4. “EXIERUNT EDUCTI VELUT MANU DEI”:
DANIEL “tales” AND CHRISTIANS’ ESCHATOLOGICAL DESTINY

The definition of the role of the “tales” in the early reflection about Pascha and the “apocalyptic” manifestation of end times directly leads to another perimeter of paleochristian speculation in which the use of this biblical material is widely attested, namely the broad reflection about eschata and the condition of the believers after earthly death.

The present chapter will try to individuate and describe the modalities in which communities assumed and interpreted “haggadic Dn” in order to articulate the principal coordinates of their “eschatological conception”; also in this occasion, the exegetical instrument eminently used seems to be represented by typology, so that scriptural events are conceived as an antecedent and a prefiguration of future realities.

As has been done for the concepts of “apocalypse” and “apocalyptic”, also in this case it is necessary to offer some clarifications concerning the way in which the same term “eschatology” will be assumed in this context, at least because of the vastness of arguments and speculations with which it can be associated. Three peculiar features of preconstantinian “eschatological thought” have to be remarked and constantly considered in this occasion:

1) eschatology is rooted in history and represents a dimension which involves the entire community – in other words, the speculations about eschata do not deal with individual experiences but rather concern the church and its general salvation;

2) eschatology is indissolubly connected with Christ’s Pascha, which was considered as the same proclamation and beginning of the eschatological time; in this sense, eschatology

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3 As also G. Pelizzari 2006-2007, p. 161, notices, the “individual eschatology” represents a later thought, which cannot actually be ascribed to early speculation.

4 This is the hypothesis of R.T. Etcheverria, La Bibbia nel cristianesimo antico. Esegesi prenicena, scritti gnostici, apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento, Brescia 2003 (Introduzione allo studio della Bibbia 10), p. 383: “L’elemento
is “inaugurated” in Jesus and grounded on the same meaning attributed to *Pascha* and its consequences;

3) eschatology is associated with the “apocalyptic dimension”, which describes the way in which end time will be established.

Considering such points, it becomes easier to understand in which sense early Christian eschatology should not be principally assumed as a “chronological *datum*” but rather as an “hermeneutical coordinate” allowing communities to interpret their present condition in the light of a substantial distinction between the time concluded by Christ’s arrival, and the eschatological dimension in the offing.

Finally reaching the topic of the present research, it is necessary to notice that – though the whole panorama of Christian origins reveals the centrality of Dn “tales” in the reflection concerning the relation between communities and *eschata* – the two categories of sources testify different approaches to the matter. Literature does not apparently insist on such interpretation of Dn narrations, probably because it rather exploits the section of “visions” in this sense. The already examined “apocalyptic” interpretation of “tales” can be considered as the most fruitful outcome of the speculation about end times in a broad perspective, since the only eschatological tradition in the stricter sense attested in ancient texts introduces the story of the Hebrews in the specific development of the theme of flesh resurrection.

caratteristico della soteriologia e dell’eschatologia cristiana è la tensione tra il presente e la salvezza decisiva, raggiunta grazie all’opera redentrice di Gesù Cristo, e la speranza in una salvezza piena e definitiva con la seconda venuta del Cristo glorioso”.


6 This association can be considered as the logical consequence of a process whose roots have to be researched in Jewish context (but it is necessary to remember that the origins of Christian eschatology results from heterogeneous influences, from pagan-Mediterranean theologies to messianic tendencies, as described among the others also by M.V. CERUTTI, *Antropologia e Apocalittica*, Roma 1990): if in Jewish apocalyptic conception the scandalous persecution of the righteous ones identified with Israel activates the promise of their redemption from death, the completion in Christ (the righteous one) of such promise represents the very beginning of a “new time”, which will be introduced by imminent apocalyptic events (for further specifications about the meaning and the sense in which the definition of “apocalyptic” should be intended here see *supra*, chapter 3, pp. 95-97). For a panorama about Jewish eschatology see among the others A. CHESTER, *Future Hope and Present Reality, I: Eschatology and Transformation in the Hebrew Bible*, Tübingen 2012 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 293).

7 The efficacious definition comes from G. PELIZZARI 2010, p. 154.

8 Such evidence has already been discussed about the specific field of apocalypse, see *supra*, chapter 3, pp. 96-98. About the eschatological theme of God’s kingdom in *Dn* see J. WEISS 1993, pp. 46-47.

9 See *infra*, pp. 203-216.
Apart from such issue, the most relevant data emerge from the study of the interpretation of a specific biblical subject, the so-called “fourth figure in the furnace” granting salvation to Daniel’s companions exposed to flames.\footnote{See infra, pp. 217-231.}

The limited literary fortune of the “eschatological reception” of “tales” is balanced by the voice of iconography, which outlines a completely different panorama: a conspicuous tradition mainly attested in catacomb paintings – of which literature seems to be substantially unaware – attributes to the type of Daniel in the lions’ den a clearly eschatological interpretation, so that the prophet precisely becomes a type of the “saved martyr”, rather than a generic “martyrial figure”.\footnote{See infra, pp. 158-200.}

In other words, if the adoption of Dt “tales” in literary eschatological speculations remains a secondary phenomenon connected with specific districts of paleochristian reflection, visual documentation places the biblical story of Daniel in the very heart of its manifests about the destiny of souls.

For these reasons, the present exposition will start from the analysis of the rich and fruitful witnesses coming from iconography, reserving the literary outcomes to a conclusive remark.

### 4.1. Excursus. Eschatology and Iconography, from “Paradigmi di Salvezza” to “Eschatological Types”

The identification of themes and symbols endowed with an “eschatological value” in the context of iconography represents a sensitive and appalling issue that requires to be faced with a special caution. Contrary to what happens with the "apocalyptic coordinate", whose possible subsistence in the context of visual has not been considered at all\footnote{See supra, chapter 3, pp. 142-144.}, the eschatological value has been indiscriminately assessed by critics as an intrinsic character of the whole panorama of documents, so that all the types and figures have been vaguely interpreted as “paradigmi di salvezza”\footnote{This is the approach expressed, among the others, by F. BISOCONTI 2000 in the introduction of his lexicon, in part. pp. 30-31, where he affirms: “...l’arte paleocristiana rappresenta una manifestazione fortemente espressiva ed organizzata...per la comunicazione rapida efficace di concetti, misteri e dogmi, tutti gravitanti attorno all’orbita della salvezza”. See also S. ENSOLI-E. LA ROCCA (curr.), Auroa Roma, Della città pagana alla città cristiana, Roma 2000, p. 293, where the idea of “paradigma di salvezza” is defined as a “costante imprescindibile nella formazione del repertorio figurativo paleocristiano".}, expressing an undefined hope of salvation.

It is certainly not an issue both that through iconography paleochristian communities wanted to describe the path of believers toward God’s reign, and that in funerary context the biblical types must have been particularly assumed in a consolatory perspective; notwithstanding this, the
 attribution of a generic “eschatological-salvific” meaning to every figurative manifestation seems a candid simplification that does not give accounts of the complexity and the richness of this source.

Two principal consequences seem to derive from such approach: on one side, it contributes in diffusing an “interpretative vagueness” that drastically dulls the peculiarities of the single themes and often impedes the real definition of their distinctive meaning; on the other, it becomes difficult to identify and point out the specificities of the eschatological outcomes expressed by the iconographic source, so that its exegetical potential cannot be fully grasped. Since the principal cause of this problematic tendency – as already mentioned – is represented by the scarce attention paid by critics to the study of the external connection between single figures, the assumption of a method that focuses on iconographic programs can represent a first, important occasion to reevaluate the relation between visual and eschatology, in a perspective which tries, on one side, not to give it for granted, and highlights, on the other, the specific developments of every document.

A comprehensive overview of materials allows to identify a double acceptation in which the allusion to eschata can be formulated in figurative source:

1) as an “eschatological tension” characterizing the entire visual program. In these cases, the final salvation of Christians represents the implicit outcome toward which the manifest tends.

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14 Such interpretative “vagueness” and a possible explanation for it have been mentioned supra, introduction, p. 12.
15 See supra, introduction, p. 12.
16 The supra has been shortly introduced in the general premises, see supra, introduction, pp. 14-17.
17 Though such “eschatological tension” will clearly emerge during the analysis of catacomb paintings (see infra, pp. 158-200), it may be interesting to consider here a paradigmatic case from which such concept emerges with particular strength. It is the document of Villa Albani, REP 1:925, ascribable to the first fourth of the 4th century (see also J. WILPERT 1932, pp. 203, 220 and fig. 162:1), where the images of Daniel and that one of the Hebrews are associated to the scene of Jonah resting under the pergola. The “eschatological tension” of the composition is not principally due to the essential combination of the three themes, but it is rather conveyed and expressed through the progressive climax that guides from the prophet with lions – standing on the ground – to the Hebrews – emerging from the furnace – and finally to Jonah, resting under a pergola unusually placed on a high rock. This figurative “ascension” efficaciously evokes the progression “from the world” toward the eschatological dimension of reign, in a way that also reminds of those “stairs” cited in Acta Martyrum and leading the persecuted ones toward salvation (see in part. Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 110-111; 4:3).
2) As a specific “eschatological value” belonging to certain types and figures which directly evoke such dimension in a distinctive way. Each of these subjects can be associated with a peculiar eschatological *theologumenon*, and should not be considered as a generic and faint “paradigma di salvazione”. The following table gathers the scenes and the symbolic elements endowed with such “eschatological value”, trying to propose a possible distinction among their punctual meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eschatological themes</th>
<th>Eschatological types</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The inauguration of new times</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cana miracle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ in throne (the type is scarcely diffused and scarcely studied; for an example see REP 2:10; a possible interpretation of the scene puts it in connection with Jn 16:16-20)</td>
<td><strong>Ezekiel and the dry bones</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The promise of resurrection / salvation</strong></td>
<td>Lazarus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah spitted out from the monster (see supra, pp. 27-29)</td>
<td><strong>Lazarus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God’s reign</strong></td>
<td><strong>The eschatological banquet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah resting under the pergola (see supra, pp. 27-29)</td>
<td><strong>The good shepherd</strong> (see supra, chapter 2, n. 102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Salvific/trascendent markers”</td>
<td><strong>Clipeus and parapetasma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dove (see supra, chapter 2, n. 93)</td>
<td>(See in part. E. JASTREBOWSKA 1979, pp. 3-90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(See supra, pp. 138-142)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Tab. 1)*
4.2. The “saved-martyr”: Daniel in lions’ den in catacomb paintings

In order to efficaciously test and interpret the “eschatological reading” of Dn “tales” in iconography, it becomes necessary to pay constant attention to the relation between the scenes derived from the “book” and those endowed with an “eschatological value”. As already mentioned, the most interesting outcomes of this tradition apparently emerge from the assumption of Daniel in the lions’ den type in the specific context of catacomb paintings.

