

# ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the late ancient cult of St. Michael the Archangel, focusing on its emergence in the eastern Roman Empire during the closing centuries of antiquity and ensuing transfer into the western Mediterranean world by the early medieval period. Chapter I surveys portrayals of angels and Michael in the biblical canon and reviews basic patristic interpretations of these scriptural sources. Chapter II reconstructs intertwined fourth-century Christological and angelological doctrinal controversies, the resolution of which established fundamental ontological and cosmological understandings about angels, including Michael, on literary planes of Christian doctrine. Chapter III recounts the blossoming of imperially sanctioned Michaeline veneration within cultic and ritual settings throughout the late ancient eastern empire. Finally, Chapter IV explores the gradual spread of the cult of St. Michael the Archangel from Greek East to Latin West over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. Together, these chapters argue that by the closing centuries of Late Antiquity the tense religious environment of the eastern Roman Empire had forged Michael's nascent cult into a doctrinally elucidated and imperially sanctioned religious system equipped for "export" to the western Mediterranean. Subsequently, over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the eastern cult of the Archangel was successfully introduced into the Latin West. Therefore, the vibrant setting of the late ancient Greek East proved to be the crucible of St. Michael's later efflorescence as a figure of sanctioned veneration in the cultic and liturgical practices of the Roman Church in Western Europe.

# INTRODUCTION

A late ancient hagiography composed in Greek tells the story of a hermit who lived at a shrine in Anatolia. There, heralded by a pillar of bright flame searing upwards from earth into the heavens, Michael the Archangel appeared to him. The Archangel made a promise:

All who flee to this place in faith and in fear, calling upon the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and Michael the Arxistrategos, swearing an oath by my name and the name of God, will not depart in despair, but instead the grace of God and my power will overshadow this place.<sup>1</sup>

A few centuries later Michael showed himself again, this time far to the west across the waters of the Mediterranean in Italy. A Latin hagiography describes the intent of his coming:

Lo! I am Michael the Archangel, who stands always in sight of the Lord. And undertaking to protect this place and the people of this land, I resolved to demonstrate by this sign that I am the watcher and guardian of this place and all things which are done here.<sup>2</sup>

After Michael's appearance the Latin hagiography reports, "When the revelation was told and made known to the citizens they established the custom of praying there to God and St. Michael."<sup>3</sup> By the end of antiquity, the Archangel had thus augured his presence in both Greek East and Latin West, separate spheres of a far-flung Mediterranean world, commanding devotees in each who entreated his character. What processes precipitated these expressions of religious faith?

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<sup>1</sup> M. Bonnet, ed., *Narratio de miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis patrat* (Paris, 1890). πᾶς ὅστις καταφύγη ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ ἐν πίστει καὶ φόβῳ ἐπικαλούμενος πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον, μὰ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὄνομα καὶ τὸ ἐμόν, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ λυπούμενος. ἡ δὲ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δύναμις μου ἔσται ἐπισκιάζουσα ἐνταῦθα.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Johnson, ed., *Liber de apparitione sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano*, printed in *St. Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 111. Ego enim sum Michaelus archangelus, qui in conspectu Domini semper adsisto. Locumque hunc in terra incolasque servare instituens, hoc volui probare inditio omnium quae ibi geruntur ipsiusque loci esse inspectorem atque custodem.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Liber de apparitione*. Hac revelatione conperta, consuetudinem fecerunt cives hic Dominum sanctumque deprecari Michaellem.

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This study examines the late ancient cult of St. Michael the Archangel, focusing on its emergence in the eastern Roman Empire during the closing centuries of antiquity and ensuing transfer into the western Mediterranean world by the early medieval period. Chapter I surveys portrayals of angels and Michael in the biblical canon and reviews basic patristic interpretations of these scriptural sources. Chapter II reconstructs intertwined fourth-century Christological and angelological doctrinal controversies, the resolution of which established fundamental ontological and cosmological understandings about angels, including Michael, on literary planes of Christian doctrine. Chapter III recounts the blossoming of imperially sanctioned Michaeline veneration within cultic and ritual settings throughout the late ancient eastern empire. Finally, Chapter IV explores the gradual spread of the cult of St. Michael the Archangel from Greek East to Latin West over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries.

Together, these chapters reveal that by the closing centuries of Late Antiquity the tense religious environment of the eastern Roman Empire had forged Michael's nascent cult into a doctrinally elucidated and imperially sanctioned religious system equipped for "export" to the western Mediterranean. Subsequently, over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the eastern cult of the Archangel was successfully introduced into the Latin West. Therefore, the vibrant setting of the late ancient Greek East proved to be the crucible of St. Michael's later efflorescence as a figure of sanctioned veneration in the cultic and liturgical practices of the Roman Church in Western Europe.

## CHAPTER I

# Michael and Angels in Biblical Scripture

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Portrayals of Michael and angels in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament constituted essential antecedents for the development of the Archangel's character in late ancient Christianity. Although mentions of Michael in the biblical canon prove relatively sparse (his name appears only in brief passages from Daniel, Revelation, and Jude) the coupling of these portrayals with numerous canonical accounts involving anonymous angels provided late ancient Christians with ample scriptural sources for determining the nature of the Archangel's character on planes of both literary doctrine and cultic ritual practice. As we shall see throughout this study, churchmen consistently depended upon scriptural material as they engaged various passages of an increasingly authoritative biblical canon to craft enduring conceptions about angels and Michael over the course of Late Antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, because the raw biblical canon preserved dramatic ambiguities in its portrayals of angels, patristic churchmen derived competing, and oftentimes even conflicting, understandings about angels from scripture as they formulated ideas in response to the opposing doctrines of their theological rivals. Within the context of the heated doctrinal feuds that racked late ancient Christianity, such conflicting interpretations usually centered upon disparate understandings about the nature of the relationship between angels and Christ: some Christian sects associated Christ with angels, whereas others emphasized the Son's inherent supremacy

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, the set of texts known today as "the Bible" was not a universally accepted, neatly packaged canon throughout much of Late Antiquity. The canonicity of this exact collection of texts was firmly established beginning only from the end of the sixth century. For brevity, however, this chapter only considers content and exegetical appeals relating to scriptural texts included within the modern biblical canon. See Eckhard Schnabel, "History, Theology and the Biblical Canon: an Introduction to Basic Issues," *Themelios* 20.2 (1995): 18.

over these beings, a discrepancy causing the ontological and cosmological position of angels to also become analogously disputed in turn. Michael himself was occasionally invoked in these dialogues. Christological concerns thus remained a primary issue surrounding late ancient understandings about the role of angels and Michael in late ancient Christian doctrine.

