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## SIMON PETER AND SIMON MAGUS AND HIS DOG IN ASTUDILLO, PALENCIA (SPAIN)<sup>1</sup>

The present-day city of Astudillo in the Province of Palencia is a small rural community of no more than 1,500 inhabitants. Today it is known primarily for two things: One, it has over 2,000 meters of underground wineries and an impressive collection of churches. On account of the new economic prosperity in Spain in the last few decades, the historical monuments of Astudillo have undergone restoration. Among them are: the Poor Clares Convent, Puerta de San Martín, Iglesia de Santa María, Iglesia de Santa Eugenia, Iglesia de San Pedro and the hermitages of La Cruz and San Marcos and a small beautiful Plaza Mayor. This has given the town a very special charm within the province of Palencia. Moreover, it is common knowledge that Palencia Province boasts of having one of the highest concentration of Romanesque churches in Europe.

The focus of this study is the 'Iglesia de San Pedro' that contains an exquisite Baroque altar relief executed in the sixteenth century most scholars believe by Hernando de la Nestosa (1525-1599), a prominent sculptor and architect who worked extensively in Astudillo and the province of Palencia. Anacleto Orejón Calvo, without much substantive evidence, went against the consensus opinion and proposed instead Agustín Castaño as the artist.<sup>2</sup> The altar has a wonderful series of artistic reliefs of the life of the Apostle Peter drawn from the canonical New Testament and the apocryphal *Acta Petri* that highlight the intense duel between Simon Peter and Simon Magus. One panel that merits special attention is one involving a ravenous dog inspired by one of several literary versions of the confrontations between Simon Peter and Simon Magus. In the rich depository of art depicting Simon Magus and Simon Peter this is one of the rarest, thus making this one in Astudillo a very special find.

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<sup>1</sup> I want to extend my deepest gratitude to my friend and colleague Dr. Prof. Pablo de la C. Díaz (University of Salamanca) who initially brought to my attention the Baroque altar in Astudillo and who with his wife Marivi took me there in the summer of 2005 to gather information and photograph. I also thank the staff at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid for their generous assistance in my consultation of the rare books on Astudillo. To the Tourism Office in Astudillo for their generous cooperation, especially the official guide, Señor Fernando Puertas Gutiérrez. I am most honored to have been invited to present this study to celebrate such an esteemed colleague as Father Marek for his immensely valuable contributions in patristics in general and specifically in the field of Christian apocrypha. A version of this paper was read at the *41st. International Congress on Medieval Studies*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 4-7 May, 2006 in honor of Prof. David J. Viera.

<sup>2</sup> A. OREJÓN CALVO, *Historia documentada de la villa de Astudillo*. Palencia, 1927, p. 44. The most recent study on Astudillo is by Jesus María PARRADO DEL OLMO, *Astudillo: iglesias y ermitas*. [Colección: Raíces Palentinas, 20] Palencia, 1994.

Astudillo in like manner as the majority of towns and cities in Iberia had its origins in the pre-Roman period. During the Celt-Iberian period there existed a village named *Astyria* ruled by the Vacceos.<sup>3</sup> In the Roman era the same village seems not to have acquired any significant role or place in the Roman province. When Christianity introduced the diocesan system Astudillo lying within the Church in Palencia went through a series ecclesiastical reshufflings from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries. It was at one time under the diocesan control of Astorga, Braga, and Cartagena in the seventh century, then Toledo in the ninth, Toledo and Oviedo in the sixteenth, and finally Burgos.<sup>4</sup> In time, after the sixteenth century, it came under the direct diocesan control of the Bishop of Palencia as it remains to this day. Palencia and Astudillo did not escape the devastating effects of the Muslim invasion and conquest of Iberia. Most of the population fled to Asturias in the initial stages of the Muslim offensive. It fell to King Alfonso III who in 905 reunified the territory under Christian rule once again and it remained secure until the end of the Spanish Reconquest in 1492. Although Astudillo never became a major city at any time in its history, in the sixteenth century it benefited from the rich artistic proliferation of the Baroque inspired by the Council of Trent's directives against the Protestant iconoclasm that was sweeping many parts of northern Europe. It is here at this time that a well-known sculptor of the region Hernando de la Nestosa left his mark in numerous churches that have preserved his artistic work that is of the highest quality. Fortunately, the aggressive campaign throughout Spain in the last 20 years to restore the artistic patrimony has include Astudillo and hence the work of Hernando de la Nestosa.

Little is known about the sculptor Hernando de la Nestosa and only one article has been written specifically about him.<sup>5</sup> As an artist he is considered one of the best of his time ranking with such luminaries as Gaspar Becerra, Juan de Anchieta, and Esteban Jordán. Some have maintained that Nestosa was the best pupil that Esteban Jordán ever trained.<sup>6</sup> When the Archbishop of Burgos visited the region in 1587 he expressed glowing praises for the work of Nestosa in Palencia. Some conjecture that it is possible that Nestosa may have been born in Hinestrosa in the province of Burgos near Castrojeriz, while some propose the northern area of 'Las Encarnaciones' in the Basque province of Vizcaya. No one knows for certain, however. These theories about his birthplace are suggested based upon the numerous ways that his name appears in the documentation: Inestrosa, Ynestrosa, Inestosa, Hinestrosa, Enestrosa and Nestrosa. What makes them not very useful to establish his birthplace is that they are nothing more than scribal errors or variants, and of paramount importance he always signed his last name, Nestosa.<sup>7</sup>

Of his personal life we have testimony that he married a Catalina of Astudillo that explains why he stayed in the town and environs all of his adult life. His one daughter Isabel married another sculptor named Juan de Ercilla who assisted Nestosa in numerous projects. Hernando de la Nestosa died 18 May 1599. It is possible that he belonged to the

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<sup>3</sup> M.C.M. *Opúsculo sobre la historia de la Villa de Astudillo*. Burgos, 1877 [Reprinted, Valladolid, 2001], p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> F.J. PORTELA SANDOVAL, "Hernando de la Nestosa." *Revista de la Universidad Complutense* 22 (1973) 223-232.