Also in this occasion it is useful to preliminary introduce some quantitative data. The first relevant evidence is the fact that in catacomb frescoes the figure of the prophet ad bestias is the most diffused type among those extracted from Dn, with 52 attestations18. The evidence is significant also because it traces a substantial difference in comparison with sarcophagi production, where the scene of the lions’ den is decisively less attested than the Hebrews’ one19. Concerning the diffusion of Daniel type in catacomb paintings, it is possible to notice that:

- the figure is associated 35 times with scenes of First Testament, against 33 times in which it is connected with subjects extracted from New Testament20;
- considering the iconographic programs and the disposition of the scenes21, the type seems to be principally combined with the following subjects: Lazarus (9 times); Noah (8 times); doves/birds (8 times); good shepherd (7 times); Jonah cycle (6 times); Peter striking the rock (6 times); other miracles (5 times)22.

An interesting evidence emerges from the survey: the prophet ad bestias, which is indistinctively associated with proto or neotestamentary figures, recurs 25 times in connection with some of the subjects that preferably allude to the resurrection and the salvation of the soul23: Lazarus, Noah and doves/birds. Moreover, it is often linked with the scenes of Jonah cycle endowed with an eschatological meaning: the symbol of Christ’s resurrection (Jonah spitted our from the sea monster) and the allusion to the rest in God’s reign (Jonah under the pergola). Such documentary evidence

18 The Hebrews in the furnace appear 21 times; Susanna 14 times and the prophet’s companions in front of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue only 2 times.
19 The value of the scene of the Hebrews in sarcophagi production is described in part. in chapter 2 and 6.
20 For a general panorama about the association between Dn types and other figures in catacomb paintings see infra, tab. 3, p. 201, n. 1.
21 For a methodological warning about the definition of these relations see infra, tab. 3, pp. 201-202.
22 For a list of all the subjects that seem to have a distinctive eschatological value see tab. 1.
may reveal the existence of a peculiar tradition interpreting the scene of the den in an eschatological perspective and in connection with the final participation of Christians to reign\textsuperscript{24}.

\textit{a) Daniel in Pietro and Marcellino catacomb}

The most fertile context to analyse the features of Daniel type “eschatological use” is represented by Pietro and Marcellino catacomb\textsuperscript{25}, not mainly because of the capillary recurrences of the subject in this area\textsuperscript{26}, but rather in the light of the paradigmatic significance and heterogeneity of the iconographic programs historiated: on one side, all the principal eschatological contents elaborated in protochristian visual are here gathered and assumed; on the other, those contents are developed in systematic association with the figure of Daniel, whose semantic potential finds a full expression.

The circulation and use of this scene in Pietro and Marcellino catacomb substantially confirms the \textit{data} emerged from a generic inspection of Roman paintings: in most cases, the programs in which the theme of the den is included can be considered as “eschatological” in a specific sense,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[24] This possibility is supported by the fact that other themes from \textit{Dn} do not keep up any privileged relation with the “eschatological themes” in catacomb paintings. As the \textit{tab. 3} shows, the figure of the Hebrews is never associated with the image of the ark, and it is connected only 4 times with that one of Lazarus; also the figure of Susanna does not show significant associations with salvific themes.
\item[26] The catacombs in which the scenes of \textit{Dn} know the most consistent diffusion are the following three: Pietro and Marcellino (20 recurrences); Domitilla (14 recurrences); \textit{Coemeterius Maius} (10 recurrences). In Pietro and Marcellino catacomb the theme of Daniel in the lions’ den returns 16 times, while Susanna and the Hebrews respectively show 3 and 1 time.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
since the prophet is directly connected with those types whose semantic core is represented by a distinctive and punctual allusion to resurrection, access to reign or salvation.

Considering the 16 recurrences of Daniel in Pietro and Marcellino, it is interesting to notice that, apart from 5 cases, the theme is always associated with at least a subject among Lazarus, Noah, Jonah spitted out from the sea monster jaws or resting under the pergola. Moreover, the figure – which appears to be preferably connected with more than a single “salvific theme” – is in most cases placed in eminent positions of iconographic programs, so that its “eschatological potential” ends up being strongly remarked. For these reasons and in the light of the complex architecture of the areas included in the cemetery, the inspection will be conducted through the analysis of the most interesting figurative programs attesting a peculiar kind of “eschatological reception” of the type, rather than considering, in a more generic perspective, the features and the working of a specific “iconographic couple”.

27 See infra, tab. 2, in red.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>NESTORI's classification of Daniel type</th>
<th>Name of the area</th>
<th>Placement of Daniel in lions' den type</th>
<th>Themes with which it is associated</th>
<th>Particular annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51 (p. 57)</td>
<td>Cubicle XIII</td>
<td>Skylight</td>
<td>Lazarus; birds</td>
<td>Daniel seems to emerge from an ark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 (p. 62)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Entrance wall (left)</td>
<td>Peter striking the rock</td>
<td>The figurative core of the iconographic program on the vault is represented by Lazarus and Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (p. 51)</td>
<td>Cubicle next to Quinzia</td>
<td>Bottom wall</td>
<td>Fossores</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21 (p. 52)</td>
<td>Cubicle III</td>
<td>Vault, superior area</td>
<td>Noah in the ark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 (p. 52)</td>
<td>Cubicle XXXIII</td>
<td>Lunette</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>The scene of Daniel is the figurative peak of a manifest concerning sacrificial Pascha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (p. 53)</td>
<td>Cubicle, Eliodora crypt</td>
<td>Vault, central area</td>
<td>Noah and Jonah</td>
<td>The scene of Daniel is the figurative peak of a manifest concerning Pascha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 (p. 53)</td>
<td>Cubicle XXVII b</td>
<td>Vault, inferior area</td>
<td>Jonah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 (pp. 54-55)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Under the arch</td>
<td>Orant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>42 (p. 55)</td>
<td>Cubicle IX</td>
<td>Entrance wall (right)</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 (p. 58)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Left wall</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 (p. 58)</td>
<td>Cubicle XIV</td>
<td>Bottom wall arch (under the arch)</td>
<td>Orant, good shepherd and dove</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 (pp. 60-61)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Left wall arch, (lunette)</td>
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<tr>
<td>74 (pp. 62-63)</td>
<td>Grave</td>
<td>Right wall</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 (p. 63)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Vault</td>
<td>Noah and Jonah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>78 (pp. 63-64)</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
<td>Vault</td>
<td>Healing of the paralytic, Noah, Lazarus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79 (p. 64)</td>
<td>Arch</td>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Lazarus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Tab. 2)*
4.2.1. Daniel and the resurrection: Eliodora’s vault

(Fig. 2)\textsuperscript{28}

A first significant case attesting both the centrality of the figure of Daniel and its connection with the salvific dimension can be found on the vault of the so called Eliodora’s crypt\textsuperscript{29}, where the image of the prophet \textit{ad bestias}, placed in the central area of the program, becomes the core of the entire exegetical reflection.

If undoubtedly the theme of martyrdom – evoked by the prophet – represents here the principal argument of the theological manifest, a reflection about the figures surrounding the centre of the vault may allow to grasp the specific acceptation in which it should be conceived.

\textsuperscript{28} The following images of catacombs are prevalently extracted from J. Deckers-H.R. Seeliger 1987. Other sources will be progressively indicated.

\textsuperscript{29} NR 57, p. 53; J. Deckers-H.R. Seeliger 1987, RCLAU 27, pp. 239-241; farbfot. 11. The crypt chronological placement oscillates from the beginning of 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} century, according to the \textit{status quaestionis} outlined by J. Deckers-H.R. Seeliger 1987, p. 241 (s.v. “Datierung”). See \textit{Ibid.} also for a short bibliography. An image of the vault can be also found in J. Wilpert 1903, \textit{fig.} 104. Apart from the vault, the cubicle preserves frescoes of male orant figures situated on the entrance wall, and of another orant type accompanied by the inscription HAIO on the bottom wall.
Three quarters of the vault’s program is dedicated to the development of Jonah cycle, here represented in its three most diffused scenes: on the left side, the image of the prophet resting under the pergola; in the inferior section of the vault, the figure of Jonah spitted out by the ketos jaws; on the right side, the prophet swallowed by the sea monster. Any effort to establish a hierarchy of importance between the scenes of the cycle seems here to fail, since all the phases of Jonah’s story occupy sections of identical dimension and none of them sticks out for peculiar characteristics; notwithstanding this, such preliminary evaluation deserves to be better calibrated in the light of the fourth subject placed above the type of Daniel, that one of Noah in the ark. The introduction of this scene may stress the importance of the second representation of the cycle, namely Jonah spitted out from the monster’s jaws, at least for two reasons:

- under a structural point of view, the two types appears to be reciprocally linked since they occupy a specular position: in this sense, the second phase of Jonah cycle is the only one which undergoes an exegetical deepening through the connection with an external figure;

   \(^{30}\) The scene is an equivalent of that one of the prophet ejected from the ship, an allusion to Christi passio, here formulated in a sort of contraction that often returns in catacomb paintings (for another example see the vault of the cubicle XXXVIIb of the same Pietro and Marcellino catacomb, see infra, pp. 165-166).
under the thematic point of view the *tertium comparationis* between the two figures is represented by the dimension of salvation: if the image of Jonah develops this eschatological coordinate as a direct allusion to Christ’s resurrection, that one of the patriarch seems – so to speak – to extend such meaning to the community of believers, which may be more punctually evoked both by the detail of the dove (symbol of the saved souls\(^{31}\)) and by the possible visual overlapping between the ark and the casket\(^{32}\).

The link “Noah-Jonah spitted out from the *ketos*” may allude to the connection between the last phase of Christ’s *Pascha* – the resurrection – and the access of the believers to final salvation. In this sense, the “baptismal” character of the type of the patriarch\(^{33}\) may perform the role of implicit explanation of the modality in which the community members can accede to the eschatological reward predisposed for them: baptism actually becomes the instrument that allows to extend the salvific prerogative of Christ’s resurrection to the destiny of Christians\(^{34}\). Through such figurative relation, the second phase of Jonah cycle on Eliodora’s vault benefits from a special treatment, that implicitly reveals the fundamental importance granted to the eschatological themes of resurrection and salvation.