Vital to this discussion will be nomenclature hinted at above but here delineated in full. Scholars have coined two terms for use in discussions addressing the relationship between angels and Christ: “ANGEL CHRISTOLOGY” and “ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY.” Charles Gieschen defines these terms:

ANGEL CHRISTOLOGY is the explicit identification of Jesus Christ as an angel.  
ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY is the identification of Christ with angelic forms and functions, either before or after the Incarnation, whether or not he is specifically identified as an angel.<sup>2</sup>

In general, an overt ANGEL CHRISTOLOGY remains absent from both the biblical canon and patristic treatises, and thus the term does not often appear in this study.<sup>3</sup> However, the ambiguous content of scriptural passages commonly allowed late ancient theologians to locate support for ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY from readings in scripture; that is, certain patristic writers could—and did—employ scripture to support doctrines identifying Jesus Christ with the forms and functions of an angel. This observation is crucial. Competing responses to the potential ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY embedded within scripture incited vigorous debate in the late ancient Roman Empire, particularly within the Greek East.

This chapter intends to trace the scriptural origins of such late ancient doctrinal arguments by surveying key portrayals of angels located within the Hebrew Bible and New

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology, Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 27.

<sup>3</sup> This is a sweeping statement, with which some modern theologians might disagree. However, for our purposes it is accurate: ANGEL CHRISTOLOGY very rarely surfaced in patristic dialogues—if it appeared at all—and therefore it merits little consideration in this chapter’s review of biblical material.

Testament. For our purposes, therefore, the consideration of what scriptural passages signified at the time of their textualization during the biblical era remains generally less important than recognizing what these passages could mean—and of course did mean—to later patristic churchmen who interpreted them as they read and wrote in the Christian Roman Empire. Additionally, this chapter surveys basic elements of Michael’s character as portrayed within the biblical canon, along with scriptural passages that later affected the maturation of his late ancient cult. With this in mind, it is important to recognize that Chapter I oftentimes only briefly introduces issues addressed by later chapters in greater detail.

### **The Hebrew Bible**

The Hebrew Bible—a literary anthology reflecting one thousand years of ancient Israel’s historical experience and containing a kaleidoscopic motley of chronicles, laws, songs, stories, proverbs, and prophecies—unsurprisingly includes many diverse portrayals of angels within its pages. The oldest dateable literature of the Hebrew Bible offers extremely enigmatic portrayals of angels which often conflate these beings with the God of Israel through their perplexing language, an element consistently deemed problematic by late ancient Christian exegetes. Conversely, more recent books of the Hebrew Bible generally elevate the God of Israel above angels; some also introduce angelic characters bearing personal names, including Michael. Based upon these shifting portrayals of angels one fundamental principle must be kept in mind: “No uniform and consistent angelology was extant in any part of the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

No section of the Hebrew Bible contains a more enigmatic angelology than the Pentateuch: its text features mysterious angels guised as strange visitors and wrathful avengers, pillars of cloud and tongues of bright fire, all the while bafflingly conflating these beings with

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<sup>4</sup> Saul Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993), 18-19.

the God of Israel. The Pentateuch's inconsistent treatment of angels ultimately derives from the combination of its great age (the Pentateuch represents the oldest content in the Hebrew Bible), very gradual textualization process, and the eventual synthesis imposed upon its once independent source texts by redactors working in ancient Israel.<sup>5</sup> The gravity of the Pentateuch's content in Christian tradition—e.g. the Creation, the Patriarchic cycle, Moses's delivery of Israel, etc.—caused its portrayals of angels to elicit especial attention from patristic exegetes.

Genesis 18 is particularly useful as a case study for our consideration of angels in the Pentateuch since this text's discrepancies provoked markedly intense controversy among late ancient Christian commentators.<sup>6</sup> The following translation highlights this passage's outstanding ambiguity<sup>7</sup>:

[1] God appeared to Abraham at the oak of Mamre, as he sat by the door of his tent in the middle of the day. [2] He looked up and behold! he saw three men towering above him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. [3] He said, "Lord, if I find favor with thee, do not pass by thy servant."<sup>8</sup>

Whereas "God" (θεός) is named in the singular, the three men (τρεις ἄνδρες) who appear to Abraham so suddenly are named in the plural; and although Abraham certainly runs "from the tent entrance to meet *them* (αὐτοῖς)," his salutation features singular nouns (Κύριε, σου) and a

<sup>5</sup> The "Documentary Hypothesis" proposes that this collection was formed by the combination of four main source documents, the oldest dating from the early kingdoms of Judah and Israel (c. tenth century B.C.). Although these sources developed relatively independently from one another, they were redacted into a recognizable form—i.e. the Pentateuch—likely sometime in the early Second Temple Period (c. fifth century B.C.). See Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997). Also William Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 15 suggests that this account finds its literary origins in tenth-century Judah.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this study interpretations and translations of passages from the Hebrew Bible are derived from the Greek Septuagint rather than Hebrew. Apart from those few exegetes learned in Hebrew, most late ancient Christian commentators operating in the eastern half of the Roman Empire would have read the content of the Hebrew Bible exclusively in the Septuagint's Greek.

