure with a history of representing a mourner, or an individualised woman who still appears in the guise of *Pietas*. Nevertheless, Nestori’s catalogue only records 5 images which it identifies as a deceased person (an individualised person) appearing as an *orans*. This stands in contrast to the argument of Lowrie, which sounds as though this ‘type’ of *orans* was common and widespread in the catacombs. Lowrie’s argument does reflect the later evolution of the *orans*, though, which came to symbolise a stock manner of portraying a holy person, especially a saint (Fig. 18).<sup>143</sup> The type of *orans* that he has identified may be a transitional category of *orans*, or it may be a continuation of the type of figures that ‘pagans’ were already producing, where imperial women appeared as individualised figures (unique facial and hair styles) in the guise of *Pietas*.

The data also contest Leclercq’s identification of several inscriptions accompanying these “spirit portraits” that allude to the privileged role of the deceased in heaven such as “VIC[tor]ia]

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<sup>142</sup> Leclercq 1907: 2299-2300.

<sup>143</sup> For an excellent discussion of the transition from catacomb to basilica, as well as the artistic/ architectural shifts which accompanied this change, see Crook 2000: 1-79.

For a Late Antique medal of St Lawrence, his soul leaving his body in the form of a female *orant*, see Utro 2005: 257-258. (The original medal has been lost and a renaissance impression is all that remains.)

See Janin 1953: 168-170 for discussion of the Blachernitissa icon type, an image originating in a 5th/6th century church in Constantinople, of the Virgin Mary with her arms spread in the posture of the *orant*.

PETE [pro nobis]" ("Victoria, pray [for us].").<sup>144</sup> He argues that while there are not many of these inscriptions, there are enough to consider their use a trend and indicative of a new tradition of asking for the intercession of the deceased. He calls this evidence indicative of a new development in the usage of the *orans* to represent the heavenly location of an individualised Christian. Rather than representing the promise of an afterlife (as in the *pietas orans*), this *orans* represents an individualised figure who could be understood as currently in heaven and able to pray for his or her fellows on earth.<sup>145</sup> However, despite these assertions, Nestori's catalogue records only one *orans* accompanied by an inscription and that is of a female *orans* accompanied by the name "HAIIO"; there is no indication that this figure was asked to pray or intercede for anyone. It is merely listed as a name.<sup>146</sup>

Additionally, Wessel (1955: 314-334) in his well-known article "Ecclesia *Orans*" makes much of a figure of a female *orans* and a male figure standing at a tripod upon which appears bread, and he writes as though this is a sub-category of *orans* which specifically represented the Church (Fig. 19). He believes that this scene represents a Eucharistic consecration, in which the male figure represents a priest, the tripod an altar, the bread the Host, and the *orans* a symbol of the church. This is a fascinating claim, as it would be indicative of the Christian celebration of the sacraments in an early period. It would also express a new category of *orans*, one which no longer represented the notion of being a worshipper or doing the correct rituals, but was symbolic of a specific ritual. Unfortunately, there is only one such figure among those recorded by Nestori.<sup>147</sup> Because this image appears only once, it seems overdone to draw any great conclusions from it. In fact, while the image does suggest the imagery of a Eucharist, it could

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<sup>144</sup> This inscription uses the verb *petere* (to entreat, beg) rather than *oro* or *precari*.

<sup>145</sup> Leclercq 1907: 2298-2302

<sup>146</sup> Peter and Marcellinus 27.

<sup>147</sup> Callixtus 22.

equally suggest the imagery of a *refrigerium*. And, if it does represent a Eucharist, assuming the figure represents the Church seems less likely than assuming the figure represents the worshipper, in keeping with the history of the Pietas and *adorans* imagery which inspired the Christian catacombs.

Finally, ‘pagan’ symbolism appears far less frequently than one might expect. Throughout this thesis, it has been possible to see that the *orans* is a ‘pagan’ image which was assigned a Christian value and used by a Christian community without being significantly changed in form or function. There are only 6 distinct ‘pagan’ images which appear in conjunction with *orantes* – Janus,<sup>148</sup> Psyche,<sup>149</sup> *putti*,<sup>150</sup> a *caduceus*,<sup>151</sup> *genii*,<sup>152</sup> and the Seasons (Table 9).<sup>153</sup> What emerges from examining these images is that, except for the image of Janus, all of these images appear in either the Catacomb of Callixtus or the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus. ‘Pagan’ imagery is otherwise entirely absent from the remaining catacombs. While it is not possible to suggest a conclusive reason for this discrepancy, it may be related to the dates at which these particular catacombs were created – perhaps very early when these images were still in common use, or perhaps quite late when they were enjoying a sort of ‘renaissance’.

Their inclusion in Christian burials is not contradictory and should not confuse the viewer into thinking these burials were ‘pagan’ or somehow ‘crypto-Christian’. If we refer back to the introduction of this thesis, we see the examples of the Proiecta casket and the sarcophagus of Marcus Aurelius Prosones as examples of Christian images which used ‘pagan’ imagery in an

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<sup>148</sup> Domatilla 26.

<sup>149</sup> Peter and Marcellinus 7 (Image appears twice in the same scene).

<sup>150</sup> Peter and Marcellinus 7 (There are 3 *putti* in the group). Priscilla 17 (One nude *putto*).

<sup>151</sup> Callixtus 26 (Appears twice in the same scene).

<sup>152</sup> Callixtus 2; Callixtus 15; Peter and Marcellinus 70.

<sup>153</sup> Peter and Marcellinus 64; Peter and Marcellinus 67.

allegorical or symbolic way.<sup>154</sup> The image of Janus, for example, may refer to temporality or the passing of time, as Janus was the two-headed god of the new year. In these cases, it may be possible to observe a transition of iconography from a more ‘pagan’ image for the soul to a more Christian image.