<sup>6</sup> J.C. AZNAR, "La escultura y la rejería del siglo XVI", in *Summar Artis*, vol. 18, p 318.

<sup>7</sup> F.J. PORTELA SANDOVAL, "Hernando de la Nestosa", p. 224.

Ynestrosa family who also had a sculptor by the name of Pedro de la Ynestrosa who is known for his work in the 'new' Cathedral of Salamanca. Another sculptor Juan de Inestrosa may have been related to him as well. Even the renowned architect Policarpio de Nestrosa who executed the main altar of the monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos may have been a relative.<sup>8</sup> In any case, this sculptor and artist who is today relatively unknown was apparently highly regarded within Castilla-León and particularly in the province of Palencia.

The altar relief that is the object of this essay is found in the church dedicated to the Apostle Peter that is believed to have been initially constructed in the thirteenth century during the Cistercian expansion into Castilla-León. The windows betray an early Cistercian style. As is evident from the present structure there were additional reforms to the building in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The building is not considered by any means Romanesque but rather an inspired yet modest Gothic style. There are nevertheless Romanesque touches in the lateral vaults that form the oldest part of the overall structure.<sup>9</sup> It also contains three naves, the lateral ones from the thirteenth century, and the central nave likely early fifteenth century. As is so common in most of the Iberian Peninsula there are touches of Mudejar art throughout. There is an impressive decorated Mudejar ceiling with the royal seal of the crown of Castilla-León repeated in floral fashion in all of the cross beams that hold up the choir that affirms the royal initiative to build the church. It was Queen Doña Violante, wife of Alfonso X the Wise, who ordered the construction, and who was a native of Astudillo.<sup>10</sup> The main reason for its being dedicated to Saint Peter was to celebrate the birth of one their children named, Pedro. Briefly, the main additions to the church in subsequent centuries were: in the sixteenth century a chapel to Our Lady of the Rosary, the sacristy in 1760, the atrium of the main entrance in 1786, an organ from the seventeenth century, the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament inaugurated 14 September 1984 and more besides that is fully documented.<sup>11</sup>

The altar piece dedicated to Saint Peter as noted before has been the object of some discussion regarding its actual sculptor. In addition to its being attributed to Agustín Castaño by Anacleto Orejón Calvo, some have proposed the sculptors known as the Balduque. Most recent researchers believe that the case for Hernando de la Nestosa is more substantive mainly because of certain stylistic touches such as: figures with abundant clothing, very little nudity and full faces. They all resemble the style of one of his mentors, Juna de Juni. The exquisite polychrome on the altar that has been magnificently restored was done by another resident of Astudillo, Juan Blanco de Espinosa for 3000 reales.<sup>12</sup>

The main altar has five major sections, three with sculptures, and four reliefs. The virtues are highlighted throughout such as: justice, charity, temperance, fortitude, and prudence through familiar symbolic personages and objects. The Annunciation as to be expected is given a prominent place coupled with the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary. Various saints and martyrs are there: Mary Magdalene, Catalina of Hungary, Barbara, Agueda, and the Archangel Michael, the Apostle Andrew, King David, the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> J.A. MARTÍNEZ, J. AUMENTE, *Iglesia de San Pedro, Astudillo*. Palencia, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> A. OREJÓN CALVO, *Historia documentada*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> J.A. MARTÍNEZ, J. AUMENTE, *Iglesia de San Pedro*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

prophet Jeremiah, Saint Paul, John the Baptist, and more. The four western Church Fathers: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Pope Gregory the Great are in large reliefs facing the Blessed Sacrament Tabernacle. Many other fascinating and interesting persons and scenes grace the altar and although artistically meritorious they are not directly relevant to this study.<sup>13</sup>

The images of Peter that are not apocryphal constitute the crucial canonical background and therefore they need to be identified, if only briefly. They do not seem to be in any order of sequence of events as laid out in the New Testament; instead they seem to have been placed randomly likely by someone other than Hernando de la Nestosa.<sup>14</sup> Peter is shown seated in his *Cathedra* with miter and extending his right hand in blessing (Figure 1). The greatest moment of weakness for Peter, his denial of Christ, is represented with the rooster, as related in all four Gospels. The rest of the scenes from the New Testament depict Peter in a more triumphant mode: receiving the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16: 17-19); the miraculous liberation of Peter from prison (Acts 12: 1-17); the healing of the paralytic (Acts 3: 1-18); Jesus and Peter walking on the water (Matt. 14: 22-33). Even though Peter's faith 'fails' he does reach out for Jesus to save him from sinking. Lastly, the healing of the sick by Peter's shadow (Acts 5: 12-16) and Peter's arrest at the orders of King Herod, maybe even by Agrippa, is included in the canonical series (Acts 12: 1-5). The rest are from the Christian Apocrypha to which we will now turn our attention.

Of the apocryphal scenes included in Astudillo some are very well known while others, at least from an artistic perspective, remain in relative obscurity. The famous *Quo Vadis Domine?* as related in the *Acta Petri* (35) is exquisitely reproduced.<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter is shown humiliated as he tries to flee the persecution of Nero in Rome only to find Christ carrying his cross. In the background one is able to see the door of Saint Sebastian with the walls of Rome. Peter's inverted crucifixion dramatically recreates the brutal treatment he received at the hands of the Romans who are in charge of executing him (Figure 2). The most well known episode is that of Simon Magus flying over Rome and his subsequent fall as a result of Peter and Paul's intervention, mainly Peter as the central figure, with Paul supporting the Prince of the Apostles with his prayers (Figure 3).<sup>16</sup>

Equally rare in art is the raising from the dead of a young man whom Martínez and Aumente have identified as the prefect's son Theophilus.<sup>17</sup> It is highly questionable that this identification is accurate. In the first place, a Theophilus being raised from the dead by Simon Peter is wholly absent in the canonical Acts of the Apostles, the *Acta Petri*, the *Passio*, and the *Golden Legend*. In the *Acta Petri* Simon Peter raises from the dead an

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, provides details for all of them, pp. pp. 9-12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*. p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Consult A. FERREIRO, "Simon Peter and Simon Magus in the *Acts of Peter* and the *Passion of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*", in: *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions*, [Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 125] Brill, 2005, pp. 55-81. The standard editions are: (*Acta Petri cum Simone*) = *Acta Petri*, in: *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (ed.) R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet. Verlag: Hildesheim-New York, 1972, pp. 45-104. In the same volume, (*Passio sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli*), = *Passio*, pp. 118-177, [1891 edition].

