

Dijkstra, R. 2014. *Portraying Witnesses. The apostles in early Christian art and poetry*. PhD Thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen, 596 p. Promotores: prof.dr. S.L. de Blaauw, prof.dr. M.G.M. van der Poel, dr. V.J.C. Hunink (copromotor), Radboud University Nijmegen.

This book explores the role of stories about the apostles in art and poetry of the third and fourth century. It aims to shed light on the late-antique relationship between art and poetry, with particular attention paid to visibility and the role of the audience.

Part one offers a chronological discussion of passages referring to the apostles. References to non-canonical stories receive special attention, although these are scarce. The authors discussed are: Commodianus, Juvenius, Proba, Hilary, Damasus, Ambrose, Claudian (and Palladius), Amphilochius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola and the anonymous writer of the *Oratio consulis Ausonii versibus rhopaliciis*.

Part two focuses on the varied representations of each apostle in art. Whilst most images are found on sarcophagi, the catacomb paintings, mosaics, reliquaries and the 'arti minori' show some of the most intriguing representations. This part also compares the corpus of visual material to the results of part one.

Canonical apostle-stories abound, but it is remarkable that some of the most popular images refer to non-canonical events from the life of Peter. This emphasises his position as the most popular of the apostles: for whilst all of the apostles are mentioned as witnesses of Christ, none receives the level of attention devoted to Peter. Most frequently, images that do not give singular attention to Peter focus on Peter and Paul (*concordia apostolorum*) or the twelve together (*concordia duodecim*). References to other apostles are virtually limited to Paul – especially in poetry – or Judas, who is mentioned within the context of the Passion and appears on some late fourth-century sarcophagi and reliquaries. The martyrdom of Peter and Paul was a very common subject: descriptions in poetry are more detailed than depictions in art, where the arrest of the apostles is depicted as a reference to their martyrdom.

Ultimately this book argues that whilst there are clear parallels between the representation of the apostles in art and poetry, there is little evidence for reciprocal influence. The visibility of many images was restricted and the Biblical canon was a more obvious source of inspiration than early Christian poetry. Thus the early Christian worlds of image and text are proven to be fairly separated.

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