**Table 9 – ‘Pagan’ Images Appearing in Conjunction with an *Orans***

	<i>Genii</i>	<i>Putti</i>	Divinity	<i>Caduceus</i>
<b>Callixtus</b>	2	0	0	1
<b>Domatilla</b>	0	0	1	0
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Jordani</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Hermes</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Maius</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Minus</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Thecla</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Anapo</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Latina</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	1	1	3	0
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Sebastian</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	3	2	4	1

<sup>154</sup> See introduction and Rutgers 2000: 82-118.

The following table (Table 10) records the various Old Testament images which appear in conjunction with the *orans*. The categories of Jonah and Moses have been combined and will be separated out in a secondary chart (Table 11).

Table 10 – Old Testament Images Appearing in Conjunction with an *Orans*

	Jonah - various	Noah	Moses- various	Daniel & Lions	Adam & Eve	Balaam	Job	Three Young Men	Sacrifice of Isaac
Callixtus	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1
Domatilla	4	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
Circus of Maxentius	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jordani	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0	1
Hermes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Maius	0	3	4	3	2	0	1	0	0
Marcus and Marcellinus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minus	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Nunziatella	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thecla	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Via Anapo	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Via Latina	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Peter and Marcellinus	7	1	6	2	1	3	1	0	0
Four <i>Orantes</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sebastian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Priscilla	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	17	8	19	10	7	4	2	3	2

Seventy-two Old Testament images appear in conjunction with an *orans*. Oddly, these images are not as diverse as the New Testament images which also accompany *orantes*. In fact, most of the scenes which appear do so many times. This makes it possible to draw some conclusions about the meanings or interpretations of these images.

The largest groups of images are the categories ‘Jonah – various’ and ‘Moses – various’. The following table (Table 11) separates these two categories into the more specific sub-categories of scenes:

**Table 11 – Subdivision of Combined Categories from Table 10 (Jonah and Moses Scenes)**

	Scenes of Jonah	Jonah at Rest	Jonah Thrown Out	Jonah Mourning		Water from Rock	Receiving Law	Miracle of Quail/ Manna	Moses Removing Shoes
<b>Callixtus</b>	0	3	1	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Domatilla</b>	1	2	1	0		3	0	0	0
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Jordani</b>	0	0	0	0		2	1	2	0
<b>Hermes</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Maius</b>	0	0	0	0		3	0	0	1
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Minus</b>	0	0	0	0		1	0	0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Thecla</b>	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
<b>Via Anapo</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Via Latina</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	3	2	1	1		5	0	0	1
<b>Four <i>Orantes</i></b>	1	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Sebastian</b>	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	1	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	6	7	3	1		14	1	2	2

The sub-category of Jonah is interesting because of the emphasis of the various scenes on deliverance, as Jonah appears as a hero of the faith who was rescued from death and reborn into a new life. The parallel between Jonah and rebirth appears in the New Testament writings in Matthew 12:40, where Jesus states “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jonah's miraculous salvation from death and his metaphorical 'rebirth' could be understood by the Christian as a symbol of the death of the Christ. These types of scenes then, are easily associated with the *orans*, which can be interpreted as a symbol of the piety or the faith of the decedent.

Several images related to Moses also appear. The image of the Water from the Rock appears most frequently – 14 times. In this scene, Moses strikes a rock and water gushes out, providing water to the Israelite people wandering in the desert.<sup>155</sup> The miracles of the Manna and the Quail, which each appear once, refer to an instance in which the Israelite people in the wilderness did not have enough food, and God informed Moses that he would provide food in the form of manna – a seed-like food – and quail. The story describes that this food appeared every day until the people arrived in Canaan.<sup>156</sup> These scenes both illustrate divine deliverance from death by the miraculous provision of physical needs, underscoring the care of God for the Jewish people. These scenes are appropriate in a funerary context, as Christians thought of themselves as God's chosen people whom he preserved from death, although in a funerary context, this preservation is likely related to the hope of eternal life.

This theme is echoed in the scenes of Daniel and the lions' den, appearing 10 times, wherein the hero was cast into a pit of lions to be eaten, but was brought out alive.<sup>157</sup> The same is true of the scenes of the three young men, appearing 3 times. In this story, the young men were condemned to death for their religion by being burned, but were drawn out of the fire alive after being seen in the fire with a fourth person, described to the king as, "like a son of the gods."<sup>158</sup> The scenes of Noah and his ark are also indicative of salvation, as Noah was saved because of

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<sup>155</sup> Ex 17:1-7.

<sup>156</sup> Ex 16:1-36.

<sup>157</sup> Dan 6:11-23.

<sup>158</sup> Dan 3:1-30.

his piety from a large flood which purportedly destroyed all other living things on earth.<sup>159</sup> Finally, the images of Balaam refer to a time when a rival king hired Balaam to curse the Israelites to ruin their prosperity. Balaam, rather than cursing the Israelites, blessed them instead, delivering them from harmful curses.<sup>160</sup>

It is apparent that these scenes, which frequently appear in conjunction with an *orans*, reflect an early Christian desire for divine deliverance. As these were funerary images, it is clear that the Christians did not seek deliverance from physical death as did the heroes they depicted, but rather sought divine salvation and admittance to the afterlife. This informs the viewer that the *orantes* in these scenes, then, have similar meanings, and can be understood as representing both the piety of the decedent, because he or she hoped to be associated with the faith of these Old Testament heroes, but also as salutary images, as they looked to the power of God to save and deliver in the past and sought to acquire that kind of salvation in future. The images themselves are ‘symbolic’ as they are not true narration (that is, painting a whole story). Instead, they are ‘image-signs’, a brief moment in time meant to symbolize an entire episode. What was important was the observing community could decipher the meaning.<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately, we, as modern observers, are often unable to decipher these image-signs because they fell from popular usage, and thus we have no ‘key’ through which to interpret them.<sup>162</sup>

While some ‘image-signs’ present in early catacomb art represent the sacraments (communion and baptism), most of them reference God’s intervention in order to save or

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<sup>159</sup> Gen 6-9.