<sup>16</sup> A full artistic inventory is in A. FERREIRO: "Artistic representations of Simon Magus and Simon Peter in the *Princeton Index of Christian Art*: with up-to-date inventory and bibliography", in: *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*, pp. 307-335, especially at pp. 323-335.

<sup>17</sup> J.A. MARTÍNEZ, J. AUMENTE, *Iglesia de San Pedro*, pp. 16-17.

unnamed widow's son identified as a young man belonging to the prefect Agrippa. The prefect chose the young man randomly to provoke Simon Magus and Simon Peter into a contest to determine who really had the power of God. At the orders of the prefect Agrippa, Simon Magus struck him dead and Simon Peter was challenged to raise him from the dead, which he did (*Acta Petri*, 25-27, pp. 72-94). The young man in question is never identified by name. In another episode a widow's son named Nicostratus was raised from the dead by Simon Peter (*Acta Petri*, 28, pp. 74-78). Although Simon Peter has the power to raise people from the dead, as the case of the woman Tabitha (*Acts of the Apostles* 9: 36-43) testifies, nowhere is a Theophilus identified as receiving a miraculous touch from the apostle. In this panel in Astudillo we are not able to establish with exactitude the identity of the person being restored to life by the apostle. Nevertheless, in terms of the overall agenda of the altar it only serves to enhance the primacy of the Apostle Peter over Simon Magus.

By far the most fascinating of the images in Astudillo is the one with Simon Peter, Simon Magus and his dog, a scene rarely reproduced artistically in the early Church or Middle Ages (Figure 4). I do not wish here, nor is it necessary, for me to unravel this long and detailed development since I have done so already in an extensive study.<sup>18</sup> I will focus this study principally on Simon Magus and the dog with brief observations on the Fall of Simon Magus apocryphal scene as well.

The primary apocryphal literary sources are the *Acta Petri*, the *Passio*, the *Acta S.S. Nerei et Achillei* (= *Acta S.S.*) and the *Golden Legend*, and a relatively unknown version by John of Mailly that also inspired artistic expressions of the duel between Simon Peter and Simon Magus and dogs. These in their turn greatly influenced medieval commentators who appropriated and adapted these stories in a wide variety of fascinating ways. I do desire to establish here a few things about the Astudillo image of the dog scene that we have before us; namely, to identify the literary sources that inspired it, its relationship to the previous artistic tradition, and its unique interpretation of the scene. I will now summarize the two versions of the dog encounters as found in the *Acta Petri* and the *Passio*.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Acta Petri* a dog plays a prominent role in the conflict between Simon Magus and Simon Peter.<sup>20</sup> The first reference involves the arrival of Simon Peter to Rome to combat the magician. Simon Magus had brought Rome under his magical influences, including the prominent Senator Marcellus in whose house he was staying and who had been "persuaded by his charms" (*morantem in domo Marcelli senatoris persuasum* 8.32-33, p. 54). Marcellus had a well established reputation as a generous almsgiver to widows,

<sup>18</sup> A detailed analysis is in A. FERREIRO: "Simon Magus, Dogs and Simon Peter", in *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval, and Early Modern Traditions*. pp. 147-200.

<sup>19</sup> *Acta Petri*, 9-12, pp. 56-60, and *Passio*, 22-27, pp. 139-143.

<sup>20</sup> A stimulating discussion of the dog incidents in the *Acta Petri* is by, R.A. LIPSIUS, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden* 2.1. Braunschweig, 1887, pp. 174-194, at 178-180. G. FICKER, *Die Petrusakten. Beiträge zu ihrem Verständnis*. Leipzig, 1903, pp. 19-20. J. FLAMION, "Les Actes apocryphes de Pierre", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 9 (1908) 233-254, 465-490, and further insights, by the same author, 10 (1909) 5-29, 245-277; 11 (1910) 5-28, 223-256, 447-470, and 675-692; 12 (1911) 209-230 and 437-450. An important fundamental study is by L. VOUAUX, *Les Actes de Pierre*. Paris, 1922. For textual matters consult W. SCHNEEMELCHER, *New Testament Apocrypha*. (trans.) R. McL. Wilson. Vol. 2. Philadelphia, 1965, pp. 259-275, with relevant bibliography. For redaction questions of the dog story see, C. M. THOMAS, "Word and Deed: The *Acts of Peter* and Orality", *Apocrypha* 3 (1992) 125-164, especially, 138-143.

orphans, pilgrims, and the poor (8.1-5, p. 55). In a sudden turn of events, a group of repentant followers of Simon Magus sought out Peter to plead with him to come to Rome to rescue Senator Marcellus from the deceptions of Simon Magus and the “bitterness” that the Senator now harbored in his heart against God, (sed si qua in te domini nostri misericordia et praeceptorum eius bonitatis permanet, succurras huius errori, qui tam mango numero in serbos dei aelemosynas fecit 8.20-22, p. 55). Moved by the insistent rogations of the brethren Peter traveled to Rome, where he condemned Simon Magus, the Devil, arch-enemy of God and of His Church. Subsequently, he elaborated a lengthy inventory of the Devil’s crimes, chiefly: the Fall of Adam and Eve (8.27-30, p. 55) and the betrayal of Judas (8.30-32, p. 55), both damnable examples of prideful treason against God. In fact, the Devil and Simon Magus are likened by Peter to ravenous wolves, (lupus rapax, uorator et dissipator uitae aeternae! 8.26-27, p. 55); towards the end of the homily, Peter again rebuked the Devil/Simon Magus for attempting to carry off as a wolf the “sheep of Christ”, – (tu enim, lupe rapax, uolens abripere pecora quae tua non sunt, sed sunt Christi Iesu qui custodit ea diligenter summa cum diligentia 8.16-18, p. 56).<sup>21</sup> Peter’s preaching touched off a new wave of converts who abandoned Simon Magus, and the newly converted brethren now zealously encouraged him to further confront the magician. Stirred by the enthusiastic crowd, Peter immediately set off towards the house of Senator Marcellus to seek out the false magician (9.19-24, p. 56).