In the context of this essential but clear exegetical elaboration, the figure of Daniel in lions’ den assumes the role of “pivot” which “connects” and “collects”, so to speak, all the semantic elements alluded by the entire vault: placed in the heart of the program, martyrdom becomes the “space of intersection” in which *Pascha*, and mainly Christ’s resurrection, meets the *passio* and the salvation of the community.

The central scene of Daniel does not just seem to represent the *trait d’union* between Christ’s and Christians’ destinies (which means between the images of Jonah and Noah), but it also picks up the role of landing place of the entire figurative program: in quality of iconographic acme toward which all the other scenes tend, it cannot be anymore considered as a generic allusion to martyrdom, but it rather evokes the salvific prerogative intrinsically “contained” in such experience,

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31 About this figure see *supra*, chapter 2, n. 93.
32 About the interpretation of the figure of Noah and its semantic levels see *supra*, chapter 3, pp. 138-141.
33 About this semantic coordinate of the scene see *supra*, chapter 3, pp. 138-141.
so that it becomes possible to suggest that the “martyr-Daniel” has to be interpreted here as already participating to the eschatological dimension of an obtained salvation.

If in the context of sarcophagi production the focus of the relation between Dn “tales” and Jonah cycle has to be clearly researched in the moment of passio – systematically evoked by the connection between the prophet thrown in the sea and the Hebrews in the furnace\textsuperscript{35} –, in the panorama of catacomb frescoes the interpretative axe shifts on the moment of resurrection: in this specific but paradigmatic case, Daniel exposed to lions is in fact the keystone of a circular program in which the symbol of Christ’s resurrection is exegetically stressed by the dialogue with one of the most diffused and ancient types alluding to the salvation predisposed for Christians since the baptism, that one of Noah\textsuperscript{36}. In this way, the representation of the den, that does not intrinsically include specific elements alluding to eschatology if considered in its individuality, seems to be somehow “charged” of such significance by the program in which it is included.

A possible confirmation of such interpretative proposal can be found on the vault of area XXXVII\textit{b}, known as the cubicle “dei pavoni nella volta”\textsuperscript{37}.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig4.png}
\caption{(Fig. 4)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{35} See supra, chapter 2, pp. 30-34.

\textsuperscript{36} It is possible to underline that such “baptismal salvation” may be stressed by the figures of the gazelles that occupy the four corners of the program. The most acceptable interpretation of this subject is offered by G. Pelizzari 2010, pp. 306-307, in the context of the description of the animals represented in the Aquileian musive program. The figure of the gazelle may be interpreted as a Christological image and as a symbol “del cristiano in cerca di Dio” (p. 307); moreover, starting from the allusion to Ps 41:2, \textit{Sicut circums desiderat ad fontes tuas anima mea desiderat ad te Deus}, the type assumes the same baptismal value associated by L. De Maria, in F. Biscotti 2000, p. 110, to the deer, a substantially equivalent figure.


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The central area of the program is here occupied by the Christological figure of the good shepherd with the flock, as well surrounded by Jonah cycle. In this case, the scene of the prophet in lacu leonis, placed in the inferior area of the section, is directly associated with Jonah spitted out from the sea monster jaws\textsuperscript{38}. The specular position expresses the privileged connection between the subject extracted from Dn “tales” and the typical figure of resurrection, in a way that clearly reveals the eschatological potential of Daniel in the lions’ den theme. The presence of peacocks between the historiated areas can be interpreted as a further allusion to the centrality of such eschatological dimension in the balance of the whole program\textsuperscript{39}.

\textsuperscript{38} The first image of the cycle, just specular to the rest of Jonah, is not perfectly recognizable. Since the other two scenes undoubtedly represent the ejection of Jonah from the ketos and the prophet under the pergola in their typical definitions, J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 244, probably by exclusion, describes the first one as “Meerwurf”. NR, p. 53, more realistically cites, as single element vaguely recognizable, the presence in the scene of the sea monster. Considering the recurrence in catacomb frescoes of representations in which Jonah is swallowed by the ketos rather than thrown in the sea from the ship, as it happens for instance in Eliodora’s crypt (see supra, p. 162, fig. 2), it seems possible to accept here the interpretation formulated by J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER, so that the scene would be a symbol of passio.

\textsuperscript{39} The generic interpretation of the peacock formulated by G.H. MOHR 1984, p. 277, seems to be principally derived from Christian literature, and signally from Augustine, who considers the animal as a reference to body resurrection, since “la carne del pavone è incorrotibile” (the allusion is to a pagan legend, accepted by Christian and cited in Augustinus, De civitate Dei 21:4). According to the scholar, this should be the meaning of the numerous representations in frescoes, sarcophagi or tombstones, where “spesso due pavoni, posti uno di fronte all’altro, bevono dal calice eucaristico o dal vaso che simboleggia l’acqua della vita”. L. DE MARIA, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 110, underlines how the symbol of the peacock assumes in paleochristian art “un significato specialmente rigenerativo, che dà una forte carica all’animale, tanto da divenire la figura zoomorfa più rappresentata”. For a monographic study about the figure see H. LOTHER, Der Pfau in der altchristlichen Kunst, Leipzig 1929; see also D.P. MIQUEL, Dictionnaire symbolique des animaux. Zoologie mistique, Paris 1991, pp. 205-206.
4.2.2. Daniel and baptism: cubicle III of Pietro and Marcellino catacomb

If in the case of Eliodora’s vault the possible “baptismal value” of the program was completely enshrined in one of the interpretative coordinates of the type of Noah, in the case of cubicle III the importance of such theme emerges in a stronger way and performs a central role in a figurative exegesis including the scene of Daniel.

The core of the iconographic elaboration is here represented by the image of the good shepherd, a subject alluding to the role of Jesus as guide of a community conceived and characterized as Christi grex. The concrete meaning and implications connected with such special membership, seem to be described by the entire program of the vault, resorting to types extracted from both Testaments.

The left area is dedicated to the scene of Abraham offering his son, an allusion to sacrificial Pascha mediated by a biblical typology. Such type of Jesus – evoking in particular the dimension of passio – is a match for a possible representation of Christ’s baptism, a figure exactly placed in front of

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41 About the figure of the good shepherd see supra, chapter 2, n. 102.

42 The fresco is in part badly conserved, but the interpretative hypothesis of J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 231, shared by NR p. 52, seems to be fully convincing.

43 As G. PELIZZARI 2013, p. 171, notices, the type principally alludes to the sacrificial Pascha of Christ. About the scene see also B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 92-95.
it: the extreme phases of Jesus’ earthly parable are in this way put in reciprocal connection, as to summarize and seal his experience.

The themes historiated above and below the central image seem to articulate a passage, so to speak, “from Christ to Christians”: on one side, the distinctive sacrificial character of Abraham scene is fully reprised by the figure of Daniel, but if the former develops the reference to passio in a Christological perspective, the latter associates it to the entire “martyrial” community; on the other side, in the same way, the tertium comparationis between the type of Christ’s baptism and that one of Noah is clearly represented by the allusion to the first Christian rite, but once again the former describes the specific experience of Jesus, while the latter extends that coordinate to the entire group of believers. In other words, it seems possible to affirm that the “horizontal” section focuses on two passages of Jesus’ life, which are Pascha-passio and baptism, while the “vertical” section associates the same themes to Christians’ experience. Coherently, as to sum up the entire figurative program, the central type of the good shepherd evokes the perfect connection between communities and their guide.

(1ab. 3)

The interpretation of the figure is not univocal and oscillates, as underlined J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 231, between a generic baptismal representation and an image of resurrection (according to R. BOSIO the scene would represent Lazarus’ miracle). The elements showed by the preserved parts of the fresco do not allow to formulate a palmar interpretation, but the most plausible hypothesis actually seems to be that one of J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 231, and by NR p. 52, so that in this context the scene will be assumed as a baptismal type.
In the context of this iconographic program, the image of Daniel in the lions’ den dialogues with that one of Noah in the ark. In a generic perspective, martyrdom is once again associated with a figure alluding to salvation from which it derives an eschatological value; in a more specific acceptation, the reading of the whole visual project demands to further interpret such combination as an allusion to the strong link between martyrdom and baptism45, two of the principal coordinates characterizing the life of Christian communities46.

45 The connection between the figure of Daniel and that one of Noah does not represent a peculiar outcome of this specific program, nor a prerogative of catacomb frescoes, being on the contrary well attested also in sarcophagi production and in the narrow category of African plates described by J. SALOMONSON 1979. Here the prophet is in some cases represented as emerging from a cantharus or from an ark (see for instance, *supra*, chapter 2, *fig. 7*): such development can by considered, according to the scholar, as a “combinaison intentionnelle” (p. 73), possibly deriving from the continuity between baptism and martyrdom.

46 On the four corners of the vault, NR p. 52, recognizes the image of gazelles, whose baptismal meaning has already been mentioned, see chapter 4, n. 36. On the entrance wall it is possible to find the representation of fossores (about these subjects see M. MINASI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 182-184). For the image historiated on the entrance wall see J. WILPERT 1903,* fig. 59:1.
4.2.3. Daniel and salvation: the cubicle of Susanna

The analysis of the two vaults so far exposed allows to face with a more stable equipment the study of a much more complex iconographic program articulated on different levels, which seems to summarize, clarify and certainly enrich with new elements the outline of Daniel in lions’ den circulation in catacombs.

The program of the cubicle XIII47, the so-called “cubicolo di Susanna presso il cubicolo dei quattro coronati”48, presents a rich theological manifest describing the progressive passage from martyrdom to salvation, sensibly exploiting – apart from the iconographic techniques assumed also in sarcophagi production to combine the scenes – also the architectonical structure of the area to convey the idea of a progressive “ascent” that also corresponds with a theological climax.

The figurative system of the cubicle can be first of all divided into three macro areas, coinciding with three different “levels” of the iconographic (and theological) development49:

1) the arch (inferior level);
2) the vault (middle level);
3) the skylight (superior level).