<sup>160</sup> Num 22-24.

<sup>161</sup> Grabar 1968: 8.

<sup>162</sup> For more discussion on the difficulty of interpreting early Christian symbols, see the chapter “Issues and Problems of Interpretation” in Jensen (2000: 8-31). Jensen discusses the differences between the private and public spheres of art and the variant readings of images in both contexts, the historical and situational context of Christian art, and the categories and history of interpretation of these early images. For a discussion of the allegories of baptism, see Jensen (2000: 171-178).

preserve certain believers, such as Noah, during the Flood, the deliverance of Isaac from sacrifice, Daniel from the lions, or the young men from the furnace, or in the gospels, Lazarus brought to life. These scenes – because of their appearance in funerary art – may have echoed or enforced the prayer of burial (*commendatio animae*) because they list precedents of divine intervention on behalf of the community of believers and ask for God to grant the same aid to the deceased (“God, save Lucius, as you saved Daniel and Noah”).<sup>163</sup>

Equally interesting is the scene ‘Jonah in repose’, which appears 7 times. Koortbijan (1995: 19-22) argues that funerary depictions of myths like Endymion and Adonis have a symbolic interpretation. He believes that the scenes depicted on sarcophagi say something about the deceased’s self-conception as well as serving as decoration, and it seems possible to apply his theories about sarcophagus decoration to catacomb decoration. He says that images of these virile young men also illustrate the virtues that the deceased would like to be identified with, such as being honourable, brave, young, and valiant, but also illustrate the aspirations of the decedent. Adonis was comforted in death by Aphrodite and is depicted as a sleeper, although he died of a hunting wound. Endymion, who slept eternally, is also depicted as a sleeping youth. He believes these images contain the hope for an afterlife.

Snyder (2003: 87) researched the Jonah images, and found that in pre-Constantinian art, the Jonah cycle appears frequently (Jonah cast into the sea 38 times, Jonah and the *ketos* (sea monster) 28 times, and Jonah at rest 42 times). Balch (2008) describes the amalgamation of the figure of Endymion with the figure of this Jonah at rest. This image, then, embodies the same ideals as the ‘pagan’ Endymion – it reflects a Christian hope of immortality. Once again, it is

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<sup>163</sup> Grabar 1968: 10.

possible to see the Christian *orans* appearing in conjunction with figures suggesting salvation and eternal life – echoes of the meaning of the *orans* suggested by the scholars mentioned in chapter one.

When we turn next to New Testament images (Table 12), they are interesting because, while there are significantly fewer New Testament images than Old Testament images, there are a larger variety of images appearing. Other than the image of the resurrection of Lazarus,<sup>164</sup> which appears 13 times, and the multiplication of the loaves,<sup>165</sup> which appears 6 times, all the other images appear only once or twice. This extends to other miracles, like the healing of the paralytic,<sup>166</sup> the woman with the issue of blood,<sup>167</sup> and the wedding at Cana,<sup>168</sup> but also to images of Christ himself, who appears in various guises as lawgiver, teacher, or enthroned. This supports the work of Rutgers (2000: 82-118), who argues that the Old Testament images were considered more canonically authoritative for Christians, even for ‘pagan’ Christians (as opposed to Jewish Christians), because of the images’ antiquity and because of the Christians’ discomfort or uncertainty about representing the Christ.

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<sup>164</sup> Jn 11:1-46.

<sup>165</sup> Mat 14:13-21; Mk 6:31-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:5-15.

<sup>166</sup> Mat 9:1-8; Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:17-26.

<sup>167</sup> Mk 5:21-43; Mat 9:18-26; Lk 8:40-56.

<sup>168</sup> Jn 2:1-11.

Table 12 – New Testament Scenes Appearing in Conjunction with an *Orans*

	Resurrection of Lazarus	Healings (various)	Apostle	Wise/ Foolish Virgins	Miracle of Loaves	Baptism of Christ	Wedding at Cana	Samaritan Woman	Images of Christ (various)	Adoration of Magi
<b>Callixtus</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Domatilla</b>	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Circus of Maxentius</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Jordani</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Hermes</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Maius</b>	4	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	2
<b>Marcus and Marcellinus</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Minus</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Nunziatella</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Thecla</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Anapo</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Via Latina</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Peter and Marcellinus</b>	3	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	1	1
<b>Four Orantes</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Sebastian</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Priscilla</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	13	3	1	2	6	1	1	2	6	3

Even more interesting is that there is not a single New Testament scene related to the crucifixion, the death of Christ, or the resurrection appearing in conjunction with an *orans*. When one considers that the *orans* is likely symbolic of life-after-death and rebirth, the absence of the crucifixion and resurrection is particularly notable, as these are the signs upon which the Christian theological interpretation of the *orans* was modeled.<sup>169</sup> This likely reflects an uncertainty on the part of early Christians about representing the shameful death of their god and the artistic tradition of using parallels or signs to represent the death of Christ. In this case, the *orans*, with its arms spread wide, may stand for the crucifixion in a period in which Christians were uncomfortable using this image.<sup>170</sup>

Having explored the division of New Testament imagery, the Good Shepherd emerges as a fascinating Christian figure. In the introduction, I discussed briefly how the Good Shepherd figure is a Christianised form of the figure of the *Kriophoros*, a figure with funerary associations, as well as pastoral associations. This figure appears 22 times in conjunction with an *orans* in Nestori's catalogue. This is extremely appropriate when one examines the 'pastoral sarcophagus' scheme of decoration which was used at the same time by both 'pagans' and Christians.<sup>171</sup> The 'pastoral sarcophagus' was a style of decoration which paired bucolic images, like trees, hunting, fishing, animals, and other rustic scenes, Koortbojian (1995: 80-82) points to the immortal Endymion's role as a shepherd for further popularising the usage of shepherds on pastoral sarcophagi, but then notes that the figure of the shepherd quickly evolved to something that was placed outside the main narrative of the sarcophagus. The shepherd, who appears at times old and at times young, appears adjacent to the main pastoral scene, often in a contemplative pose or

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<sup>169</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>170</sup> Viladesau 2008: 3-56.