When Peter arrived at the gate of the house of Marcellus, he commanded the doorkeeper to inform Simon Magus, who was hiding in the house, that he was waiting for him at the entrance. The doorkeeper who was unable to lie to the apostle returned immediately and told Peter that Simon Magus had instructed him not to tell Peter, whether it was night or day, that he was hiding in the house, (praeceptum autem habeo: recognouit enim te externa die introisse in urbem, dixit mihi: “Siue interdiu siue noctu adque hora quae uenerit, dic quoniam non sum intus” 9.28-31, p. 56). Apparently, Simon Magus already had been tipped off that Peter was looking for him. Sympathetic to the doorkeeper’s obligations to the master of the house, Peter turned to the crowd and promised them that they would witness a “great and marvelous wonder” (Magnum et mirabilem nostrum uisuri estis 9.33-34, p. 56).

Peter noticed that a dog had been chained at the entrance to Marcellus’s house. Whether Simon Magus personally placed the canine there or whether it was a watchdog belonging to Senator Marcellus is unclear. In any case, Peter unchained the dog. To the amazement of all, at that moment the dog miraculously acquired a human voice and asked of Peter, “What do you wish for me to do, servant of the ineffable living God?” (Quid me iubes facere, seruus inenarrabilis dei uiui? 9.3, p. 57). Peter ordered the dog to go into the house to tell Simon Magus to come out immediately and face him. The dog obediently carried out Peter’s command. When Simon heard the dog speak, he and those with him were dumbfounded at the sight of this speaking canine, (Audiens enim haec Simon et respiciens incredibilem uisum, excidit a uerbis quibus seducebat circumstantes, omnium stupentium 9.11-13, p. 57).

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<sup>21</sup> Wolves as a type of evil in scripture are noteworthy: prophets as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Mt. 7:15) and the world of wolves, Mt. 10:16. The shepherd, in this case Simon Peter in the *Acta Petri*, as protector of the sheep from wolves, John 10:12. Finally, the wolf as a dividing influence of the flock (the Church) Acts 20:29 identifies the schismatic activities of Simon Magus in the *Acta Petri*.

The focus of this section of the narrative is not on Simon Magus stupefied, but on Marcellus converted. When Marcellus witnessed the miracle of the speaking dog, he went straightway to the doorway, threw himself at Peter's feet, and pleaded that he not experience eternal fire with Simon Magus, (non me tradidi cum peccatis Simonis igni aeterno 10.23-24, p. 57). Praying the mercy of God upon Marcellus and his entire household, Peter in full view of the crowd embraced Marcellus as a sign of his re-entry into the Church (10.11-24, and 11.26, p. 58). Suddenly, a man in the crowd began to laugh mockingly, at which time Peter recognized that he was demon possessed called him out of the throng. Still under demonic control the man ran into the courtyard of the house and gave out a shout and slammed himself against a wall. Then in a loud voice he proclaimed that Simon Magus was in the house arguing with the dog, who was giving the magician an earful; the dog would die, he prophesied, as soon as his work for Peter had finished (11.25-31, p. 58 and 11.1-4, p. 59). In order to further display the power of God and to expose the weakness of Simon Magus, Peter exorcised the demon out of the young man—the inference being that he had also been under the magical influences of Simon Magus.

The dog once again comes to center stage as we get further details about the conversation at Marcellus's house between the dog and Simon Magus. Having recovered from the shock of a speaking dog, Simon Magus commanded the dog to tell Peter that he was not in the house. The dog refused to obey Simon, however, and harshly rebuked Simon as a shameless man who would not even listen to a dumb animal with a human voice sent by God to uncover his deception (12.1-4, p. 60). In the *Acta Petri* no hope is held out whatsoever for Simon's repentance, however. The dog makes it clear that this extraordinary display of divine intervention was intended only to effect the redemption of those who had been deceived by his magic and false teachings, (et hoc non tui causa, sed horum quos seducebas et in perditionem mittebas 12.8-9, p. 60). After his eloquent speech the dog immediately ran out of the house, and the people who had been led astray by Simon Magus likewise abandoned him (Simone solo derelicto, 12.13, p. 60).

The dog went to Peter, now with the former disciples of Simon Magus, to report to him the details of his conversation with the Magus. The dog seized the occasion to prophesy that a great contest would take place between Simon Magus and Peter, which would result in many more converts to the faith (12.13-18, p. 60). As soon as the dog finished prophesying, he sat at Peter's feet and died, (haec cum dixisset canis, caecidit ante pedes apostolic Petri et deposuit spiritum 12.19-20, p. 60), just as had been predicted earlier by the demon possessed man, (et postquam perfecit mysterium quod illi praecepisti, ante pedes tuos morietur 11.3-4, p. 59). Although the story ends with the dramatic conversion of numerous people who heard the dog speak, there still remained some in the crowd demanding even more "signs" from Peter. In the end, however, the apostolic mission accomplished the rescue of Marcellus and the throngs from the magical deceptions of Simon Magus.