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47 The image of Daniel corresponds with NR 51, p. 57 (see also J. WILPERT 1903, fig. 232:1 for a picture). The representations of single parts of the cubicle are offered by J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987: for the vault see farbtaf. 29; for the scene of Lazarus in the skylight see farbtaf. 30/a; for the arch and the lunette see farbtaf. 30/b, 31a/b; 32a/b; 33a/b. The most interesting figures among them will be progressively showed. The description of the entire cubicle can be found in J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987 RCLAU 51, pp. 281-284, with detailed illustrations of paintings and a rich bibliography (p. 284); for a complete iconographic scheme of the area see IBID. RC Lau 51. The chronological placement of the cubicle oscillates from the half of 3rd century to 4th (see J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 284, “Datierung”).
49 See infra, fig. 6.
The skylight (superior level)

The vault (middle level)

The arch (inferior level)

(Fig. 6)
a) The arch (inferior level): the “baptismal” scene of Noah

The Arch (fig. 7)

Under the Arch (fig. 8)

The lunette of the arch is entirely occupied by the fresco of Susanna between the elders, another scene extracted from Dn “tales” and signally from chapter 13. Considering the specificities of the theme, which will be investigated in a further section of the present work, the exegetical core of the “inferior level” of the cubicle seems to be represented by a reference to martyrdom; as it will be exposed, the condition of the woman between the evil seniores may represent a reference to the paradoxical condition of the early communities, harassed in their historical dimension and destined to obtain a corresponding reward.

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50 About the typical features, the different modalities and the problems concerning the definition of the type of Susanna see infra, chapter 6, pp. 318-334; in this context the identification of the scene and its distinction from that one of the orant between apostles do not present any difficulty since at least two elements are convincing in this direction: the presence of the trees, evoking the biblical “garden” in which the woman was menaced by the elders, and the attitude of the same seniores, that seem to be approaching Susanna instead of just staying next to her. This image of Susanna is cited by P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 192.

51 It will be possible to describe, in a dedicated chapter, the reasons underlying the assumption of such interpretation of the type, see infra, chapter 6, pp. 318-334.
The specific acceptation in which the type of Susanna – symbol of those who sacrifice themselves for faith and of the “persecuted church” – should be here assumed, is explained through the visual program exposed under the arch, consisting in three figures:

- **left area**: Peter striking the rock;
- **right area**: Adam and Eve;
- **central area, overlooking Susanna**: Noah in the ark.

(Fig. 9)

The *tertium comparationis* between the subjects – which means the “semantic focal-point” of the program – seems to be represented by baptism. If the apostle striking the rock clearly alludes to the first rite in Christian formation\(^{52}\), its connection with the specular scene of the protoplasts may describe the passage of humanity *from* first *to* new economy: the access to the flock of believers, disclosed by the assumption of baptism, corresponds here with the emancipation from a sinful state symbolized by Adam and Eve, placed at both sides of the biblical tree. Such interpretation may be supported by the fact that the specific composition of the type of the protoplasts exactly illustrates the moment which follows the original sin\(^{53}\).

\(^{52}\) About the meaning of the scene of Peter striking the rock see A.M. Nieddu, in F. Bisconti (ed.) 2000, pp. 218. An efficacious reflection about the types of the apostle is exposed by G. Pelizzari, in R.E. Guglielmetti (ed.) 2011, pp. 37-80.

\(^{53}\) About this specific representation of Adam and Eve see D. Calcagnini-C. Carletti, *Note su alcune raffigurazioni dei protoparenti a Roma*, in C. Casale Marcheselli (cur.), *Parola e Spirito. Studi in onore di Settimio Cipriani*, I, Brescia 1982, pp. 741-762. The study delineates the principal coordinates about the different
Both the reference to baptism conveyed by Peter and the exegetical allusion to its effects, expressed by the theme of the protoplasts, find a full expression and a synthesis in the central representation of the type of Noah, another subject extracted from Gn.; as already mentioned\textsuperscript{54}, the figure of the patriarch of the deluge, which can be considered as a reference to final salvation, is also endowed with a baptismal value.

(Fig. 10)\textsuperscript{55}

If, in a generic sense, the eschatological tension – enshrined in the detail of the dove – represents the principal meaning of this figure\textsuperscript{56}, in this specific case the “baptismal character” of Noah deserves to be stressed in a particular way, in the light of the entire program of the area: both the reiteration of the element of water in the scene of Peter and the exegetical link formed by the apostle’s scene and the protoplasts, activate and enlighten this acceptation of the type of the patriarch, whose salvific relevance can be assumed as a punctual consequence of the Christian rite.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{54} See supra, chapter 3, pp. 138-142.
\textsuperscript{55} The image is from J. Wilpert 1903, fig. 186:2.
\textsuperscript{56} See supra, chapter 3, pp. 138-142.
\end{flushright}
Moreover, it must be noticed that the figure of Noah, which already demonstrated to keep up significant and frequent relations with both the type of the Hebrews and that one of the prophet in the den\textsuperscript{57}, is in this occasion linked with another theme derived from \textit{Dn}, that one of Susanna.

If the connection with the furnace principally highlights the “apocalyptic potential” of the scene drawn from \textit{Gn} and the association with Daniel underlines its salvific role, the relation with Susanna may rather stress the value of Noah as a symbol of the “martyrial experience” of the entire community: in this sense, the ark can be interpreted as a reference to the final salvation predisposed for the whole church since baptism\textsuperscript{58}. In other words, in the “inferior level” of the iconographic program, the persecuted church typologically anticipated by Susanna would become the protagonist of that process of emancipation from sin activated by the baptismal option, which represents at the same time both the instrument and the guarantee of salvation.

The program seems to support, in this sense, the interpretation of Noah already emerged from the analysis of the cubicle III\textsuperscript{59}: the meaning of the patriarch’s type should be understood in the light of baptism and martyrdom, but if in that context those coordinates were respectively evoked by the images of Christ’s baptism and that one of Daniel in lions’ den, here the scenes involved are those of Peter striking the rock and Susanna between the elders\textsuperscript{60}. Such parallelism does not anyway have to nullify the significant differences between the programs: as already described, in the case of cubicle III the presence of Jesus and Daniel activated a reflection about the meaning of the eschatological salvation, while in this case the figures of Peter and Susanna stress the reference to the collective path of early believers who belong to Christ’s church.

\textsuperscript{57} See supra, chapter 3, pp. 138-142 and chapter 3, \textit{tab}. 3.
\textsuperscript{58} See supra, chapter 3, pp. 138-142.
\textsuperscript{59} See supra, pp. 167-169.
\textsuperscript{60} As it will be further underlined (see \textit{infra}, in part. pp. 181-183) about the cubicle XIII, both themes will know a further reprise and development in other sections of the iconographic program.
b) The vault (intermediate level): the “second pergola”

(Fig. 11)

The “intermediate level” of the iconographic program is represented by the vault, whose central area is entirely devoted to the figure of the good shepherd. Also in this case, the figurative keystone of the project consists in a symbol of the Christian community, here represented as the flock of believers and their guide: the martyrrial church evoked by Susanna and saved by baptism, seems to be “physically transferred” and lifted, so to speak, to a higher level, where it can finally become in all respects Christi grex.

Around this central group, the same identity and experience of the “shepherd” is revealed and symbolically described through the representation of a cycle of Jonah in four phases. The interpretation of the most common scenes of the cycle does not present any specific problem: the sequence goes from the ejection of the prophet from the ship (symbol of Christ’s death), to its emersion from the sea-monster jaws (symbol of resurrection) and its rest under the pergola (symbol of eschatological rest)61.

61 About the cycle see in part. supra, chapter 2, pp. 27-29.
The fourth image, just opposite the _ketos’_ one, is generally interpreted as the rare – and probably more recent compared with the others – scene of the “sad Jonah”⁶². Trying to define the meaning of this type, P. PRIGENT hypothesizes that it had been added to the cycle, originally composed of the three other scenes; in this way, the ancient figurative sequence obtained a more faithful to the bible conclusion⁶³.

Such interpretative option does not actually seem satisfying, mainly in the light of the same working of the visual source, which often manipulates the texts it assumes, even in a substantial way⁶⁴. Though it would be impossible to conduct in this context an accurate and general inspection on such controversial “fourth figure” of Jonah cycle, it seems anyway appropriate to attract the attention on two possible interpretative coordinates of the specific figure historiated in Pietro and Marcellino fresco, trying to consider the immediate perception that the image must have raised in the audience’s perception:

- on one side, it is possible to notice that the addition of a “fourth scene” allows in this specific case to swell the symbolic exposition of Christ’s experience in the entire vault. It cannot be excluded, in other words, that the introduction of such rare figure was in some measure functional to generically stress the centrality of _Pascha_ and to enlarge its figurative extension. Its use should not actually be explained as an attempt to pursue a spatial “symmetry”⁶⁵, but more seemingly as an attempt to attract the audience’s attention on the core of the Christian message, that is indeed _Pascha_.

⁶² The vault and the skylight of the catacomb are cited in P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 160-161, in a description of the biblical theme of Jonah and as an example of the cycle represented in four scenes, including the rare type of “Jonas triste”, described as “le prophète est sous sa tonnelle, assis dans une attitude de réflexion ou de tristesse”. See also J. SPEIGL, _Das Bildprogramm des Jonasmotivs in den Malereien der römischen Katakomben_, “Römischen Quartalschrift” 73 (1978), pp. 1-15.
⁶³ P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 161-162: “Il n’y a vraiment rien qui puisse expliquer la scène du repos. Et c’est bien cela qui amène l’addition d’une quatrième scène plus fidèle à la conclusion du livre prophétique: Jonas assis, se voit reprocher son irritation par Dieu qui veut lui faire entendre qu’il n’y a pas de commune mesure entre la miséricorde faite aux hommes et la colère soulevée par un inconfort passager...La quatrième scène témoigne d’une volonté secondaire et délibérée de conclure l’histoire conformément à la Bible”.
⁶⁴ A clamorous case of this kind, here cursorily cited as a paradigmatic example, is represented by the type of the resurrection of the dry bones, extracted from _Ez 37_: in figurative production the scriptural miracle is performed by the same Christ, who assumes the role of the biblical _Logos_ (see for instance Capua sarcophagus, REP 2:11). Such example reveals the methodological weakness of any explanations of iconographic peculiarities as possible attempts to preserve the narrative fidelity to the biblical text, which is, on the contrary, constantly exposed to an exegetical and interpretative activity.
⁶⁵ This is the explanation offered by E. FERGUSON in A.C. NIANG-C. OSIEK (edd.) 2012, p. 344, who speaks about another representation of Pietro and Marcellino catacomb, in which the cycle of Jonah presents a “fourth scene” created, according to the scholar, “for the sake of symmetry”.
• In a more specific sense, such “expansion” of Jonah cycle seems to highlight and potentiate a peculiar element of the sequence, that is the scene of the rest, with which it shares the same iconographic structure: in both cases, a naked figure is actually lying under a pergola. Two differences can be spotted between the scenes of Susanna cubicle:
  1) in the traditional representation of the rest, the prophet is placed on the ground, while in the “fourth scene” he is reclined on a rock;
  2) in the former, the pergola is in bloom and garnished with vine (apparently ivy), while in the latter only *cucurbitae* hang on a bare pergola.