<sup>171</sup> Bisconti 2002 : 53-74.

sleeping. He sees this image as representative of a “bucolic idyll” and connects the main imagery of the sarcophagus to scenes of a beneficent afterlife.

In addition to its appearance as a solo image, the shepherd also appears on sarcophagi as part of a trio of philosopher, orant, and shepherd. This scenery was used by both ‘pagans’ and Christians. It was a bucolic type of scene, meant to associate the deceased with the represented virtues – Pietas (the *orans*), divine care (the shepherd/ *Kriophoros*), and legacy (the philosopher with his scroll). These images were both comforting images because they represented the afterlife of the noble person as a bucolic paradise, but also because they spoke about the type of person who had commissioned the sarcophagus. This type of person was pious, fulfilled his obligations, and left a great legacy to his decedents in noble deeds.<sup>172</sup> This makes it possible to see the evolution of this image of the shepherd, as well as its popular association with the *orans*.

In the transition to Christian art, the philosopher’s testament came to be associated with the Christian Testament, that is to say the Bible. The shepherd became associated with the figure of Christ, with the lamb carried by the shepherd being equated with the deceased Christian. Finally, the *orans* retains her meaning of piety, albeit directed towards a specific belief in the Christian god, rather than simply insisting that the decedent has done his or her duty towards the divine. This creates a correlation between the notion of the bucolic afterlife and the Christian afterlife.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Bisconti 2002: 58-74; Snyder 2003: 42-44.

Snyder refers to the work of Klauser, who believed that the *orant* represented *pietas* and the Good Shepherd represented *philanthropia*.

<sup>173</sup> Prigent 1995: 102-108, 130-132; Rutgers 2000: 89-92; Nicolai, Bisconti, and Mazzoleni 2009: 120-121.

## *Conclusion*

Interpreting this vast wealth of data can pose multiple challenges, and was certainly challenging to classify and present. What becomes apparent is that the *orans* appears in a variety of physical locations, but is predominantly restricted to *cubicula* and *arcosolia*, the final resting places of the Christian faithful. These images appear frequently, but not in such great numbers that they appear to be formulaic or expected. They appear most frequently in conjunction with Old Testament images, but appear in a variety of other contexts.

What becomes clear from an examination of these figures is that the *orans* did not have one ‘meaning’ in the sense that it always represented a particular person or thing in every context in which it appeared. However, it does have a continuous association with prayer and piety, being associated with both the correct performance of religious rituals and also with status as a worshipper. *Orantes* represent a correct way of interacting with the divine, and gain the added visual signal of representing the cross with their spread hands. In this way, it is possible to call the *orans* a figure which represents prayer and piety.

## General Conclusion

The images with which the *orans* appears comply fairly standardly to the method of interpretation put forth by Rutgers and discussed in the introduction. Although the dating of the catacombs remains problematic, it is possible to see a variety of popular ‘themes’ of imagery which were likely used in differing ratios over different decades. The incredible popularity of the Old Testament imagery as compared to all the other categories suggests that Rutgers’ Old Testament phase, which he identifies as being most popular in the third century, was also the time in which the *orans* was most widely used. The relative scarcity of New Testament images, which Rutgers identifies as belonging to the fourth and fifth centuries, may suggest that *orantes* were no longer as common a funerary depiction in this period. In fact, this model seems to be the most accurate way of relatively dating these *orantes* and it raises the question why the image would have had such an extensive and popular usage in the third century, but slowly slipped from favour in the fourth and fifth.

One explanation is that other images were superseding the *orans* as Christians developed new methods to represent both worship and piety.<sup>174</sup> Another suggestion is that the catacombs were themselves undergoing a fall in popularity as people more popularly were buried around holy sites and as the saintly relics of the catacombs were removed to churches.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, the *orans* remains interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, its usage as a transitional Christian symbol can be highlighted. The *orans* was truly a ‘pagan’ image, but became Christianised because it was visually associated with Christ and his crucifixion, as well as representing a new

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<sup>174</sup> Nestori’s catalogue includes many more ‘traditional’ symbols of faith, including the cross and the dove.

<sup>175</sup> Crook 2000: 40-50.

form of *pietas* which was grounded in keeping the tenets of the Christian religion, rather than reflecting the ‘pagan’ notion of generally conducting appropriate religious observances.

This figure represents an important transitional moment in the development of Christian iconography because it is a time during which Christians became self-aware of their own differences from their surrounding culture, but had not yet developed unique methods of expressing those differences. Instead of creating new images to represent their faith, as they would later do with images of their God and his passion, they reused the images which were already prevalent in their context and simply ascribed new meanings to those images; however, they did not stray far from their sources. The Christian *orans* is almost identical in both form and meaning to the images of *adorantes* which were used in ‘pagan’ art and to images of the goddess Pietas, whose own appearance with raised arms may have been derived from the *adorans*. Pietas also represents an appropriate choice of iconography for this Christian image, as her cult was associated with conducting correct religious rituals, maintaining the appropriate attitude towards the divine, having respect for the dead, and assuring oneself of the afterlife, all virtues which are nearly analogous to the Christian beliefs in the afterlife and correct religious behaviour.