<sup>8</sup> Gen 18.1-3. [1] "Ὡφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς πρὸς τῆ δρυὶ τῆ Μαμβρη καθημένου αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ μεσημβρίας. [2] ἀναβλέψας δὲ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ εἶδεν, καὶ ἰδοὺ τρεῖς ἄνδρες εἰστήκεισαν ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἰδὼν προσέδραμεν εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν [3] καὶ εἶπεν Κύριε, εἰ ἄρα εὗρον χάριν ἐναντίον σου, μὴ παρέλθῃς τὸν παῖδά σου.

singular imperative verb (ἐῴρον). Similar contextual and grammatical discontinuities persist throughout the account’s ensuing narrative:

[9] They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” [10] Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. [11] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. [12] So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” [13] The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ [14] Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, to this point the narrative has described Abraham’s visitor(s) variously as “three men” (τρεις ἄνδρες), “God” (θεός), and “Lord” (Κύριος)—but never has the word “angel” (ἄγγελος) been used. It is not until the following chapter, after Abraham’s visitors have departed from his tent and God has pronounced judgment against Sodom, that these figures are named as angels: “The two angels [one has been left behind] came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground.”<sup>10</sup> The puzzling language of Genesis 18 thus raises many questions about the identity of these angels and their relationship with the God of Israel.

This episode did not escape the notice of later Christian churchmen. Procopius of Gaza (d. 528) identified three main schools of interpretation surrounding Genesis 18. His commentary outlines them systematically:

There are those who assert that (1) the three men are three angels, those who, being Judaizers, say that (2) one of the three angels is God, the other two angels, and those who say that (3) it is a

<sup>9</sup> Gen 18:9-14. [9] Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν Ποῦ Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Ἴδου ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ. [10] εἶπεν δὲ Ἐπαναστρέφων ἦξω πρὸς σὲ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον εἰς ὥρας, καὶ ἔξει υἱὸν Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου. Σαρρα δὲ ἤκουσεν πρὸς τῇ θύρᾳ τῆς σκηνῆς, οὐσα ὄπισθεν αὐτοῦ. [11] Ἀβρααμ δὲ καὶ Σαρρα πρεσβύτεροι προβεβηκότες ἡμερῶν, ἐξέλιπεν δὲ Σαρρα γίνεσθαι τὰ γυναικεῖα. [12] ἐγέλασεν δὲ Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα Οὐπω μὲν μοι γέγονεν ἕως τοῦ νῦν, ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος. [13] καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Ἀβρααμ Τί ὅτι ἐγέλασεν Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀληθῶς τέξομαι; ἐγὼ δὲ γεγήρακα. [14] μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα; εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἀναστρέψω πρὸς σὲ εἰς ὥρας, καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σαρρα υἱός.

<sup>10</sup> Gen 19.1. [1] Ἦλθον δὲ οἱ δύο ἄγγελοι εἰς Σοδομα ἐσπέρας· Ἄωτ δὲ ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν πύλην Σοδομων . . .

model of the holy and consubstantial Trinity because the Lord is said as being one in number.<sup>11</sup> The first interpretation—that all three visitors were angels—was adopted by theologians such as John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Augustine for various doctrinal reasons. Augustine, for example, was unwilling to accept the problem of the preincarnate Christ appearing to man before the Incarnation.<sup>12</sup> The second interpretation—that one of the angels was God, specifically the preincarnate Christ—is discernible within the writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Novation, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Hilary.<sup>13</sup> The identification of Christ as one of Abraham’s three visitors could be immensely controversial: because this interpretation associated Christ with angelic messengers implicitly sent by God (a mild ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY), theologians occasionally employed it within doctrinal tracts arguing for the Son’s subordination to the Father. Conversely, the third interpretation—a Trinitarian understanding by means of typological and allegorical exegesis—was propounded by thinkers such as Augustine, Ambrose, and Pseudo-Dionysius for the purpose of demonstrating that the Trinity’s nature is one.<sup>14</sup> The ambiguous angelophany of Genesis 18 thus provides a telling example of a biblical account that incited considerable Christological debate, occasionally splitting patristic writers deeply along doctrinal lines.

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<sup>11</sup> Procopius of Gaza, *Comm. on Genesis*, cap. 18. Τοὺς τρεῖς ἄνδρας οἱ μὲν τρεῖς ἀγγέλους φασὶν, οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαίζοντες ἓνα μὲν τῶν τριῶν εἶναι λέγουσι τὸν θεόν, ἀγγέλους δὲ τοὺς δύο, οἱ δὲ τύπον ἔχειν φασὶ τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου Τριάδος, πρὸς οὗς εἰρησθαι μοναδικῶς τὸ Κύριε. I have added the numbers in parentheses to the English translation for clarity.

<sup>12</sup> L. Thunberg, “Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18,” *Studia Patristica* 8 (1966): 561-563. This view seems to have been used polemically against Jews, since Justin Martyr attributes it to Trypho (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 56.5). Pinpointing Justin Martyr’s understandings about the nature of the relationship between Christ and angels is difficult. See Silke-Petra Bergjan, “Qualifying Angel in Justin’s Logos Christology,” *Studia Patristica* 40 (2003): 353-357. Augustine provides the most succinct explanation: Item deus apparuit Abrahae ad quercum Mambre in tribus uiris, quos dubitandum non est angelos fuisse; quamuis quidam existiment unum in eis fuisse dominum Christum, adserentes eum etiam ante indumentum carnis fuisse uisibilem . . . angelos autem fuisse scriptura testator . . . (*City of God* 16.29).

<sup>13</sup> Thunberg, “Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18,” 563-565.

<sup>14</sup> Thunberg, “Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18,” 565-569.