It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the pergolas substantially reproduce a “double rest”, and, if it would certainly be out of proportions to wonder whether the representations adumbrate a reference to a peculiar theological option, it remains at least possible to underline the centrality assumed by the themes of salvation and reign in this figurative program. Since the scenes follow here a chronological order – from Jonah thrown overboard to the prophet spitted out from the sea monster (which means from death to resurrection) – the first pergola may reasonably evoke the widespread and "traditional" reference to God’s kingdom, specifically alluding to the final landing place of Jonah/Christ’s destiny. It does not seem too hazardous to wonder whether the second bare pergola ought to be interpreted as the expression of a theological *datum* which is traditionally assumed as an implicit consequence of Christ’s rest: namely the fact that such rest is not a specific prerogative of Jesus, but implies a corresponding salvation for those who followed him.

In other words, the “fourth scene”, apart from representing a sort of “expansion” of the whole cycle that stresses the theme of God’s kingdom access, may specifically allude to the inclusion of the believers’ flock in the eschatological salvation disclosed by their guide. The hypothesis, which is here suggested in terms of a simple interpretative proposal, matches the presence of both the central image of *Christi grex* and the representations of orants with doves spacing out the single phases of Jonah cycle.

Summarizing what has been so far exposed, the “intermediate” level of this iconographic project can be assumed as a typological portrayal of Christ’s *Pascha*, particularly focused on its development in the eschatological rest, conceived as the conclusion of both Christ’s experience and

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66 The detail seems to be even more interesting since it does not represent a constant feature of this representation: in a fresco of the so-called “cubicolo della Madonna con i due magi” (still in Pietro and Marcellino catacomb), no difference can be spotted between the two pergolas coexisting in Jonah cycle; see J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, nr. 69, pp. 324-329; *tab. 49a*, A. GRABAR, *Christian Iconography: a Study of its Origins*, Princeton 1968 (The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts. Bollingen Series 35/10), *tab. 2*; J. SPIER (ed.), *Picturing the Bible: the Earliest Christian Art*, New Haven 2007, *tab. 10c*.

67 The interpretative proposal will be further articulated *infra*, pp. 184-186.
the believers’ one. The common destiny of Christians and their Lord would be synthesized by the central image of the vault: if the good shepherd represents an essential allusion to Christ, the flock recalls the fundamental role of the community members, who are as much ready to be assumed in the eschatological reign. In other words, it seems possible to affirm that the indissoluble unity of Jesus and his church is the real protagonist of the intermediate plan of the program.

c) The skylight (superior level): Lazarus and the “saved-Daniel”

The “third level” of the cubicle, corresponding with the skylight, is devoted to two isolated scenes: the resurrection of Lazarus and Daniel in lions’ den. The relation between the figures may be immediately interpreted as a reference to the link between resurrection68 – recalled by the miracle scene – and martyrdom – alluded by the prophet. The disposition of the images stimulates a deeper reflection: placed in the very acme of the entire cubicle, the theme of Daniel plays the role of “figurative peak” of the whole iconographic program, so that martyrdom does not seem to be here conceived as the “grounding” and the “fundament” of the resurrection symbolized by Lazarus, but, on the contrary, as a consequence of it.

68 About the meaning of the figure of Lazarus see infra, n. 69.
In order to better decipher such interesting conception, it is necessary to formulate some preliminary considerations about the figure of Lazarus, whose value and use do not actually imply any particular interpretative problem, but rather relevant specificities69.

The deep and specific meaning of the type of the miracle narrated in Ἰν, which certainly alludes to the divine power overtaking death70, can be fully grasped through a more conscious exegetical reflection. On one side, in quality of last sign described in the Gospel, it represents a "passaggio funzionale e strettamente correlato alla Pasqua di Cristo"71: it means that, apart from "illustrating" the resurrection of Lazarus, the theme evokes also the imminent resurrection of Christ himself who operated the miracle. On the other, the subject should not be eminently nor principally connected with the single experiences of either Jesus or Lazarus, but it should be rather conceived as an implicit reference to the wide inclusion of believers in the eschatological salvation.

(Fig. 13)

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70 As M. GUJ in F. BISCONTI (ed.) 2000, pp. 201-203 underlines, the core of this figure interpretation in paleochristian literature is exactly represented by “la peculiarità del miracolo, segno della potenza divina che vince la morte” (about the literary reception of the theme see E. DASSMANN 1973, pp. 283-289). As it will be showed, iconography seems to propose a more specific definition of this meaning.

71 G. PELIZZARI 2011, p. 53. Lazarus’ sign represents, according to R.E. BROWN 1979, p. 556, “la causa diretta della morte di Gesti”, unavoidably becoming, among the different miracles of resurrection, that one which entails the strongest relation with Christ’s Easter.
In other words, the scene would symbolize the guarantee of resurrection predisposed for the entire community and derived from the miracle introducing and preparing Christ’s Easter. Both its collective value and its relation with the destiny of Christians efficaciously surface from the cases in which the portrait of the dead substitutes the traditional image of the same Lazarus\textsuperscript{72}.

In the light of these considerations, it becomes easy to understand the theological background of a peculiar use of this type, which is often associated to the scene of Peter striking the rock, the clearest symbol of baptism in a collective perspective\textsuperscript{73}. The systematic link between Lazarus and the apostle, particularly attested in sarcophagi production\textsuperscript{74} but recurring also in the “inferior level” of Susanna cubicle\textsuperscript{75}, allows to hypothesize that the scene extracted from \textit{Jn}, evoking the victory

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{72} It happens in the case of the so-called sarcophagus of Sabino’s wife, \textit{REP} 1:6 (see also J. Wilpert 1929, fig. 139:3), where a female figure substitutes the image of Lazarus:
  \begin{center}
    \includegraphics[width=1\textwidth]{image1.png}
  \end{center}
  \textit{(Fig. 14)}
  \item \textsuperscript{73} About the meaning of the figure of Peter striking the rock see \textit{supra}, n. 52. See also \textit{supra}, chapter 3, n. 157.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Preferably placed at the extremities of documents with a single register of images, the scenes of “Peter’s rock” and Lazarus respectively seem to be conceived as the beginning and the end of Christians’ path, which goes from baptism to resurrection. Remaining within the panorama of sarcophagi, where the figurative couple is mainly attested, the most interesting documents, from the beginning of documentation to the constantinian period, seem to be the following ones (in chronological order): \textit{REP} 1:636, 241, 951, 6, 625, 15, 11, 770, 771, 39, 772; 3:36; 2:12. Concerning catacomb paintings, J.S. Partyka 1993, pp. 70-76 underlines the special link between the figure of Lazarus and baptismal images, in particular the \textit{miraculum fontis}, see in part. \textit{tab.}, pp. 71-74 for numeric \textit{data}. Examples of the connection between Peter and Lazarus in catacomb frescoes also come from Pietro and Marcellino area: the themes return in a specular link on the vault of Nicers’ cubicle (see \textit{infra}, in part. p. 193); they are directly connected with a representation of Daniel in the lions’ den on the front of the arch classified as NR 79, p. 64, (see A. Ferrua, \textit{Una nuova regione della catacomba dei ss. Pietro e Marcellino}, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 44 [1968], pp. 29-78, in part. 74). It should be necessary to further reflect about the frequent introduction, in the scene of Lazarus, of a kneeling female figure of difficult interpretation and traditionally connected with Maria or Marta (J.S. Partyka 1993, pp. 58-59); it cannot be excluded that the subject alludes to the bleeding woman healed by Christ (\textit{Mk} 5:21-43; \textit{Mt} 9:18-26; \textit{Lk} 8:40-56). If this interpretative option – that cannot be discussed here – was valid, it would be plausible to hypothesize that Lazarus type further evokes the inclusion of every believer in the panorama of salvation, with no discriminations depending on the prescriptions of purity and impurity of \textit{Lev}, which would appear to be in this way immediately overtaken through baptism.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} See \textit{supra}, in part. p. 172.
\end{itemize}

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against death, was perceived as strictly connected with the rite of baptism, representing the first and preliminary step in the path that brings believers toward salvation76.

Coming back to the skylight of cubicle XIII, it seems possible to affirm that such “baptismal” character of Lazarus scene offers interesting elements to explain its position “under” Daniel type: the salvation of the entire community would not be exclusively conceived as the final outcome predisposed for Christians, but it would be rather interpreted as a condition “intrinsically” inscribed, since the beginning, in the same baptismal choice. In this sense, it “grounds” and “precedes” the same martyrdom.

Such interpretative hypothesis requires to be more profoundly analysed in the light of a detail characterizing the image of the prophet with lions: Daniel is actually emerging from a sort of ark-casket that immediately reminds of Noah’s distinctive attribute77.

\[\text{(Fig. 15)78}\]

76 J.S. Partyka 1993, p. 76: “la representation du miraculum fontis lié avec la scene de la resurrection de Lazare peut être en quelque relation aver le baptême ou bien elle figure la promesse de la resurrection future pour la vie éternelle, dont le sacrément du baptême constitue le gage inaliénable”.
77 The meaning of this attribute of Noah has already been analysed supra, chapter 2, n. 98.
78 The image is from J. Wilpert 1903, fig. 232:1. A good parallel for this representation seems to be the Spanish fragment described by G. Bovini 1954, nr. 11.
Such element, far from representing a silent peculiarity, consistently enlarges the semantic *spectrum* of the type, which may be involved in a sort of *crasis* with the figure of the patriarch of the deluge. In other words, through such figurative addition, Daniel stops representing a generic allusion to martyrdom and intersects two further acceptations strictly connected with the scene derived from *Gn*: a salvific meaning and a baptismal value.