The *orans*, then, can be said to be a perfect way of examining the early Christian journey to self-identification. This journey begins with ‘pagans’ using ‘pagan’ images in the form of *adorantes* or as Pietas. The group then begins to think of themselves as Christians and continue to use ‘pagan’ images, as in the *orantes* accompanied by other ‘pagan’ symbols like *putti* or *genii*. The group then continues to use the ‘pagan’ symbols in conjunction with Jewish symbols, as they become more aware of their own distinctness from their ‘pagan’ culture, and produce *orantes* in conjunction with Old Testament images. Finally, their self-identification becomes much more overt and they use New Testament images in conjunction with the ‘pagan’ *orans*

because they have embraced the newest and most controversial aspects of their new Christian religion and because the Christian community has begun to ascribe greater importance to the new teachings of Christ. The final step is the abandonment of the ‘pagan’ image completely as Christians no longer need the old symbol because of the variety of new symbols they have developed. At this point, the *orans* falls from common usage. The image did not survive the transition to the new milieu of churches and shrines except in one context – as a stock pose for the saint.<sup>176</sup> This continuation represents the small remaining vestige of iconographic ‘paganism’ in Christianity, as the saint continues to express the notion of correct religious behaviour formerly expressed by the ‘pagan’ goddess Pietas. Nevertheless, as a funerary image, the *orans* was replaced and its meanings of prayer and piety were transferred elsewhere.

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<sup>176</sup> Crook 2000: 40-70.

## Appendix 1: In-Text Figures



Figure 1: Good Shepherd Ceiling Fresco with scenes of Jonah and male and female *orantes*, Peter and Marcellinus 51, International Catacomb Society Collection ([http://www.catacombsociety.org/database/search3.php?image\\_id=1269](http://www.catacombsociety.org/database/search3.php?image_id=1269))



Figure 2: Female Figurine from Ma'maryia, Egypt, c. 3650-3300 BCE. Brooklyn Museum, Accession No. 07.447.500 ([http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/123075/Female\\_Figurine/set/2af95b5a4068c42855fb4e2591603085?referring-q=07.447.500](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/123075/Female_Figurine/set/2af95b5a4068c42855fb4e2591603085?referring-q=07.447.500))



Figure 3: Clay Female Figurine – The Minoan Poppy Goddess, 1400-1300 BCE, Heraklion Archaeological Museum (<http://library.artstor.org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3kqeV15cS0%3D&userId=gDdGdj4t&zoomparams=>)



Figure 4: Gold Poppy Goddess Seal/ Signet Ring, Acropolis of Mycenae, Grave Circle A, 15th century BCE. National Archaeological Museum, Athens. (Reproduced by permission of the museum.)



Figure 5: Corinthian Plate of Demeter with Poppies – late 5th century BCE, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, inv. no. 537 (© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism /Archaeological Receipts Fund. Reproduced by permission of the museum.)



Figure 6: Statue of Artemisia *adorans* from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, c. 350 BCE, British Museum, inv. no. 1857.1220.233 ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=460574&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=460574&partId=1))



Figure 7: Marble Tegea stela of Zeus Stratios with Ada adorans and Idrieus (successors of Artemesia and Mausolus) and traces of a Greek inscription, 351-344 BCE, British Museum, inv. no. 1914.0714.1 ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=459626&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=459626&partId=1))



Figure 8: Great Cameo of France – 5-layered sardonyx cameo, c. 29 CE, Paris Bibliotheque Nationale (Kleiner 2010: 107)



Figure 9: Apostle from the *Hypogeum of the Aurelii* (Grabar 1968: 68)



Figure 10: Denarius of M. Herennius, 108-107 BCE, Minted in Rome, Obv: PIETAS Rev: M HERENNI Rev: Amphinomus carrying his father, University of Virginia Art Museum, inv. no. 1989.EL.14.10 ([http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n14\\_1989\\_10](http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n14_1989_10))



Figure 13: Silver *denarius* of Hadrian, 117-138 CE, Minted in Rome, Obv: HADRIANVS AVG COS III P P, bare-headed and draped bust of Hadrian Rev: PIETAS AVG, Pietas standing left, both hands raised in prayer. Altar to left, British Museum, inv. no. 1981.0517.2 ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=2657&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=2657&partId=1))



Figure 12: Copper *Dupondius* of Pietas, 22-23 CE, Minted in Rome, Obv: PIETAS, bust of Pietas, veiled and diademed  
 Rev: SC, DRVSVS.CAESAR.TLA VGVSTIF.TR.POT.ITER, British Museum, Inv. no. R.3589  
 ([http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1202429&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=1202429&partId=1))



Figure 13: Coin of Salonina, 253-268 CE, Minted in Rome, Obv: SALONINA AVGVSTA - Diademed bust, right, draped  
 Rev: PIETAS AVGVSTI - Pietas standing left, sacrificing at altar, University of Virginia Art Museum, inv. no. 1991.17.162 ([http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n1991\\_17\\_162](http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n1991_17_162))



Figure 14: Coin of Salonina, 253-268 CE, Minted in Rome, Obv: SALONINA AVG(VSTA) - Diademed bust, right, draped Rev: PIETAS AVGG(VSTI) - Empress as Pietas seated left with two children before her and one beside her, University of Virginia Art Museum, inv. no. 1991.17.160 ([http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n1991\\_17\\_160](http://coins.lib.virginia.edu/display-uva?id=n1991_17_160))



Figure 15: Livia as an *Orans*, second half of second century CE, inv. no. 637, Gallery of the Busts, Pio-Clemente Museum. (Reproduced by permission of the museum.)