Comparably vague passages abound throughout both the Pentateuch and related sections of the Hebrew Bible, many of which sparked similarly divisive Christological interpretations in Late Antiquity. For example, in Genesis 32 Jacob wrestles with a mysterious visitor traditionally identified as an angel, although the scriptural account only describes the unnamed stranger as both “God” (θεός) and “a man” (ἄνθρωπος).<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the “Angel of the Lord” tradition present within many early books of the Hebrew Bible indiscriminately conflates angelophanies and theophanies, most notably in Exodus, where the Angel of the Lord repeatedly speaks for God in the first person and is invested with the Lord’s holy name.<sup>16</sup> Contentious doctrinal interpretations of such passages will be discussed further in Chapter II.

Regarding Michael, the Book of Joshua includes a particularly relevant angelophany.

The account follows:

[13] Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?” [14] He replied, “Neither; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, “What do you command your servant, my lord?” [15] The commander-in-chief of the army of the Lord said to Joshua, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.<sup>17</sup>

Although the word “angel” (ἄγγελος) does not appear in this passage, its narrative identifies the strange visitor as the “commander-in-chief of the army of the Lord” (ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως κυρίου). This title was frequently applied to Michael in late ancient Christian texts—a

<sup>15</sup> Gen 32.24-30. The account first describes the visitor as a “man” (ἄνθρωπος) in Gen. 32:25, but in Genesis 32:31 as “god” (θεός). Again, the word “angel” (ἄγγελος) is never used.

<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew Bible alternates between describing this figure as the “Angel of God” (ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ, e.g. Exodus 14:19) and the “Angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου, e.g.. Exodus 3. 2-4); commentators usually presume that they are the same character. The Angel of the Lord Tradition is extensive. See episodes such as Exod 3.2-4, Exod 14:19, Exod 23.20-22.

<sup>17</sup> Josh 5.13-5.15 [13] Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἦν Ἰησοῦς ἐν Ιεριχω, καὶ ἀναβλέψας τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον ἐστηκότα ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ ῥομφαία ἐσπασμένη ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ. καὶ προσελθὼν Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἡμέτερος εἶ ἢ τῶν ὑπεναντίων; [14] ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἐγὼ ἀρχιστράτηγος δυνάμεως κυρίου νυνὶ παραγέγονα. καὶ Ἰησοῦς ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Δέσποτα, τί προστάσεις τῷ σῷ οἰκέτῃ; [15] καὶ λέγει ὁ ἀρχιστράτηγος κυρίου πρὸς Ἰησοῦν Λῦσαι τὸ ὑπόδημα ἐκ τῶν ποδῶν σου· ὁ γὰρ τόπος, ἐφ’ ᾧ σὺ ἕστηκας, ἅγιός ἐστιν.

fundamental conception of the Archangel was thus derived from the immediate wording of scripture.<sup>18</sup> During the patristic period, however, certain writers instead labeled Christ “commander-in-chief” of the heavenly host in order to associate the Son with angels.<sup>19</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus (c.393-c.457) epitomizes this discord in a biblical commentary on the above passage from Joshua: “Who was the supposed ‘commander-in-chief of the army of the Lord’? Some say that the Word of God was seen; but I think that it was the archangel Michael.”<sup>20</sup> For Christian exegetes, controversy engendering interpretations about Christ and angels—some even involving Michael—frequently resulted from close readings of the Hebrew Bible.

In comparison with the early patriarchal literature (which, as we have seen, frequently confuses angels with the God of Israel), less ancient books of the Hebrew Bible portray angels quite differently. “Yahweh is supreme upon the celestial throne; about it in human fashion are the angelic assistants . . . they speak sing, and minister as do courtiers for an earthly monarch.”<sup>21</sup>

Consider Isaiah 6.1-5:

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!” (Isaiah 6.1-5)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> e.g. the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* a famous fifth-century hagiography, M. Bonnet, ed., *Narratio de miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis patrato*. Paris, 1890.

<sup>19</sup> e.g. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.2.3.

<sup>20</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, cap. 6. Τίνα νοητέον τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον τῆς δυνάμεως Κυρίου; τινές φασι τὸν Θεὸν λόγον ὀφθῆναι· ἐγὼ δὲ οἶμαι Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχάγγελον εἶναι.

<sup>21</sup> William George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 27.

<sup>22</sup> Isa 6.1-5. [1] Καὶ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἑνιαυτοῦ, οὗ ἀπέθανεν Οὐζίας ὁ βασιλεύς, εἶδον τὸν κύριον καθήμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου ὑψηλοῦ καὶ ἐπηρμένου, καὶ πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. [2] καὶ σεραφῖν εἰστήκεισαν κύκλω αὐτοῦ, ἐξ πτέρυγες τῶ ἐνὶ καὶ ἐξ πτέρυγες τῶ ἐνὶ, καὶ ταῖς μὲν δυσὶν κατεκάλυπτον τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ταῖς δυσὶν κατεκάλυπτον τοὺς πόδας καὶ ταῖς δυσὶν ἐπέταντο. [3] καὶ ἐκέκραγον ἕτερος πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον καὶ ἔλεγον Ἄγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ, πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. [4] καὶ ἐπήρθη τὸ ὑπέρθυρον ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς, ἧς ἐκέκραγον, καὶ ὁ οἶκος ἐπλήσθη καπνοῦ. [5] καὶ εἶπα ὦ τάλας ἐγώ, ὅτι κατανένυγμαί, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ὢν καὶ ἀκάθαρτα χεῖλη ἔχων ἐν μέσῳ λαοῦ ἀκάθαρτα χεῖλη ἔχοντος ἐγὼ οἰκῶ καὶ τὸν βασιλέα κύριον σαβαωθ εἶδον τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς μου.

Scholars attribute this widening distinction between God and his angelic servants in the Hebrew Bible to the ancient Israelites' increasing contact with other Near Eastern traditions, especially Persian religion.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, such external influences are also considered to have precipitated the introduction of name-bearing angels into the Hebrew Bible, including Michael himself.