The second major episode between Simon Magus and Simon Peter involving dogs is found in the *Passio*.<sup>22</sup> The confrontation in question takes place in the presence of the Emperor Nero, who had been swayed by Simon's magical powers to favor the magician

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<sup>22</sup> R.A. LIPSIVS, *Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten* 2.1, pp. 366-390 who engaged the various versions of the *Passio*. A brief comparison of the *Passio* with the *Acta Nerei et Achillei* is in, J. FLAMION, "Les actes apocryphes de Pierre", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 11 (1910) 447-470.

and to persecute the apostles Peter and Paul. Peter told Nero that Simon Magus could not, as he had claimed, read the minds of those around him. Peter proposed to the Emperor a test to prove once and for all the false claims of Simon Magus. Peter asked Nero to have a loaf of barley bread brought to him secretly, that is, unknown to Simon Magus. When they had all gathered together for the “contest,” Peter pressed Nero to ask Simon Magus what Peter had been doing and thinking prior to their meeting. Unable to reveal the truth, Simon Magus attempted to turn the tables on Peter by asking him instead to reveal what was on his own mind at that moment. Undaunted by this trickery, Peter continued to press Simon Magus once again to disclose his own thoughts and deeds earlier that day (27.5-6, p. 143). In an aside, the narrative reminds the reader that Peter had secretly blessed and broken the bread into several pieces, which were hidden up his sleeves from Simon Magus’s view, (*Petrus enim benedixerat panem quem acceperat ordeaceum et fregerat et dextera atque sinistra in manica collegerat* 26.3-4, p. 143).

At this critical juncture in the confrontation a visibly humiliated and frustrated Simon Magus, having failed to reveal Peter’s thoughts and deeds, became uncontrollably enraged and cried out, “Let Great Dogs come forth and devour him before Caesar,” – (*Procedant canes magni et deuorent eum in conspectus Caesaris*, 27.6-7, p. 143). Instantly, large growling dogs miraculously appeared and lunged at Peter to bite him. Peter unshaken by the sight of the ravenous dogs maintained his composure, stretched out his hands in prayer, offered the dogs the blessed bread which he had in his sleeves, and the dogs upon eating [the bread] vanished as suddenly as they had appeared, (27.7-11, p. 143). Turning to Nero, Peter reminded the Emperor that he had proven by his own deeds that he knew in advance what Simon Magus had all along been plotting against him. Peter also asked Nero to recall that Simon had promised to command a group of angels to come against Peter, but instead because of his inferior magical sorceries could only muster up dog(like) angels, (*nam qui angelos promiserat contra me esse uenturos, canes exhibuit, ut se ostenderet no diuinos angelos sed caninos habere* 27.13-14, p. 143). The story moves on to more confrontations between Simon Peter and Simon Magus before Nero that do not involve any canines. The apostle eventually vanquishes Simon Magus and although Peter will suffer martyrdom at the hands of Nero at the end of the story, his death is clearly displayed as a triumph for the Church.

The dog scene at the house of Marcellus did not escape the notice of artists in the Early Christian period. Aside from the artistic interest of these rare pieces, the most striking feature is that all of them are found on sarcophagi. Two are from Verona and Mantua and are dated by scholars between the years A.D. 390-400.<sup>23</sup> (Figures 5 and 6.) A third sarcophagus, at one time deposited at Nîmes, France, but very likely from the Transalpine, is now missing and is known only from a drawing. (Figure 7.) The object may be more the victim of being misplaced than actually being lost and it would be worth the time and

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<sup>23</sup> One of the earliest and productive studies of these two sarcophagi is in G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die apokryphen Petrusgeschichten in der alchristlichen Kunst*. Berlin-Leipzig, 1925, pp. 3-9, with only a photograph of the Mantua piece, at 4. G. WILPERT published two splendid photographs of the Verona and Mantua sarcophagi, but with little commentary, in *I Sarcofagi Cristiani Antichi*. Testo, vol. 2. Roma, 1932, pp. 348-351. For the Mantua sarcophagus, plate 30, p. 39, and the Verona piece, plate 150.2, p. 177. Neither image escaped the attention of G. Turcio, “San Pietro e i Cani,” *Ecclesia* 7 (1948) 297-299. A succinct discussion is in M. Sotomayor, *S. Pedro en la Iconografía Paleocristiana*. Biblioteca Teológica Granadina, 5. Granada, 1962, pp. 30-31 and 161-162.

effort to try to locate it anew.<sup>24</sup> The fourth piece is deposited at the national Museum in Krakow and according to its discoverer Professor Janusz A. Ostrowski, it also likely originated in Gaul and dates between 390-400.<sup>25</sup> (Figure 8.)

In content the Verona, Krakow, and lost Nîmes sarcophagi are strikingly similar one to another: all three have Peter on the left and the dog on the right of the relief. The dog is wearing a visible collar around its neck, presumably where the heavy chain had been attached, according to the *Acta Petri*, (*catena grande ligatum* 9.1, p. 57), although a chain is not visible. They all depict the scene in front of Marcellus's home as evidenced by the arcade and columns in the Verona and Krakow pieces, but in the drawing of the lost Nîmes object the column is there without the arcade. One wonders if the drawing of the Nîmes relief has fully captured the entire scene contained in the original. The Mantua sarcophagus has all of the elements found in the other sarcophagi with some basic differences, however: here the dog is on the left, Peter, on the right. The dog, as all the images, has a prominent muzzle but no chain, and as in the others the entrance has an arcade without any columns or building blocks. All four depict the dog with his fore-paw in the air, which I believe demonstrates his submission and friendly disposition towards Peter or the "conversion" of the dog that I described earlier. Although the dog still has a growling face in all the reliefs, let us recall that ancient and medieval reliefs usually collapse into one scene a sequence of events, in this case: the initial hostility of the dog, the blessing of Peter, and the conversion of the animal to God's service.

The *Passio* dog scene is preserved only in medieval artistic examples. Although few in number, they are nevertheless illuminating. Three are Italian: one at the Cathedral at Sessa Aurunca, a lost fresco from the church San Piero a Grado, and another in a Vatican Library Latin *Passional* manuscript.<sup>26</sup> There is one non-Italian example of the

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<sup>24</sup> E. Le Blant was the first scholar to widely publicize the lost sarcophagus from Nîmes, in *Les sarcophages chrétiens de la Gaule*. Paris, 1886, p. 114, no. 136. Further notices and commentary are in, STUHLFAUTH, *Die Apokryphen Petrusgeschichten*, pp. 5-6, with a reproduction of the Le Blant drawing, p. 5. Wilpert took notice of the Nîmes piece, *I Sarcophagi*, 2:350, as did, TURCIO, "San Pietro e i Cani", p. 299 and Sotomayor, *S. Pedro en la Iconografía*, pp. 31 and 161.