Figure 16: Basanite sculpture of Agrippina the Younger as an *Orans*, first century CE, Musei Capitolini, inv. no. MC1882 ([http://en.centralemontemartini.org/percorsi/percorsi\\_per\\_sale/sala\\_macchine/celio/statua\\_di\\_agrippina\\_minore\\_come\\_orante](http://en.centralemontemartini.org/percorsi/percorsi_per_sale/sala_macchine/celio/statua_di_agrippina_minore_come_orante))



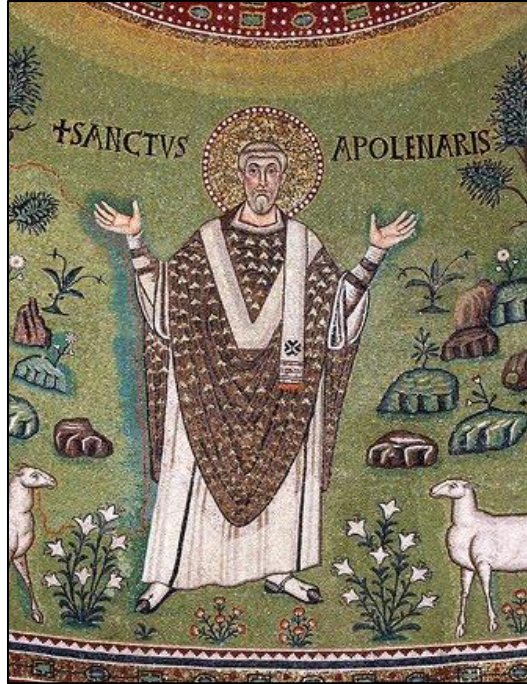


Figure 18: St Apollinaire as *Orans* – interior detail of apse mosaic in Sant' Apollinaire Nuovo, c. 549 CE  
(<http://library.artstor.org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8DIKaFkkKzQzJQ%3D%3D&userId=gDdGdj4t&zoomparams=>)



Figure 19: A Eucharistic Banquet, c. late second century CE, Catacomb of St Callixtus 22. Used by permission of the International Catacomb Society. ([http://www.catacombsociety.org/database/search3.php?image\\_id=3583](http://www.catacombsociety.org/database/search3.php?image_id=3583))

## Appendix Two: Catalogue of *Orantes* in the Roman Catacombs

### *Callixtus:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
2	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		2		Daniel and the Lions; Good Shepherd (repeated twice); Female <i>orantes</i> (repeated twice); Ornamental heads; <i>Genii</i> ; Flying birds; Flowers
6	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: Daniel and the Lions; Dove and vase of flowers Centre: Female <i>orans</i> Right: Dove and vase of flowers; Jonah in repose
15	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Wall (left)		1		<i>Genii</i> ; Remains of a female <i>orans</i> ; Decorative floral elements; Trellis
18	Crypt of St Cecilia	N/A			1	Indecipherable elements, including part of an <i>orans</i> .
22	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall		1		Jonah in repose; Two doves in flight; Digger; Laying on of hands on a tripod with bread and fish and a veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Eucharistic banquet; Sacrifice of Abraham; Digger
23	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall	1	1		Decorative lines; Male <i>orans</i> ; Head of person; Female <i>orans</i>
26	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: Goat with caduceus Centre: Female <i>orans</i> Right: Ducks; Goat with caduceus

27	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: The Three Young Men; Jonah in repose Centre: Veiled female <i>orans</i> Right: Jonah rejected; Resurrection of Lazarus
38	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		2		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Bust of Christ Right: Female <i>orans</i>
39	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch	1	1		Left: Male <i>orans</i> Centre: Dove in flight Right: Female <i>orans</i>
52	Decorated Niche	N/A		1		Indecipherable elements; Bust of a female veiled <i>orans</i> with two Constantinian monograms; Dove with a plant in its mouth; Grapevine with two bunches of grapes

***Domatilla:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
26	Decorated Niche	N/A		2		Inscription of Janus; Indecipherable elements; Two veiled female <i>orantes</i> ; Two sheep
27	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Lower Niche		2		Left wall: Female <i>orans</i> Back wall: Jonah in repose Right Wall: Female <i>Orans</i>
29	Decorated Niche	N/A			1	Seven baskets of bread; <i>Orans</i> (destroyed)
38	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette		1		Peter; Recess for the insertion of a picture; Vase with handles; Veiled female <i>orans</i>

42	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Font (top)		1		Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Garlands; Indecipherable elements
45	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Wall (right)		1		Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Noah and the Ark; Resurrection of Lazarus
51	Decorated Niche			1		Adam and Eve; Panel with a bust of an unveiled female <i>orans</i> ; Good Shepherd with sheep and birds on trees
60	Decorated Niche	N/A		2		Female <i>orans</i> ; Jonah thrown out and in repose; Female <i>orans</i>
62	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Wall (left)			1	<i>Orans</i> (remnants); Scene of Jonah; Horses; Fake marble decoration
63	Decorated Niche	Upper Register		2		Flock with trees and Good Shepherd; Veiled female <i>orans</i> (twice); Good Shepherd (twice); Flock with trees
69	<i>Cubiculum</i>	<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch)		1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Adam and Eve Right: Healing of the paralytic
70	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Arch			2	Left: Water from the Rock; Vase of flowers Centre: Good Shepherd with two sheep and two small/child <i>orantes</i> Right: Vase of flowers; Resurrection of Lazarus
71	<i>Arcosolium</i> (Destroyed)	Arch	1			Left: Multiplication of the loaves Centre: Male <i>orans</i> Right: Water from the Rock
75	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Arch	1	1		Left: Water from the Rock Centre: Good Shepherd with two <i>orantes</i> (male and female) Right: Resurrection of Lazarus

*Circus of Maxentius:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
1	Pillar (Right Wall)	N/A		1		Left: Rose petals; Bird in flight; Stylized flowers Front: Bird in flight; Vase with roses petals; Container with rose petals Right: Bird in flight; Female <i>orans</i> ; Bird in field