The Book of Daniel (c. second century BCE) mentions both Michael and Gabriel—it is the only text in the Hebrew Bible that includes named angels. Of course, Daniel's eventual place in the Christian canon meant that patristic exegetes routinely considered its portrayals of the Archangel. Daniel 12 contains one of the two mentions of Michael in this text:

[1] At that time Michael, the great angel, the protector of your people, shall arise . . . at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. [2] Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.<sup>24</sup>

The above passage dubs Michael “great angel” (ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ μέγας) while nearby Daniel 10 similarly styles Michael “one of the foremost princes” (εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων), titles that advanced the Archangel's prominence in Christian tradition and assured his favorable reception among patristic commentators. Cassiodorus (c.485-c.580), for example, bluntly observed that “a good angel was called ‘prince’ just as Daniel reads ‘Michael, your prince.’”<sup>25</sup> Daniel 10 features the Hebrew Bible's final mention of Michael. An unnamed character traditionally identified as Gabriel appears to the prophet and says:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament*, 101. This change was rooted in the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian Captivity (6<sup>th</sup> century BC). During the Babylonian Captivity, the religion of ancient Israel was infused with new elements via Israel's prolonged encounter with a cosmopolitan Persian religion.

<sup>24</sup> Dan 12.1-2. [1] καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὥραν ἐκείνην παρελεύσεται Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ μέγας ὁ ἐστηκὼς ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ λαοῦ σου . . . καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὑψωθήσεται πᾶς ὁ λαός, ὃς ἂν εὖρεθῇ ἐγγεγραμμένος ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ. [2] καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ἀναστήσονται, οἱ μὲν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ εἰς ὄνειδισμόν, οἱ δὲ εἰς διασπορὰν καὶ αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον.

<sup>25</sup> Cassiodorus, *Commentary on the Psalms*, Psalm 117. Sic et bonus angelus dictus est princeps, sicut in Daniele legitur: Michael princeps uester. Also Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Psalm 117. Nam et angeli dicti sunt principes, sicut in daniele legimus: michael princeps uester.

<sup>26</sup> Dan 10.16 describes the character as “ὁμοίως χειρὸς ἀνθρώπου,” Daniel 10.18 as “ὄρασις ἀνθρώπου. Later tradition regularly identified the unnamed character as Gabriel.

[12] . . . I have come because of your words. [13] But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, [14] and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days . . . [20] Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. [21] But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your prince.<sup>27</sup>

The Archangel's role as protector of Israel—established through the above passage's revelation that Michael fights against the prince of Persia on behalf of Israel—received significant attention from theologians: texts composed by Origen, John Cassian, Eusebius of Caesarea, Basil of Caesarea, and Jerome (among many others) all address this role of the Archangel.<sup>28</sup>

Correspondingly, Michael's guardianship over Israel, rooted in the scriptural account of Daniel, typified a prototypical aspect of his character as expressed within patristic literary texts.

The above review provides only a sampling of patristic interpretations derived from portrayals of the Archangel in the Book of Daniel. Michael's early inclusion in the Hebrew Bible certainly precipitated his entrance into many different later Christian traditions, including the New Testament itself. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible constituted only the first half of the scriptural origins of Michael the Archangel: Jesus Christ and the angels of the New Testament would appear forthwith.

## The New Testament

The dawn of the Christian era provided late ancient readers with an entirely new collection of scriptures brimming with content about angels: the word “angel” (ἄγγελος) occurs 175 times in the New Testament while Michael's character appears on two distinct occasions

<sup>27</sup> Dan 10.12-21. [12] . . . καὶ ἐγὼ εἰσηλθὼν ἐν τῷ ῥήματί σου. [13] καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς βασιλέως Περσῶν ἀνθίστηκει ἐναντίον μου εἴκοσι καὶ μίαν ἡμέραν, καὶ ἰδοὺ Μιχαὴλ εἰς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων ἐπήλθε βοηθῆσαί μοι, καὶ αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ κατέλιπον μετὰ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως Περσῶν . . . [20] καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Γινώσκεις τί ἦλθον πρὸς σέ; καὶ νῦν ἐπιστρέψω διαμάχεσθαι μετὰ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Περσῶν· καὶ ἐγὼ ἐξεπορευόμεν, καὶ ἰδοὺ στρατηγὸς Ἑλλήνων εἰσεπορεύετο. [21] καὶ μάλα ὑποδείξω σοι τὰ πρῶτα ἐν ἀπογραφῇ ἀληθείας, καὶ οὐθεις ἦν ὁ βοηθῶν μετ' ἐμοῦ ὑπὲρ τούτων ἀλλ' ἡ Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἄγγελος·

<sup>28</sup> John Cassian, *Conferences*, 13; Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, cap. 10, etc.

(Rev 12 and Jude 1).<sup>29</sup> Like the Hebrew Bible, New Testament portrayals of both nameless angels and Michael constituted authoritative source materials cited within patristic treatises. However, late ancient commentators reading the New Testament were also no longer compelled to insert the preincarnate Son into curiously worded angelophanies, for Jesus Christ himself was now heavily present in scripture. Nonetheless, the Incarnate Son's entrance into the biblical canon did not immediately clarify key dogmatic conceptions about angels. In fact, the New Testament's enigmatic portrayals often yielded only further kindling for doctrinal controversies surrounding the nature of the relationship between angels and the Godhead.

Angels are involved throughout many of the most memorable scenes of the New Testament's four Gospels in inferior roles emphasizing Christ's power. In Luke, Gabriel (like Michael a named angel inherited from the Hebrew Bible) heralds the coming of the "Son of the Most High."<sup>30</sup> Following Satan's temptation of Christ in the desert both Matthew and Mark tellingly recount that "angels came and waited on him," revealing Christ's superiority over his angelic attendants.<sup>31</sup> The Gospel of Matthew affirms the Son's command over the heavenly host at the dramatic moment of his betrayal and arrest: Christ asks the soldiers who come to seize him, "Do you think that I am not able to appeal to my Father, and he will at once send more than twelve legions of angels to me?"<sup>32</sup> All four Gospels describe the appearance of angels at Christ's empty tomb; angels are therefore present within each narrative at the crucial moment when

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<sup>29</sup> Darrell Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 122.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 1.32-33. <sup>[32]</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>[32]</sup> οὗτος ἔσται μέγας καὶ υἱὸς Ὑψίστου κληθήσεται, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὸν θρόνον Δαυεὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 1.13. οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ and Matthew 4.11 ἄγγελοι προσῆλθον καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ. The verb διηκόνουν (from διακονέω) has the connotation of "to serve" or "to minister unto," showing Christ's superiority over these beings.