Placed in the ark-casket, the martyr seems to be first of all represented as “already saved” and “already participating” to that eschatological dimension to which Christian martyrdom brings in the same moment in which it happens. In a more specific sense, also the collocation *above* the scene of the miracle, at the top of the whole figurative program, contributes in connoting the martyr as the privileged addressee of the powerful, divine action involving, apart from Christ himself and Lazarus, the entire *consortium* of believers. Moreover, through the detail of the ark, the prophet seems to obtain a further “baptismal value”, not just because the scene of Noah generically evokes such meaning, but mainly considering the importance assumed by this theme in the specific context of the cubicle: as has been showed, the baptismal coordinate, which is a principal theme of the arch section, is indeed also strictly – though implicitly – connected with the same image of Lazarus.

Conclusively, the efficacious image of Daniel, placed at the top of the entire program, gathers, summarizes and potentiates all the elements cited in the whole area, strongly remarking the indissoluble link between water and blood baptism as instruments of the eschatological salvation in protochristian life.

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79 The use of the ark to connect the figure of Noah with that one of Daniel does not actually represent a semantic *unicum*: a parallel can be identified in the already examined case of Velletri sarcophagus, see supra, chapter 2, pp. 55-57.

80 Such conception clearly emerges from the entire martyrrial literature, where the *dies natalis* of the victims coincides with the day of their martyrdom (see generically R. CACITTI 1994).

81 See supra, pp. 172-175.

82 See also supra, chapter 3, pp. 142-143, where the theme has been also connected with *Passio Perpetua*. 
Summarizing and integrating the exegetical elements emerged from the analysis of the three iconographic “levels”, it becomes possible to propose a full reading of the cubicle XIII of Pietro and Marcellino catacomb.

Combining the figure of Susanna with a synthetic but clear development in the area of the arch, the inferior section seems to introduce a reflection about the role of baptism in the passage from First Testament to the economy inaugurated by Christ. In the elaboration of this preliminary portrait of the believers, the martyrlic perspective already plays an important role, being evoked by the figure of a woman that symbolically expresses the “paradoxical” essence of Christian life, in which the earthly persecution becomes a guarantee of the eternal salvation.83

This portion of the cubicle already informs about the centrality of the community in the balance of the iconographic program, since most of the figures included in this area imply a punctual reference to the consortium of Christians: this consideration does not just count for the already mentioned representation of Susanna exposed to the cruel elders, whose “collective value” will be investigated and pointed out in the successive chapter84, but also for the themes of Peter – the apostle guide of the community85 – Noah – whose ark can be interpreted as a symbol of the church86 – and the protoplasts – alluding to the condition of the entire humanity before Christ’s arrival87.

The “intermediate level” of the program preserves and gives further sense to the description of the path of community toward salvation, enriching the figurative panorama with Christological subjects: it is not a case that the centre of the vault is devoted to the image of the good shepherd with the flock, symbolizing par excellence the group of believers with their guide. This representation of Jesus unavoidably routes the theological reflection toward the theme of Pascha, typologically reproduced through a complete cycle of Jonah in four scenes. The sequence seems to remark with special intensity the “salvific landing place” represented by the rest, through the iconographic duplication of Jonah’s pergola. Though the protagonist of the section is undoubtedly Christ, it must

83 See infra, chapter 6, pp. 318-334.
84 See infra, chapter 6, pp. 318-334.
85 See supra, chapter 3, n. 157.
86 See supra, chapter 3, n. 155.
87 See supra, chapter 4, n. 53.
be noticed that the church – explicitly represented through the “choir” of orants, symbolized by the flock and possibly recalled through the scene of the “second pergola” – is constantly mentioned in quality of real object of the salvation disclosed by him. As has been noticed, the unity of Jesus and his followers is the real main topic of the area.

In the vertical evolution “from the arch to the vault”, the iconographic program seems to describe the passage from the preliminary formation of the community, made possible through baptism, to the more mature definition of such group as Christi grex. Especially in the case of a “martyrial church” – such as the one evoked since the beginning by Susanna – the proximity with Christ, guide of his flock, mainly implies the participation of the choir of believers to the heart of the kerygma, that is Pascha. The conclusion of this path consists in the eschatological access to kingdom and rest.

The “third level” of the program, corresponding with the “highest” area of the skylight, seems to summarize and bring to further consequences all the theological arguments introduced and developed in the previous sections. Here, the image of Lazarus, an allusion to Christ’s and Christians’ resurrection, “sustains” the figure of Daniel in lions’ den emerging from an ark-casket. The “saved-martyr” is conceived as the principal and eminent depository of that final salvific reward which is already disclosed by baptism and finds its real meaning in the believers’ participation to Christ’s experience. Placed at the top of the entire program, the type extracted from Dn “tales” seems to be assumed as the symbol of a theological conception that interprets martyrdom as the result of a constant tension between the preliminary, baptismal salvation and the final, eschatological dimension.

The eschatological value of the frescoes is apparently reinforced by the presence of birds, disseminated in the whole iconographic project not just to perform a decorative function but mainly in quality of images of the saved souls. At the same time, the possible eschatological reading of the skylight strengthens the interpretative option proposed for the fourth, problematic scene of Jonah cycle: as in the third level of the program the saved-martyr (Daniel) is linked with a type alluding to Christ’s resurrection (Lazarus), also in the intermediate section, the “traditional” image of Jonah under the pergola, evoking the rest in a Christological perspective, is combined with a “second pergola”, that may be interpreted as a reference to Christians’ access to such rest.

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88 About the symbolic value of doves and birds see supra, chapter 2, n. 93.
In other words, it cannot be excluded that the pergola with ivy assumes in the vault the same “preliminary and preparatory” function displayed by the scene of Lazarus in the skylight: that one to bring believers, together with Christ, toward eschatology.\footnote{Nor can be excluded a connection between the figure of Daniel in the skylight and the naked subject sitting on the rock under the\textit{ cucurbitae}, as to establish a direct link between the martyrs and the saved ones. The association between the prophet and a cycle with the so-called “sad Jonah” would not after all represent a specificity of this cubicle of Pietro and Marcellino catacomb, since it also returns in the case of NR 77, p. 63, always in the vault. Here the scenes of the cycle are three, since the expulsion of the prophet from the \textit{ketoj}’ jaws does not show: curiously, the image of the rest - possibly “duplicated” in the representation of the “sad prophet” - is directly connected with the symbol of death, without the mediation of the theme of resurrection. A.\textsc{ Ferrua}, \textit{Una nuova regione della catacomba dei ss. Pietro e Marcellino}, “\textit{Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana}” 46 (1970), pp. 7-83, in part. p. 15, offers a scheme of the iconographic program of the section; Daniel is placed in front of the first scene of Jonah cycle, that one of the prophet thrown in the sea from the ship, so that Jesus’ death is associated with martyrdom, in a “Quartodeciman acceptation” (see supra, chapter 2, pp. 27-29); moreover, the theme occupies the area of the vault corresponding with the entrance of the cubicle, where also Noah is historiated. In this way, the eminent symbol of martyrdom maintains a special relation with \textit{Pascha-passio} and with the baptismal-salvific theme of the patriarch. Also in this case, the allusion to community does not just emerge from the cited reference to the ark, but it seems strongly remarked by the presence of orant figures in three out of four corners of the iconographic program; the fourth area is significantly devoted to the representation of an \textit{avis} alluding to the saved soul.}
4.2.4. Daniel and the community: the cubicle of Nicerus

The themes and the theological outcomes developed in the articulated program of the cubicle of Susanna seem to return also in the so-called “cubicolo di Nicerus”\(^{90}\), where the figure of Daniel in the lions’ den performs, once again, an eschatological function, in association with three subjects alluding to Christians’ salvation and resurrection.

If the principal characteristic of the cubicle XIII seemed to be represented by its “vertical” structure, the plan of Nicerus area principally extends in an horizontal disposition: the sections in which the program can be scanned actually consist in three walls with arches surrounding a central vault\(^{91}\). The entrance to the whole chamber is marked by two orant figures, a male and a female, probably evoking the entire community\(^{92}\).

\(^{90}\) J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, RCLau 65, pp. 312-318; tab. 44-46; farbtaf. 43-46; in part. the figure of Daniel is farbtaf. 44a. About the frescoes see also G.P. KIRSCH, Un gruppo di cripte dipinte inedithe del cimitero dei ss. Pietro e Marcellino, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 7 (1930), pp. 203-234, in part. pp. 210-220. The “Datierung” proposed by J. DECKERS-H.R. SEELIGER 1987, p. 381, for the area is, generically, “mittelkonstantinisch”; also in this case scholars oscillates between 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) and 4\(^{\text{th}}\) century (for bibliographical references see IBID., p. 318.)

\(^{91}\) The scheme infra, see fig. 16, tries to show the organization of the iconographic program.

\(^{92}\) See fig. 17, “Entrance”.
(Fig. 17)
a) The bottom-wall

In the area of the bottom wall, which is immediately visible to the believers who accede to the chamber, the lunette of the arch shows the type of Christ healing the bleeding woman. Due to its prominent position in the whole figurative plan, the image can be considered as the real focus of the section.

(Fig. 20)\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{93}Detail of Christ with the bleeding woman.
The scene, which represents a woman caught in the action of touching Jesus’ clothes, can be interpreted as an allusion to the strength of faith, whereby a single contact vehicles salvation; in this sense, it is possible to affirm that the real protagonist of the scene is not actually Christ, but rather the woman, who becomes herself the same symbol of the *vera fide*\(^{94}\). The kneeling figure, by which Jesus accepts to be touched, may also evoke the theme of the emancipation from law and from the concept of purity and impurity characterizing New Testament economy\(^{95}\).