<sup>25</sup> For additional photographs of the Verona and Nîmes sarcophagi, "Apocryphal and Canonical Scenes. Some remarks on the Iconography of the Sarcophagus from the Collection of the National Museum in Krakow", *Études et Travaux 13 (Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie méditerranéenne de l'académie polonaise des sciences, 26)* (1978) 305-309. A photograph of the Krakow sarcophagus is at, p. 308. The Director of the *Polish Academy of Science*, (Warsaw) Dr. Karol Myśliwiec, kindly sent me a copy of this article and a photograph. Also relevant, J. A. OSTROWSKI, "Unknown fragments of Early Christian Sarcophagi", *Meander* 28 (1973) 326-331.

<sup>26</sup> By far the best study on Sessa Aurunca is, D. GLASS, "The Archivolt Sculpture at Sessa Aurunca," *The Art Bulletin* 52, 2 (1970) 119-131, especially at 125-128 and for the dogs figure 16. Useful are also, C. STORNAJOLO, "I rilievi dell'arco sul portico della cattedrale di Sessa Aurunca," *Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia* 6, 2 (1896) 163-180 and A. VENTURI, *Storia dell'arte Italiana, 3. L'arte romanica*. Milano, 1904, pp. 570-571, figures 532, 534, 535. An extensive study of the church S. Piero a Grado is by, P. D'ACHIARDI, "Gli affreschi di S. Piero a Grado presso Pisa e quelli già esistenti nel portico della basilica vaticana," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di scienze storiche* (Roma 1-9 Aprile 1903), vol. 7. *Atti della Sezione IV: Storia dell'arte*. Roma, 1905, Kraus Reprint, 1972, pp. 193-285, especially at 212-216 and 257-258. A microfiche copy of the *Latin Passional* is in the *Princeton Index of Christian Art* under the Simon Magus file, 32R76LV+82, 10A, Roma Lib. Bibl. Vaticana, lat. 8541, *Passional*.

*Passio* scene in a fresco in the cloister church at Müstair, Switzerland.<sup>27</sup> These are the only known medieval artistic works commemorating the dog scenes that I have been able to locate

The *Acta S.S. Nerei et Achillei*, believed to have been written somewhere between the fifth and sixth centuries, became one of the principal sources that medieval writers used to popularize the *Acta Petri*. Jacobus of Voragine and John of Mailly in their explanation of the fate of Simon Magus reveal that they came under its sway. A near-contemporary source that influenced Jacobus is the *Abbreviato in Gestis et Miraculis Sanctorum*, a mid-thirteenth century work by the Dominican John of Mailly, that mediated the *Acta S.S.* material in the Middle Ages.<sup>28</sup>

In the *Golden Legend* Jacobus highlights the following details: Peter set the dog free from its chains by using the sign of the cross; the dog became gentle with all present, except Simon Magus whom the dog began to chase. The dog, then, knocked Simon to the ground and attacked him, and as the animal went for Simon's throat (et eum strangulare volebat), Peter intervened and called off the dog. Told by Peter not to injure the magician bodily, instead the dog tears Simon's clothes off and leaves him completely naked (ut ille nudus positus remaneret). Moreover, once Peter released the dog with the sign of the cross, which is in the *Acta S.S.*, the canine set about to seize Simon by the throat, and the apostle commanded the dog not to kill him. The dog's attempt to kill Simon Magus by crushing his throat with his jaws, recorded by Jacobus (et eum strangulare volebat), is not in the *Acta S.S.* text but it is in John of Mailly. Peter's invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ to command the dog not to bring bodily harm to Simon Magus in the *Acta S.S.* is absent in the *Golden Legend* (Praecipio tibi in nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi) and John of Mailly, but Jacobus does report from the *Acta S.S.* that the dog is given leave only to tear his clothes to shreds (*Golden Legend*, "sed vestes adeo laceravit", *Acta S.S.* "sed vestimenta ita morsibus attraxit", Mailly, "sed vestem eius discissit."). Jacobus further notes that after the attack, Simon Magus was completely naked (ut ille nudus positus remaneret), and he is chased out of the city in the buff by the crowd, the children, and the dog. The *Acta S.S.* mentions the nudity, too, but in a slightly restrained way (ut nulla pars ejus corporis tecta remaneret). Nakedness is invariably interpreted as symbolic of spiritual unveiling of shame and falsehood before God (2 Cor. 5:3). On this matter it seems that Jacobus was indeed depending heavily on John of Mailly since their texts contain identical lan-

<sup>27</sup> The most substantive study to date of the fresco at Müstair with a splendid photograph is in, B. BRENK, *Die Romanische Wandmalerei in der Schweiz*. Basler Studien zur Kunstgeschichte, 5. Bern, 1963, pp. 44-49 and figure 21.

<sup>28</sup> For the *Acta S.S.* see the Latin text, *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 3, pp. 4-16, the dog account is at 9-10. The Greek text has been edited by A. Wirth, *Acta S.S. Nerei et Achillei graece editit*. Leipzig, 1890. and H. ACHELIS, *Acta S.S. Nerei et Achillei*. Leipzig, 1893. The edition of John of Mailly is in, *Jean de Mailly, Abrégé des Gestes et Miracles des Saints*, (ed. & trans.) A. Dondaine. Bibliothèque d'histoire dominicaine, 1. Paris, 1947, pp. 225-226, the *Acta S.S.* is at, 199-201. The unedited manuscript of John of Mailly is: Ms. B. III 14 Universitätsbibliothek Basel Folio 31r and 31v. For Jacobus see, Th. GRAESSE, *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda Aurea*. Osnabrück, 1969 [reprint of 1890 edition] and W. G. RYAN, *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*. Vol. 1. Princeton, 1992. See also the study by K. E. GEITH, "Jacques de Voragine—auteur indépendant ou compilateur?," in *Le moyen Français*, 32. *Legenda aurea—la Légende dorée (XIIIe-XVe s.) Actes du Congrès international de Perpignan (séances "Nouvelles recherches sur la Legenda aurea)*, ed. B. Dunn-Lardeau, pp. 17-31, especially at 18-23. A comparative analysis of Jacobus, John of Mailly and the *Acta S.S.* is in FERREIRO, "Simon Magus, Dogs, and Simon Peter", pp. 80-84.