<sup>32</sup> Matt 26.53. ἢ δοκεῖς ὅτι οὐ δύναμαι παρακαλέσαι τὸν πατέρα μου, καὶ παραστήσει μοι ἄρτι πλείω δώδεκα λεγιῶνας ἀγγέλων;

scripture finally reveals the Son's transcendent triumph over death.<sup>33</sup> Late ancient interpreters took note of these episodes; John Chrysostom summarized the relationship between Christ and angels in the Gospels by noting, "They served Him servilely."<sup>34</sup> To my knowledge no patristic author denied Christ's basic eminence in relation to the angelic host.

Scripture showed that Christ was superior to angels, but to what extent? Should the difference between the Son and his angels be interpreted as merely a subtle difference of degree or a pronounced difference of kind?<sup>35</sup> Could Christ, in his divinity, even be compared to angels at all? These questions were addressed in patristic texts. Some subordinationist theologians employed ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY to compare Christ with angels, thereby arguing for a difference of degree in order to demonstrate the Son's subordinate position alongside angels and beneath the divine Father. Conversely, their doctrinal rivals dismissed such identifications between Christ and the heavenly host; these writers instead elevated Christ above angels by affirming an unequivocal difference of kind that reflected the exalted Son's position beside the Father in the consubstantial Godhead. Chapter II will examine these issues in detail.

Michael himself is conspicuously absent from the Gospels. Luke mentions Gabriel twice, establishing a precedent for the inclusion of named angels within the narratives of Jesus's life.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, scholars have long recognized Michael's position as one of the most prominent angels among ancient Jewish circles that influenced early Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Why then do the Gospels

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<sup>33</sup> The four Gospels use different language to describe the visitor(s). See Tobias Nicklas, "Angels in Early Christian Narratives on the Resurrection of Jesus: Canonical and Apocryphal Texts," (in *Angels, the Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*. Edited by Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 293-311.

<sup>34</sup> John Chrysostom, *In synaxim archangelorum*. Καίπερ ἐν σαρκὶ θεωροῦντες τὸν ἄκτιστον, δουλοπρεπῶς δηκόνουν.

<sup>35</sup> That is, should Christ be interpreted as the high commander over angelic beings similar to him in nature (degree) or wholly separate in nature (kind)?

<sup>36</sup> Luke 1.19 and 1.26.

<sup>37</sup> Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, 48-51.

refrain from naming Michael? John Arnold proposes that the Archangel was deliberately omitted to guarantee the “divine and royal status of Jesus without any fear of confusion caused by Michael’s presence.”<sup>38</sup> It is plausible that Michael, was perceived as a rival to Christ, and was therefore barred because of his own outstanding prominence; on the other hand, it is also dangerous to read Arnold’s conclusion into the Gospels based only upon Michael’s *absence* from these texts. Regardless, the fact remains that late ancient readers did not encounter Michael alongside Christ in scripture. Patristic exegetes were at least aware of this omission. John Chrysostom, commentating on Christ’s baptism, observed that “the Father himself, and neither angels nor archangels, neither Gabriel nor Michael, heralded the Son from the heavens.”<sup>39</sup>

Beyond the Gospels, several passages included within the New Testament indicate immediate contemporary concerns about confusion between angels and the Godhead. Consider Revelation 22.8-9, which presupposes illicit angel worship in common cultic practice:

[8] I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; [9] but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant (σύνδουλος) with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, the corrective tone of Hebrews 1.5-12, coupled with its efforts to assure readers about Christ’s exalted nature, reveals that dogmatic disputes centering upon ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY preoccupied Christian authors from a very early period:

[1] Long ago God spoke to our ancestors . . . [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. [3] He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [4] having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>38</sup> John Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c. 300-c. 800* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 34-35.

<sup>39</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Joannem (homiliae 1–88)*. 12. μείζονα. οὐδὲ ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀρχάγγελοι, οὐδὲ Γαβριὴλ καὶ Μιχαήλ, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς αὐτὸν ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐκήρυττεν ὁ Πατήρ,

<sup>40</sup> Rev 22.8-9. [8] Κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἔβλεψα, ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. [9] καὶ λέγει μοι Ὅρα μὴ: σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου: τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον.

[5] For to which of the angels did God ever say,  
 “You are my Son;  
 today I have begotten you”?

Or again,  
 “I will be his Father,  
 and he will be my Son”?

[6] And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
 “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

[7] Of the angels he says,  
 “He makes his angels winds,  
 and his servants flames of fire.”

[8] But of the Son he says . . .

. . . [10] “In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth,  
 and the heavens are the work of your hands;

. . . [13] But to which of the angels has he ever said,  
 “Sit at my right hand  
 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

[14] Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?<sup>41</sup>

By forcefully exalting the Son above angels, the content of this passage lent itself to refutations of ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY. Indeed, careful exegesis of Hebrews 1 later formed a cornerstone in polemical works composed by both Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, each of whom directed his treatise against rival theologians advocating subordinationist Christologies.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Heb 1.1-14. [1] πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν . . . [2] ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας: [3] ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος “ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ” τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, [4] τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

[5] Τίνι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων

“Υἱός μου εἶ ξύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε,”

καὶ πάλιν “Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν;”

[6] ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει “Καὶ προσκνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.”