\(^{94}\) The type of the bleeding woman is derived from the narration of *Mt* 9:20-22; *Mk* 5:25-29; *Lk* 8:43-48 and is interpreted by scholars as “emblema della fede nella divinità taumaturgica del Maestro”, since the protagonist was moved by such a strong faith that she could reach salvation only by touching Christ (see M. PERRAYMOND in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 171-173. About the theme see M. PERRAYMOND, *Il miracolo dell’emorroissa nell’arte paleocristiana*, in F. VATTIONI [cur.], *Sangue e antropologia. Riti e culto. Atti della V Settimana di Studi*, Roma 1984, pp. 1719-1728). In addition to such interpretative option, early Christian literature receives the synoptic passages also as a symbol “del peccato annullato dal perdono...della vittoria su Satana...dell’importanza fondamentale del pentimento...della chiesa che mette a nudo le sue piaghe e chiede che vengano sanate” (M. PERRAYMOND in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 172). In spite of this, since the prevailing element in iconographic context is undoubtedly the gesture of the woman, it seems reasonable to consider the strength of the faith evoked by it as the real core of the figurative reception of the scene. The same gesture represents the element that allows to distinguish this type from the miracle of the daughter of the Canaanite woman: in spite of “elementi simili che caratterizzano l’impianto figurativo delle rispettive scene”, a sensible difference seems to be represented by the fact that “la Cananea si prostra e supplica il Maestro, indipendentemente dall’azione compiuta da quest’ultimo, di salvare la figlia (Mt 15:21-28; Mc 7:24-30), mentre l’emorroissa tocca o fa l’atto di sfiorare il lembo del pallo di Cristo” (M. PERRAYMOND in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 140-141. About the peculiarities of these subjects see M. PERRAYMOND, *L’emorroissa e la Cananea nell’arte paleocristiana*, in “Bessarione” 5 [1986], pp. 147-174). In this context it seems necessary to simply underline that such distinctive gesture belongs as well to the figure of difficult interpretation placed at Christ’s feet in the image of Lazarus (an exception can be found in the representation of Jonah sarcophagus; about this peculiar case see the convincing interpretation of G. PELIZZARI, in R.E. GUGLIELMETTI 2011, in part. pp. 50-52); such detail suggests to consider the possibility that the feminine figure in the resurrection type actually is the bleeding woman. If so, the interpretative *tertium comparationis* of the crisis Lazarus/bleeding woman could be connected both with the role of faith in salvation and, more punctually, in resurrection (about the scene of Lazarus see *supra*, chapter 4, n. 69); and with the link between the emancipation from law (about this meaning of the bleeding woman see *infra*, chapter 4, n. 95) and the emancipation from death (about the possible interpretation of such combining see G. PELIZZARI, in R.E. GUGLIELMETTI 2011, p. 52-53). Though a real inspection about the kneeling figure cannot be conducted here, it is important to consider that the bleeding woman episode is “wrapped” in a story of resurrection also in synoptic tradition, where it is included in the episode of Jarius’ daughter (Mt 9:18-26; Mc 5:21-43; Lk 8:40-56). In this sense, the figurative source would not have radically changed nor “betrayed” the nature and the vocation of the synoptic stories: extrapolating the episode of the woman and associating it with “another” story of resurrection, iconography simply operates a sort of “different stitching” of evangelical materials, whose intrinsic meaning is anyway preserved: the link between faith and resurrection is confirmed, but the context chosen by visual documents to express this theological content would not be “a” generic resurrection, but rather “the” resurrection *par excellence*, that is Lazarus’ one, whose specificities and whose special connection with Christ’s *Pascha* have already been exposed (see *supra*, in part. pp. 180-181).

\(^{95}\) As M. PERRAYMOND in F. VATTIONI (cur.) 1984, pp. 1719-1720, underlines, “essa...che secondo la tradizione ebraica era ritenuta in stato di impurità, per cui non poteva né avvicinarsi né essere avvicinata da alcuno, non supplicò il Cristo di imporre le mani e tanto meno chiese qualcosa; essa credette in maniera totale nel Maestro con la certezza di salvarsi”. At the same time, the status of bleeding women in first economy suggests the exceptionality of this figure’s integration in Christ’s salvific project: “...con quel «figlia mía», *unicum* nei vangeli,... il Cristo la toglie dal suo esilio sociale e religioso e la reintegra nella famiglia dei credenti. E’ la fede della donna, quindi, che permette il miracolo; Cristo, pur guidando l’avvenimento, dato che la guarigione sopravviene quando lui la decreta, è il solo mezzo della salvezza” (such development

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Under the arch, the scene of Christ with the Samaritan dialogues with an image of the same Jesus with the cripple woman (the themes are placed in specular positions)⁹⁶.

If the type of the Samaritan is usually considered by critics as an allusion to the extension of the promise of salvation to ecclesia ex gentibus⁹⁹, the representation of the mulier inclinata can be associated with Christ’s openness toward “marginal figures” of the society¹⁰⁰.

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⁹⁶ The scene is derived by Lk 13:10-13. For an analysis of this rare figure, that does not seem more than two other attestations on documents of Museo Nazionale Romano, see L. DE MARIA, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 280-281. See also L. DE MARIA, Una discusa scena nella catacomba dei Santi Marcellino e Pietro: battesimo o guarigione?, “Bessarione” 9 (1992), pp. 141-153.

⁹⁷ Christ with the Samaritan.

⁹⁸ Christ with the cripple woman.

⁹⁹ As D. GOFFREDO, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 275-276 underlines, the scene, extracted from Jn 4:4-42, represents one of the less diffused types of the entire iconographic production (the earliest in roman context is attested in Pretestato “cubicolo della coronatio”), and does not attest a fix structure. The presence of the water jug, held by the Samaritan in her hands, is one of the elements that allow to define a precise interpretation of the scene. About the figure see also G. BINAZZI, Cristo e la Samaritana al pozzo nella iconografia dei primi secoli, “Bessarione” 4 (1989), pp. 161-172.

¹⁰⁰ Due to the exiguity of attestations, it is impossible to formulate a more specific and conscious interpretation; the literary exegesis of the theme remains as much vague, but it seems to be focused on the fact that the healing happened on Saturday (see L. DE MARIA, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 280).
In the light of the entire section, it seems possible to interpret this portion of the cubicle in a double sense:

- as an allusion to the powerful role of Christ who operates miracles on behalf of figures that would have been excluded by any salvific perspective in First Testament;
- as a reference to the strength and the power of these protagonists, who become themselves the symbols of that vera fide which guides toward salvation\textsuperscript{101}.

In addition to the semantic meanings here mentioned, an evident tertium comparationis linking all the representations is certainly the gender of the characters. The arch is indeed fully devoted to women, in a way that bears witness to their fundamental role in paleochristian iconography\textsuperscript{102}. The fact that the central area under the arch is dedicated to the portrait of an orant woman stimulates the hypothesis that the entire figurative development of the section implicitly alludes to the owner of the cubicle, “probabilmente una donna”\textsuperscript{103}, whose identity (and, consequently, whose destiny) may have seemingly been overlapped with that one of the synoptic “exemplary” figures. In other words, as it happens in Susanna cubicle, also in this case a member of the community, who evokes the entire group of the believers, performs an active and important role in the theological manifest.

\textbf{(Fig. 23)}

\textsuperscript{101} The presence of peacocks at both sides of the central lunette confirms that the final goal of this program is represented by salvation - and signally resurrection. Those “decorative” elements are not actually lacking in semantic value. About the symbolic meaning of the peacock see supra, chapter 4, n. 39.

\textsuperscript{102} The importance of feminine figures mainly emerges from the study of Susanna’s type, see infra, chapter 6, pp. 318-334.

\textsuperscript{103} See L. DE MARIA, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 280.
If the program of the bottom wall seems to articulate, so to speak, a theological discourse concerning the condition and the destiny of the community members already portrayed at the entrance of the area, mainly stressing the centrality of faith in their evolution toward salvation, the left and the right walls, though developing an internal and individual iconographic program, are also involved in a more complex, reciprocal dialogue.

The composition of the left wall lunette includes the scene of Daniel in the lions’ den, which can be considered as the real figurative core of the section, principally because of its central location. The presence of doves around the type immediately suggests to attribute to it an eschatological character: accompanied by the most diffused symbols of the soul (all of them keeping an olive branch in the paws and two of them historiated while flying), the prophet should not be interpreted
as a generic martyrrial figure, since he rather assumes the specific connotation of the saved martyr\textsuperscript{104}. This interpretative proposal may be confirmed by the presence of the type of Lazarus under the arch\textsuperscript{105}; as it happens in Susanna cubicle, Daniel \textit{ad bestias} maintains a specific and direct connection with the privileged symbol of resurrection\textsuperscript{106}.

(Fig. 26)

In the left and right areas under the same arch, both a feminine figure with a closed roll and a male subject reading are represented: in a generic sense, they seem to reaffirm the absolute centrality of the community members in the theological manifest in which they are actively included since the very beginning. In this perspective, it becomes possible to wonder whether the figures represent a reiteration of the same portraits placed at the entrance of the whole cubicle\textsuperscript{107}; if so, they could probably be interpreted as a sort of “mirror” in which the believers gathered in the area could reflect themselves. Historiated at the entrance of the chamber and then included in the core of the same iconographic program, these subjects may evoke the essential role of \textit{catechesis}\textsuperscript{108} in the path that guides toward resurrection; more precisely, they may refer to the exact “figurative” \textit{catechesis} opened out in the face of the community reunited in Pietro and Marcellino catacomb and conceived as an instrument of salvation.

\textsuperscript{104} The role of the doves will be further clarified in connection with the analysis of the “figurative couple” formed by Daniel and Noah, see infra, pp. 195-197. An interesting figurative parallel for this representation of the scene of Daniel can be identified in plastic production and signal in the sarcophagus of Lungara, where the portrait of the dead is surrounded by seven doves clearly alluding to a condition of salvation. About the document see G. Pelizzari 2013, pp. 125-127.

\textsuperscript{105} NR p. 60, puts a question mark next to such interpretation, that seems anyway to be acceptable and coherent with the scene preserved, as confirmed by J. Deckers-H. R. Seeliger 1987, p. 313 ("Auferweckung des Lazarus").

\textsuperscript{106} About the interpretation of Lazarus scene see supra, pp. 180-181.

\textsuperscript{107} See supra, in part. 187.

\textsuperscript{108} About the use of the roll to elaborate scenes alluding to \textit{catechesis} see M. Busia, in F. Bisconti 2000, pp. 274-275.
In conclusion, the left section of the cubicle seems to expose an essential eschatological discourse in which a protagonist of Dn “tales” performs the role of symbol of the saved martyr, the privileged beneficiary of that resurrection predisposed by Christ both for himself and for believers and evoked by the paradigmatic miracle of Lazarus. In this panorama, the consortium of believers is directly involved in the eschatological discourse; such participation is preliminary determined by the necessary passage represented by catechism.

c) The right-wall

The right wall of Nicerus cubicle seems to represent a prosecution and an evolution of the specular left portion. Before investigating the specific traits of such connection, it is necessary to linger on the single section, whose lunette is devoted to the most traditional reproduction of Noah type, the already described “eschatological figure” which frequently obtains, especially in the context of catacomb paintings, a “baptismal” interpretation109.