*Jordani:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
3	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette			1	Head of a person with stylized decorations (possibly an unveiled <i>orans</i> ?)
4	Decorated Niche	Wall; (Upper Register)		1		Female <i>orans</i> ; Adam and Eve; Water from the Rock; Daniel and the Lions; Multiplication of the loaves. Missing/ Partial: Good Shepherd; Sacrifice of Isaac; Daniel and the Lions; Fish.
7	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1		Christ teaching; Male and female <i>orantes</i> under vegetation; Birds covered with cups filled with flowers; Moses receiving the Law; Gift of the quail; Gift of the manna; Balaam and the ass blessing the Israelites
8	Niche	Front		1		Swags of rose petals; Female <i>orans</i>
9	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Wall (right)		1		Veiled female <i>orans</i> with holy intercessor

10	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Front		1		Left: Veiled female <i>orans</i> Centre: Two doves on either side of a vase Right: Water from the Rock
11	Decorated Niches	Wall		2		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Group of rose petals; Scattered roses; Doves Right: Female <i>orans</i>

***Hermes:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
2	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette		1		Female <i>orans</i> between two baskets of flowers
10	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		1		Fragmentary: Female <i>orans</i> ; The Three Young Men (sun flaming); Doves; Festoon of leaves
12	Decorated Niche	N/A		1		Female <i>orans</i> between stars

***Maius:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
3	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault			2	Resurrection of Lazarus; Water from the Rock; <i>Orantes</i> (sex indecipherable); Birds in flight

4	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette		1		Shepherd with cows; Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Good Shepherd; Jars of milk; Sheep
7	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		1		Good Shepherd; Resurrection of Lazarus; Water from the Rock; Female <i>orans</i> ; Noah and the Ark; Acanthus scrolls; Ducks
8	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch	1			Left: Adoration of the Magi; Adam and Eve in the Garden Centre: Daniel and the Lions Right: Noah and the Ark; Job; Male <i>orans</i>
		Lunette		1		Resurrection of Lazarus; Good Shepherd; Veiled female <i>orans</i>
9	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch			1	Left: Multiplication of the loaves; Noah and the Ark with <i>orans</i> (sex indeterminate) Centre: Daniel and the Lions Right: Adam and Eve in the Garden; Adoration of the Magi
		Lunette		2		Good shepherd with female <i>orantes</i>
11	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance Wall	1	1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Over door: undecipherable scene Right: [destroyed] Male <i>orans</i>
15	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette		2		Bust of the deceased; Two veiled female <i>orantes</i>
16	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1		Christ the judge; Male and female <i>orantes</i> with sheep; Healing of the paralytic; Water from the Rock; Moses removing his sandals; Resurrection of Lazarus; Vases of flowers
17	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Lunette			1	<i>Orans</i> (sex indeterminate); Doves bearing olive branches.
18	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Arch			1	Left: Dove in flight Centre: Gazelle Right: Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Daniel and the Lions; Dove

19	N/A	Lunette		1		Left: Wise virgins at the banquet Centre: Female <i>orans</i> ; Flying bird Right: Wise virgins at the market
20	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Shepherd with flock Right: Winemaker with ox-drawn wagon
22	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Inner Arch	1	1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Bust of Christ Right: Male <i>orans</i>

***Marcus and Marcellinus:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
5	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Front	1	1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Stylized flowers Right: Male <i>orans</i> ; Stylized flowers

***Minus:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
1	Decorated Niches	N/A			2	(Left to Right) Water from the Rock; Resurrection of Lazarus; Remains of <i>orantes</i> ; Scattered flowers; Noah and the ark; Daniel and the Lions

*Nunziatella:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
4	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1		Christ the judge; People in tunics and palliums; Male and female <i>orantes</i> with fish; Dove in flight

*Thecla:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
2	Vestibule	Right <i>Arcosolium</i> (Upper portion)		1		Right: Birds with baskets of fruit; Resurrection of Lazarus; Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Rose petals Left: Geometric decoration

*Via Anapo:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
8	Niche	Left Pier		1		The Three Young Men; Female <i>orans</i>
12	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Lunette	1			Male <i>orans</i> ; birds in flight; Architectural decorations

14	Niche	Right Pier		1		Interior: Female <i>orans</i> ; Fake marble decoration Exterior: Daniel and the Lions; Fake marble decoration
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***Via Latina:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
3	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Lunette		1		Adam and Eve; Female <i>orans</i>
9	Room	Arch	1	1		Left: Male <i>orans</i> Centre: Decorative panel with stylized flowers Right: Female <i>orans</i>
13	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: Noah and the ark; Fake marble mirror Centre: Decorative geometric motifs Right: Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Fake marble mirror

***Peter and Marcellinus:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
1	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Front	1	1		Trellis; Male <i>orans</i> ; Moon and stars; female <i>orans</i> ; Trellis
4	Decorated Niche	N/A			2	Shepherd with flock; Resurrection of Lazarus; Water from the Rock; Job; adoration of the Magi; Crib; <i>Orantes</i> (sex unspecified)
7	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Niche	1	1		Two representations of Psyche and three <i>putti</i> ; Male and females <i>orantes</i> ; Birds in flight; Decorative motifs