[7] καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει “Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα:”

[8] πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν . . .

. . . [10] καὶ “Σὺ κατ’ ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας,”

“καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί:”

. . . [13] πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε “Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου;

” [14] οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσιν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν;

<sup>42</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration Against the Arians* 1.1-64, especially 1.1-8 and 1.53-1.64. See Chapter II of this study.

Rather than literary based Christological concerns, Colossians 2.16-18 addresses the role of angels in common cultic practice. Like the above excerpt from Revelation, this passage's censure of the "worship of angels" suggests that Christians invoked angels in religious rituals even during the biblical period:

[16] Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. [17] These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. [18] Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking . . .<sup>43</sup>

Scholars suggest that "the New Testament letter to the Colossians attacks an incipient Gnostic group that was trying to combine Jewish cultic practices with Christianity" through "angel worship."<sup>44</sup> Patristic readers of Colossians apparently arrived at a similar reading. As we shall see, forms of unsanctioned angel invocation in the fourth-century eastern empire centered upon practices involving illicit rituals incorporating magic and syncretic worship. With this setting in mind, late ancient exegetes did not interpret Colossians as forbidding angel invocation *per se*, but instead only forms of this cultic practice deemed unacceptable by contemporary churchmen. This conclusion will become more apparent through Chapter III's discussion of the fourth-century canons of Laodicea, which, likely influenced by Colossians, issued proscriptions against illicit forms of angel invocation and triggered the rise of sanctioned Michaeline shrines in the Greek East. In turn, late ancient hagiographies related to this phenomenon also indicate a ready familiarity with Colossians.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Col 2.16-18. [16] Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων, [17] ἃ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ χριστοῦ. [18] μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκευίᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκῆ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ . . .

<sup>44</sup> Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, ed. and trans. (*Ancient Christian Magic, Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 60.

<sup>45</sup> Bonnet, *Narratio de miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis patrato*. See Chapter III for discussion.

The New Testament's Book of Revelation includes an iconic portrayal of the Archangel. Revelation 12.7-9 depicts Michael as commander over the angelic host and vanquisher of Satan through its epic account of the "War in Heaven":

[7] And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, [8] but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. [9] The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.<sup>46</sup>

Michael's role in this passage is revealing: "schon für die frühen Christen der ersten Jahrhunderte im Himmel eine Hierarchie der Engel bestand, in welcher Michael eine der ersten Stellen einnahm."<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, certain patristic theologians (adopting ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY) instead emphasized the Son's position as the Father's lieutenant over the celestial armies in order to affirm Christ's subordination.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, despite the visibility of Revelation's account of Michael in later Christian tradition, patristic exegetes did not often reference its material (though their tracts still cite it occasionally) but instead focused attention upon portrayals of Michael in Daniel and Jude. This absence is perhaps surprising due to the rich content of Revelation 12; on the other hand, it can be easily explained by Revelation's late acceptance into the New Testament canon, a feature resulting from frequent patristic objections to its apocryphal content.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Rev 12.7-9. [7] Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ "Μιχαὴλ" καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ "τοῦ πολεμῆσαι" μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ, [8] καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν, οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη αὐτῶν ἔτι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. [9] καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, "ὁ ὄφις" ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος "Διάβολος" καὶ Ὁ "Σατανᾶς," ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην, — ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν."

<sup>47</sup> Johannes Peter Rohland, *Der Erzengel Michael Arzt und Feldherr: Zwei Aspekte des vor- und frühbyzantinischen Michaelskultes* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 36. The account even depicts Michael as Satan's conqueror in place of the expected Christ.

<sup>48</sup> e.g. Eusebius of Caesarea and Eunomius. See Chapter II.

<sup>49</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, who emphasized the Son's role as the Father's lieutenant over the heavenly host, rejected Revelation as scripture.

Jude contains the New Testament's other portrayal of Michael. Its account derives from a Jewish apocryphal tradition about a conflict between Michael and Satan over Moses' burial<sup>50</sup>:

[9] But when the archangel Michael contended with the Devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"<sup>51</sup>

Semantically, this verse styles Michael as "archangel" (ἀρχάγγελος), a compound literally meaning "commander-angel," which appears only twice in the biblical canon.<sup>52</sup> Despite the endurance of this lofty title patristic writers consistently cite Jude's account in didactic contexts addressing the importance of humility and servility, proffering that even Michael—although eminent—refused to condemn Satan and thereby supersede God's authority.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, like portrayals of Michael in the Hebrew Bible, the Archangel's inclusion in canonical passages of the New Testament precipitated numerous patristic derivatives.

### Conclusion

This chapter examined passages within the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that comprised authoritative sources for the fashioning of Christian conceptions of angels during the closing centuries of Late Antiquity. As we have observed, portrayals of angels within the biblical canon prove multifaceted and varied. Such ambiguity provided a mixed store of potent ammunition to late ancient theologians composing doctrinal tracts hundreds (sometimes even thousands!) of years after the initial textualization of the biblical canon. Significantly, the

<sup>50</sup> James Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 539-540.

<sup>51</sup> Jude 1.9 [9] Ὁ δὲ "Μιχαὴλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος," ὅτε τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Μωυσέως σώματος, οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν κρίσιν ἐπενεγκεῖν βλασφημίας, ἀλλὰ εἶπεν "Ἐπιτιμήσαι σοι Κύριος."

<sup>52</sup> 1 Thess 4.16 is the other.