Above this subjects stands a male character with an open roll, flanked by both an orant woman and a man holding a closed roll: the integration of community in the figurative *catechesis* seems to be once again remarked. In this case, men and women do not occupy a marginal position, but rather become the real protagonists of the entire area under the arch, directly dialoguing with the scene of Noah: the final destiny predisposed for those who accede to *catechesis* is here clearly identified with that salvation guaranteed since the access to the first Christian rite\textsuperscript{110}.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig29.jpg}
\caption{(Fig. 29)}
\end{figure}

As has been outlined, the present section cannot be properly understood without considering its special connection with the specular left area. The first association involves the scenes of Daniel in the lions’ den and Noah in the ark, not just because they occupy the same position in the opposite lunettes and in the balance of the entire cubicle, but also and mainly in reason of the skilful use of the important detail represented by the “salvific marker” of the dove.

First of all, it must be noticed that such specific attribute of the patriarch is reproduced as an independent element around the martyr\textsuperscript{111}; at the same time, it twice returns with the function of “decorative” motif also in the right lunette. Here, together with the doves, two gazelles with haloes are reproduced as baptismal symbols that strengthen the allusion to the saved souls of Christians\textsuperscript{112}. Both the iteration of the bird, and the structural connection between Daniel and Noah confirm the prevalence of the eschatological perspective in the reception of the biblical story of the prophet exposed to lions, who becomes, once again, the *alter ego* of the patriarch with which it is so often linked in Pietro and Marcellino’s frescos.

The specular reading of the arches is moreover confirmed by the reproduction of the figures of the community members, which seem to be the protagonists of a sort of path: the feminine

\textsuperscript{110} Considering the centrality of the community in the entire program, it is plausible to think that the image of Noah has to be connected here with the theme of the ark-church (see supra, chapter 3, n. 155). Any further attempt to attribute a specific meaning to each subject above the patriarch would seem incautious.

\textsuperscript{111} See supra, pp. 193-194.

\textsuperscript{112} About the meaning of the gazelle see supra, n. 36.
subject holding a close roll next to Lazarus under the left arch may actually “evolve” in the image of a woman in orant position placed in the right area; at the same time, the man disclosing the roll in the left portion of the chamber may be twice reproduced under the right arch, where he first keeps a close roll and then an open one, in the central clipeus. It would certainly appear too hazardous to try to introduce a definite interpretation of such passages: it is enough to notice here how those figures contribute in establishing a connection between the single areas of the cubicle, whose iconographic program should be considered as unitary; moreover, the reproduction of these subjects stresses the essential role played by believers, conceived as catechumens directly involved in the whole figurative manifest and in the evolution toward salvation.

d) The vault

(Fig. 30)

113 Such “evolution” of the orant figures can be grasped by the entire scheme of the cubicle, see fig. 17.
Placed in the central clipeus, the figure of the good shepherd, which represents a symbolic “transcription” of the unity of Christ and the believers, is the core of the vault program. The allusion to Christi grex seems to be here enriched by the representations of men and women scanning the iconographic sequence.

At the left side of the good shepherd, the image of Lazarus’ resurrection is once again repeated and it dialogues with the scene of Peter striking a rock, the already mentioned symbol of baptism with which the last sign of John maintains a privileged connection: assuming this well-attested couple of figures, the fresco expresses the typical iconographic interpretation of the theme of Lazarus, whose pivot is represented by the indissoluble link between the “promise of resurrection” announced by the first Christian rite and the “effective resurrection”, that concretely fulfils as a consequence of Christ’s salvific action.

Above and below the central image of the shepherd, the types of the loaves multiplication and Cana miracle are historiated. If the former represents the clearest and most diffused reference to Lord’s Supper in the early iconographic panorama, the latter, characterized by the symbolic element of wine, implies an Eucharistic allusion, but more specifically refers to the inauguration of the eschatological time disclosed by Christ.

Considering the entire vault, it seems possible to interpret the iconographic program as a theological discourse concerning the access of believers to salvation, made possible by the liturgical steps of baptism and Eucharist. If baptism, recalled through the figure of Peter, represents the

114 It was already present in the central section under the left arch, see supra, pp. 193-194.
115 See supra, in part. p. 181.
116 About the scene see supra, chapter 2, n. 162.
117 The type of Cana miracle, derived from Jn 2:1-11, is principally attested in the context of funerary plastic (for a generic inspection on the theme see C.A. MOREIRA AZEVEDO, O milagre de Caná na iconografia paleo cristã. Estudo interdisciplinar: exegese, patristica, liturgia, iconografia e iconologia, Porto 1986). The meanings with which it can be associated go from baptism to the messianic await, to Eucharist (see M.P. DEL MORO, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 232-234). If in the context of literary reception all these meanings certainly play a significant role (apart from the already cited C.A. MOREIRA AZEVEDO 1986, see also A. BRESOLI, L’esegesi di Giov. 2,4 nei Padri Latini, “Revue des Études Augustiniennes” 8 [1962], pp. 243-273), the figurative assumption of the type seems to have been studied in the most fruitful way by G. PELIZZARI 2013, pp. 173-183, who attracts the attention on two essential motifs of the miracle narration which may have played a decisive function in its iconographic reception: the symbolic mention of wine and the allusion to the end times. The visual fortune of the theme should probably be connected with the interpretation of the evangelic episode efficaciously presented by R. BROWN 1994, pp. 136: “Il miracolo di Cana poteva venir compreso dai discepoli come un segno dei tempi messianici e della nuova economia”. In the context of plastic production, where the subject knows its most prolific diffusion, the hypothesis may be confirmed by the frequent association with the portrait of the dead, which would obtain to be – so to speak – symbolically placed, thanks to the proximity with the type of Cana, at the very threshold of eschatology. The type of the miracle would assume in this way the role of “door” signing the evolution from the present history to a salvific, transcendent dimension. This seems to be the reason why, as it happens for instance on S. Callisto sarcophagus (REP 1:364), the scene of Cana is often followed by salvific themes, such as Lazarus’ one. In the specific case of Nicerus’ vault, the combining with the image of the loaves multiplications suggests to grant a special relevance to the eucharistic value of the type.
starting point of such path and already includes the salvific promise destined to be fully achieved in the final resurrection evoked by Lazarus, Eucharist seems to be here characterized – so to speak – by “two natures”: an “historical/liturgical dimension”, immediately expressed by the scene of the multiplication which alludes to the celebration of Supper, and an “eschatological projection”, evoked by the type of Cana miracle and signally symbolized by the element of wine included in it.\textsuperscript{118}

c) From the single sections to the whole program

The analysis of the entire program of Nicerus’ catacomb reveals a rich, exegetical elaboration in which \textit{Dn} “tales” perform a significant role. The entrance of the cubicle immediately stresses the centrality of the community, introducing the portraits of a man and a woman in the orant attitude: they both return in other passages of the visual project as if they were the real protagonists of it. The bottom wall is eminently devoted to an elaboration in which feminine figures (the bleeding woman, the Samaritan and the cripple) are presented as the exponents and the symbols of the \textit{vera fide}, the instrument that grants them salvation. The real heart of the section is the portrait of the dead, a woman standing with open arms in the central area under the arch: this subject, evoking the entire group of the believers, obtains to be implicitly associated through a typological connection to the neotestamentary feminine figures symbolizing the faith in Christ.

The left and right walls develop, through a reciprocal connection, an eschatological discourse evoking, this time, male subjects of First Testament: the fundamental cores of the argumentation, as it emerges from their location and exposure, is represented by the images painted on the lunettes, which are Daniel in lions’ den and Noah in the arch, associated by the reiterated representation of doves. The persecuted prophet, placed under the type of Lazarus and surrounded by birds, clearly assumes a strongly eschatological connotation, becoming the symbol of the “saved martyr”; in this sense, it is further connected with the theme of Noah, alluding to the integration of the entire church in that salvific perspective, made possible by the instrument of baptism.

The images of the community members placed at the entrance of the chamber seem to be reprised, once again, in the lateral areas of the cubicle, where the destiny of Christians, with no gender distinction, keeps on assuming a role of pre-eminence: under both arches, images of Christians are portrayed while acceding to the \textit{catechesis}, which becomes, together with baptism and

\textsuperscript{118} The case of Nicerus’ vault seems particularly interesting also to understand the instruments used by iconography to convey peculiar meanings: the placement of connected scenes in specular positions (Lazarus/Peter; loaves multiplication/Cana’s miracle) is sustained by the structural identity between types, that present the same composition: in the case of Lazarus/Peter, a subject in profile tends the \textit{viga} respectively toward the temple and the rock; in the case of the link between loaves multiplication and Cana, a frontal male figure is surrounded by baskets and wineskins.
martyrdom, a fundamental stage toward salvation. The progressive connection among the three sections of the cubicle is pointed out by the use of symbolic markers “decorating” the sides of the lunettes: the peacocks – performing their role of generic symbols of resurrection\textsuperscript{119} – frame the type of the bleeding woman, while doves – the most diffused and strong allusion to the saved souls – clarify the eschatological range of Daniel; in the same way, the scene of Noah, apart from sharing the attributes of the prophet’s type, is further characterized by the presence of gazelles, a possible allusion to Christians’ baptism\textsuperscript{120}.

The representation of the community members’ path continues in the area of the vault, whose central clipeus is devoted to the image of the good shepherd with his grex. If the symbolic allusion to Christi sheep can be considered as the theological background underling the repetition of orant subjects to scan the iconographic sequence, the long hike of Christians toward God’s kingdom is here once again evoked by two pair of subjects reciprocally placed in specular positions:

- Lazarus and Peter striking a rock reveal two prerogatives of baptism: respectively, its development in the dimension of salvation and resurrection, and its historical consistence as a liturgical step in the life of communities;
- the multiplication of loaves and Cana miracle seem to allude to both the “cultual value” of the Lord’s Supper in the present of the believers, and its eschatological function as “door” introducing new times inaugurated by Christ.

\textsuperscript{119} See supra, n. 39.
\textsuperscript{120} See supra, n. 36.