guage.<sup>29</sup> The crowd that was watching, a group of children, and the dog itself chase after the naked Simon and run him out of the city, as one would chase a wolf.<sup>30</sup>

When we compare and contrast the three major versions of the dog incident as described above it is apparent that the Astudillo version is taken from the *Acta Petri/Acta S.S.* mediated by the *Golden Legend* [and John of Maily] and not the *Passio*. Significantly, the Astudillo depiction of the dog scene and the Fall of Simon Magus are unique and singular in comparison to the entire artistic tradition of these scenes, as I will point out below. As noted in Astudillo there is only one dog while in the *Passio* artistic and literary versions two canines are assumed by the interpreters. In the *Acta Petri* no ambiguity exists on the fact that one dog is at play in the confrontation between Simon Magus and Simon Peter. In the *Passio*, moreover, the dogs do not attack Simon Magus whereas in the *Acta Petri* and *Acta S.S.* they do and there is a ‘conversion’ of the dog along with Senator Marcellus and a throng of people. The dog accompanied by a crowd of ex-followers of Simon Magus chases him out of Rome with the dog leading the attack so to speak. In Astudillo it captures the moment in which Simon Magus is half nude, a touch of modesty that is typical of the sixteenth century Spanish Baroque, and the dog is attempting to do him bodily harm (Figure 9). At first glance it appears that Peter is encouraging the dog to attack Simon Magus. What is clear in the *Acta Petri* and the *Acta S.S.* is that Simon Peter orders the dog not to do him any harm and the dog obeys the apostle. So in Astudillo Simon Peter apparently is restraining the dog (Figure 4). The dog is biting at Simon’s clothes only and not actually biting him on his body consistent with the literary tradition that highlights that Simon Peter never prays for the death or bodily harm of Simon Magus. Hernando de la Nestosa chose to isolate Simon Peter, Simon Magus and the dog in this scene thereby excluding both Senator Marcellus and the doorkeeper. This is a departure from the artistic images which focus on the encounter at the entrance of Senator Marcellus’s home. The Astudillo scene is absolutely unique because it is the only existing one that I am aware of so far that captured that particular moment in the *Acta Petri* and *Acta S.S.*

In the panel showing the Fall of Simon Magus the central figure is very likely Senator Marcellus. Once again no other artistic recreation of the Fall of Simon Magus has Senator Marcellus in the midst of the apostles Peter and Paul as we find here in Astudillo. Peter with a beard is directly behind him holding a book, the Apostle Paul is kneeling in prayer, and there is a hooded man with a mustache behind Peter whose identity is unknown. All of them are intently witnessing the demise of Simon Magus. (Figure 3). The book that Peter is holding is no doubt the Sacred Scriptures that he and Paul, as symbolic representatives of the Magisterium of the Church, are proclaiming and guarding. True to ancient tradition Peter has a beard and a full head of hair and Paul also is bearded but with a touch of baldness. The demon that had sustained Simon Magus in flight is recre-

<sup>29</sup> For example, on the nudity of Simon Magus:

J. Maily—ut nudus omnino remaneret

A.S.S.—ut nulla pars ejus corporis tecta remaneret

Jacobus—ut ille nudus positus remaneret

<sup>30</sup> “Et canis quidem corpus ejus non laesit, sed vestes adeo laceravit, ut ille nudus positus remaneret, populus autem et maxime pueri cum cane tamdiu post eum concurrerunt, donec illum quasi lupum de civitate fugarent,” 89.2, in GRAESSE, *Legenda Aurea*, p. 373. RYAN, *Golden Legend*, p. 344. For a study on Jacobus’s sources see, W. HUG, “Quellengeschichtliche Studie zur Petrus- und Pauluslegende der Legenda Aurea,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 49 (1929) 604-624. J. DE MAILLY, *Abrége des Gestes*, pp. 225-226.

ated here in the form of a small dragon. It captures the moment when the prayers of Peter and Paul have caused the demon to release him to expose Simon's demonic alliance (Figure 10). It results in the death of Simon Magus as he strikes the pavement. Nestosa has once again in this scene focused entirely on these central figures thus excluding the throngs of people who gathered in the presence of the Emperor Nero to witness the contest between the apostles and the magician. Nestosa has also exquisitely captured the terror stricken Simon Magus who appears, as expected, confused and in panic. Simon Peter on the other hand is in full control of the situation and his face is filled with confidence and determination to drive out the magician from Rome. The Petrine Primacy is also reinforced as we notice that Peter is standing on a slab of stone. This is undoubtedly an iconic reference to Peter being designated by Jesus the 'Rock' upon which the Church is built (Matthew 16: 13-19). Lastly, the Petrine triumph is intended in the entire altar in Astudillo since it highlights the Prince of the Apostles vanquishing the prince of all anti-apostles, Simon Magus.

Although from a purely artistic perspective the altar at the Church of St. Peter in Astudillo is one of the many exquisite testaments of the legacy of Hernando de la Nestosa, there is a more intentional doctrinal purpose. The altar reflects a rejection of the main Protestant anti-Catholic teachings by affirming the central tenets rejected by the Reformers. After all, in nearby Valladolid small pockets of Protestants did spring forth but never grew in any significant way. Even though Protestantism remained a northern European movement its presence in Iberia, however small in Valladolid, was enough to cause great alarm in the entire region.