14	Pit Burial Chamber	Vault	2	2	Good Shepherd with pan-pipes; 4 <i>orantes</i> at the four corners (2 male, 2 female)
16	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance Wall		1	Left: Good Shepherd with pan-pipes Above the Entrance: Indecipherable scene Right: Jonah rejected; Female <i>orans</i>
19	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		2	Good Shepherd; Female <i>orantes</i> ; Birds; Gazelles
27	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance Wall	2		At Right- and Left-hand sides: Male persons as <i>orantes</i>
		Back Wall		1	Female <i>orans</i> with the name “HAIIO”
35	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		2	Two stylized peacocks; Moses removing his sandals; remains of an <i>orans</i> (likely female)  Among the plaster fragments from the vault of the <i>arcosolium</i> of the back wall: Female <i>orans</i> ; Good Shepherd; Jonah thrown into the sea; Dove
41	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Arch		1	Left: Daniel and the Lions Centre: Shepherd with pan-pipes with flock; Festoons of rose petals Right: Female <i>orans</i>
44	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Front		1	Female <i>orans</i> ; Vase of flowers
46	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Arch		1	Left: Water from the Rock Centre: Female <i>orans</i> Right: The prophet Balaam
49	<i>Cubiculum</i>	<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; right-hand wall)	1	1	Left: Female <i>orans</i> Centre: Dove; Festoon of leaves; Swastikas; Stylized flowers Right: Male <i>orans</i>
50	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance Wall	1	1	Left: Male deceased in the posture of an <i>orans</i> Right: Female deceased in the posture of an <i>orans</i>
		<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; right-hand wall)	1	2	Left: Female veiled <i>orans</i> Centre: Male <i>orans</i> Right: Female veiled <i>orans</i>
51	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1	Good Shepherd; Scene of Jonah; Male and female <i>orantes</i> ; Birds in flight

52	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Arch		1	Left: Water from the Rock; Resurrection of Lazarus; Adam and Eve; Dove Centre: Christ between two rolled <i>capsae</i> Right: Indecipherable scene; Female <i>orans</i>
53	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		2	Central figure orating; Two female <i>orantes</i> ; The prophet Balaam; Multiplication of the loaves; Sheep; Doves; Dolphins facing a pedestal; Hanging baskets
				1	Left: Jonah in repose Centre: Female <i>orans</i> Right: Water from the Rock
54	<i>Cubiculum</i>	<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; lower wall)		1	Left: Missing scene Centre: Female <i>Orans</i> Right: Missing scene
56	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance wall	1	1	Left: Seated man reading; Female <i>orans</i> Right: Male <i>orans</i>
57	<i>Cubiculum</i>			1	Good Shepherd; Female <i>orans</i> ; Festoon of rose petals; Birds; Scattered flowers
58	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1	Scene of teaching; Scene of Jonah; Sheep with a bucket of milk; Male and female <i>orantes</i> ; Scattered flowers
59	<i>Cubiculum</i>		1		Left: Male <i>orans</i> Centre: Remains of a dove in flight Right: Person with an open book
62	Double <i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		1	Female <i>orans</i> ; Festoon of leaves; Stylized flowers
		<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; back wall)		1	Left: Baptism of Christ Right: Female <i>orans</i> ; Festoon of leaves Right: The prophet Balaam
64	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		2	(fragmentary) Good Shepherd; Scene of Jonah; Female <i>orantes</i> ; Personifications of the four seasons
65	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1	Water from the Rock; Miracle at Cana; Multiplication of the loaves; Resurrection of Lazarus; Male and females <i>orantes</i> ; Birds in flight
		<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; back wall)		1	Left: Christ and the Samaritan woman Centre: Female <i>orans</i> ; Stylized flowers; Festoons of leaves Right: Healing of the crippled woman

		<i>Arcosolium</i> (lunette; right wall)		1		Left: Deceased woman in the <i>orans</i> posture Centre: Man with an open scroll; Festoon of leaves Right: Man with a scroll
67	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	1	1		Good Shepherd with pan-pipes; Male and female <i>orantes</i> ; Personifications of the four seasons
71	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall	1	1		Left: <i>Genii</i> with garlands and birds; Male <i>orans</i> Right: Female <i>orans</i>
		<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch; Back wall)		1		Left: Healing of the woman with the hemorrhage Centre: Female <i>orans</i> Right: Christ and the Samaritan woman
76	<i>Cubiculum</i>	<i>Arcosolium</i> (arch)	1			Left: Woman serving a drink; Ornamental head; Birds; Flowers Centre: Good Shepherd Right: Male <i>orans</i> ; Ornamental head; Birds; Flowers
77	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	2			Good Shepherd; Jonah under the pergola; Jonah thrown into the sea; Jonah mourning; Daniel and the Lions; Noah and the Ark; Male <i>orantes</i> ; Birds in flight
78	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall	1	1		Female <i>orans</i> ; Male <i>orans</i> ; Chevron decorative motifs; Stylized eggs and flowers

***Four Orantes:***

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of <i>Orans</i>			Description
			M	F	U	
3	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault	2	2		Bust of Christ; 4 <i>orantes</i> (2 male, 2 female); Scenes of Jonah; Peacocks

*Sebastian:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Part of Room	Sex of Orans			Description
			M	F	U	
5	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall		1		Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Good shepherd; Decorative male figures (perhaps athletes)

*Priscilla:*

Room Number	Type of Room	Type of Room	Sex of Orans			Description
			M	F	U	
1	<i>Arcosolium</i>	Inner Arch		1		Left: Veiled female <i>orans</i> Centre: Peacock showing its tail Right: Noah and the ark
5	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Vault		4		Good Shepherd; Scenes of Jonah; Noah and the ark; 4 veiled female <i>orantes</i> ; Birds in flight
7	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Back Wall		1		Person delivering a veil; Veiled female <i>orans</i> ; Woman with a baby on her lap
10	Decorated Niche	Field (left of Niche)	1	1		Male and female <i>orantes</i> praying towards a <i>capsa</i> at the centre; Figure (lost) indicating the two praying; Bust of the deceased (also lost)
14	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Right-hand Wall		1		Decorative lines; Birds in flight; Female <i>orans</i>
17	<i>Cubiculum</i>	Entrance Wall		1		Left: Female <i>orans</i> Over the door: Dove at rest Right: Nude <i>putto</i>

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