Let us recall firstly that the Baroque style developed as a result of the condemnation of Protestant iconoclasm at the Council of Trent and the encouragement at that council of the promotion of images and sacred art coupled with an admonishment of their proper use in devotions. In the Astudillo altar we have iconographic affirmation of Catholic doctrine throughout. First and foremost the Petrine Primacy, Marian devotion by highlighting the Annunciation (not rejected by Protestants) but coupled with her Assumption and Coronation that soon came under serious attack. The transubstantiated presence of Jesus in the Eucharist as expressed by the adoring gaze of the four great Latin Church Fathers (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Pope Gregory the Great) showed kneeling in adoration facing towards the Tabernacle. The Church Fathers also symbolized Sacred Tradition which along with Sacred Scripture form the Deposit of Faith entrusted to the Magisterium, the Pope, and the Bishops. Lastly, Simon Magus the arch-enemy of Simon Peter, dramatically rendered in both panels, suffers the fate that awaits all who oppose Peter, the Rock upon which Christ built his Church, and by extension his successors the Popes and all of the bishops in communion with him. This served as a powerful reminder of the fate of anyone who passed over into the camp of the Protestants.

SZYMON PIOTR ORAZ SZYMON MAG I JEGO PIES  
W ASTUDILLO, PALENCIA (HISZPANIA)

*Streszczenie*

W kościele św. Piotra w wiosce Astudillo znajduje się nastawa ołtarzowa z XVI w., przypisywana Hernandowi de la Netosa, przedstawiająca sceny z życia Apostoła. Między innymi jest tam relief obrazujący konflikt z Szymonem Magiem, na którym – w oparciu o przekazy apokryficzne – umieszczono drapieżnego psa. W artykule przeanalizowano literackie źródła, będące inspiracją dla scen nastawy ołtarzowej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem motywu psa, oraz dokonano konfrontacji z innymi przedstawieniami artystycznymi o paralelnej tematyce.

**Descriptions of figures:**

1. Peter seated in his 'Cathedra.' Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro
2. Peter's martyrdom. Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro
3. Fall of Simon Magus. Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro
4. Simon Magus and his Dog. Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro
5. Late Antique Sarcophagus in S. Giovanni in Valle, Verona, Italy. Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
6. Late Antique Sarcophagus in Mantua, Italy, with permission from the *Direzione dell'Archivio Storico Diocesano di Mantova. Curia Vescovile.*
7. Line sketch of Late Antique sarcophagus at Nîmes, France, now lost. After E. Le Blant, *Les sarcophages Chrétien de la Gaule.* Paris, 1886, fig. 136, p. 114.
8. Late Antique Sarcophagus in the Kraków museum (inv. Num DMNKCz, 2167) with permission from Dr. Janusz A. Ostrowski, Director of *Princes Czartoryski Museum, Kraków.*
9. Simon Magus half nude and attacked by his Dog. Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro
10. Dragon Demon releases Simon Magus. Astudillo, Palencia. Photograph A. Ferreiro



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

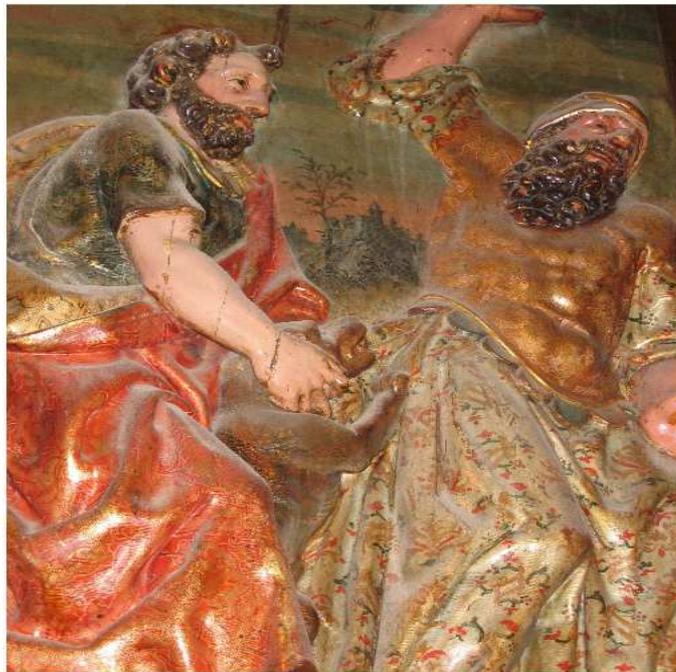


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

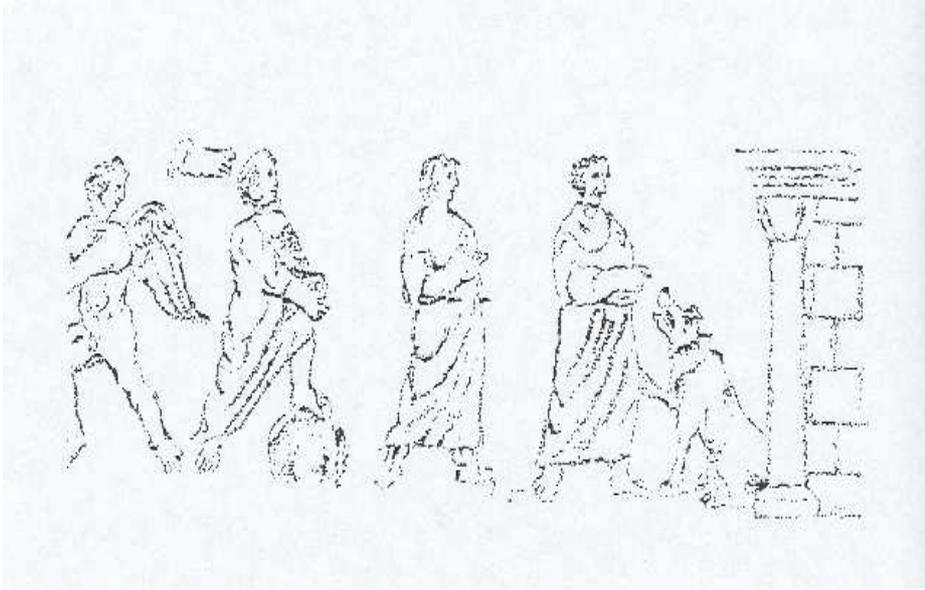


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10