<sup>53</sup> e.g. Jerome, *Commentarii in iv epistulas Paulinas*. Quando Michael archangelus cum Diabolo disputabat de Moysi corpore, non fuit ausus inferre iudicium blasphemiae, sed dixit, imperet tibi deus. Si igitur Michael non fuit ausus Diabolo, et certe maledictione dignissimo, iudicium inferre blasphemiae: quanto magis nos ab omni maledicto puri esse debemus?" Also Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Epistulas apostolorum* (CPL 0903), among others.

ambiguity of angels in scripture allowed patristic theologians to insert the preincarnate Christ into the angelophanies of the Hebrew Bible and to associate the Son with the angels of the New Testament—or not. Consequently, questions about the nature of angels in relation to the Godhead fueled vigorous theological debates during the patristic era, the resolution of which allocated to angels doctrinal and cosmological positions both rooted in biblical precepts and infused with patristic dogmas (as we shall see in Chapter II). Along with these literary concerns, scripture also addressed the role of angels in cultic practice, prefiguring later clerical attempts to control the ritualistic invocation of these celestial beings.

Canonical scriptures thus formed an essential well for understandings about both the cultic and dogmatic functions of angels in later Christian traditions. This is not to say that biblical texts comprised the only source exerting an influence upon conceptions of angels in Late Antiquity. Theologians occasionally cited apocryphal traditions and inflected biblical material with dogmatic ideas lacking precise biblical precedent; in contexts of cultic angel invocation ritual practices often drew from elements wholly foreign to scripture. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to underestimate the weight that later Christian readers assigned to depictions of angels in the biblical canon: “cette révélation biblique est le creuset de l’angéologie populaire.”<sup>54</sup> This chapter certainly did not review all relevant scriptural passages regarding angels, but it addressed many of the most important ones.

Finally, the Archangel himself is present in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. This proved crucial. Late ancient conceptions of Michael’s character (especially those found within patristic literary treatises) were often informed by scriptural episodes

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<sup>54</sup> Victor Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l’histoire du culte de l’archange Saint Michel en orient jusqu’à l’Iconoclasme,” (in *Noscere Sancta, Miscellanea in memoria di Agostino Amore OFM + 1982*, vol. 1, edited by Isaac Vázquez Janeiro OFM. Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1985): 361.

hallowed through their transmission within authoritative texts. Ultimately, each named angel later embraced by the Roman Church—that is, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael—receives explicit mention in scripture and corresponding treatment in the literary works of patristic authors. In comparison, other Hebraic named angels found only in non-canonical traditions—e.g. Raguel, Uriel, Suriel, etc.—were generally ignored by patristic authors, becoming anathema by the eighth century.<sup>55</sup> Together, then, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament laid essential foundations for Michael’s character and prepared the Archangel’s entrance into the doctrinal, cultic, and liturgical practices of late ancient Christianity in both Greek East and Latin West.

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<sup>55</sup> John Arnold, “The Containment of Angels: Boniface, Aldebert, and the Roman Synod of 745,” *Quaestiones mediaevi novae* 17 (2013): 211-242 examines the eighth-century anathema pronounced against non-canonical angels—a process beyond the scope of this study. Raphael is found in the *Book of Tobit*, a deuterocanonical text in the Catholic Church. However, many contemporary Protestant denominations do not count Tobit as canonical.

## CHAPTER II

# Michael and Angels in Patristic Doctrine

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The *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*, a fifth-century hagiography, describes a man who visits a shrine dedicated to the archangel Michael.<sup>1</sup> There the visitor proclaims, “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—God—succor me through the embassy of Michael the Commander-in-Chief.”<sup>2</sup> This text is a hagiographical narrative rather than theological treatise, but the above profession nonetheless reflects complex doctrinal outcomes: the collective use of “God” (θεός) after naming the Trinity’s three individual *hypostases* affirms its consubstantiality, whereas the hagiography then places Michael apart from the Godhead and acknowledges his role as the Trinity’s ministering lieutenant. This chapter examines the processes that produced these conceptions of Michael the Archangel in late ancient Christian doctrine.

The fourth century witnessed the triumph of Nicene Christology over its Arian rival, an outcome that reciprocally determined doctrinal understandings about angels in Late Antiquity. The Arian-Nicene controversy compelled patristic theologians to scrutinize scriptural portrayals of Christ and angels through close readings of biblical texts; writers then imbued these biblical sources with extra-scriptural exegesis to support precise Christologies crafted in conscious opposition to the competing claims of rivals. Although these methods sought to refine competing Christological doctrines, at the same time they also produced competing Arian and Nicene conceptions of angels alongside ideas about Christ. Accordingly, the triumph of Nicene

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<sup>1</sup> For dating of the hagiography, see Glenn Peers, “Apprehending the Archangel Michael: Hagiographic Methods,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 101.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bonnet, ed., *Narratio de miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis patrat* (Paris, 1890). ὁ πατήρ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ὁ θεός, διὰ τῶν πρεσβειῶν Μιχαὴλ τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου βοέθει μοι.

theology over Arianism at fourth century's end assigned enduring ontological and cosmological roles to angels compatible with Nicene dogma. Angelology was thus a "background issue in the first great doctrinal controversy of the church" and a "by-product of Christian controversies about the nature of Christ was to clarify the ontological status of angels."<sup>3</sup>

Michael himself was occasionally invoked in these dialogues. To be sure, the Archangel was not a central figure in fourth-century Christological debate and his character elicits limited attention in doctrinal treatises. Nonetheless, certain texts deliberately address Michael's relationship with the Godhead in dogmatic and theological contexts. Consequently, along with the countless unnamed angels of the heavenly host, the triumph of Nicene theology in the eastern empire ensured that later doctrinal conceptions of the Archangel would be founded upon Nicene dogmatic principles.

This chapter, building upon our previous review of late ancient interpretations derived from portrayals of angels in scripture, reconstructs the Arian-Nicene angelological debate by examining patristic literary treatises in detail. No systematic tract dedicated principally to doctrinal understandings about angels survives from the patristic period—"les Pères ne parlent des anges q'incidemment."<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, because patristic theologians employed angels as "foils" to Christ, angels commonly entered treatises within which doctrinal conceptions of them were then fashioned alongside dogmatic conclusions about Christ.

### **The Arian-Nicene Conflict: Christology and Angelology**

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<sup>3</sup> R.M.M. Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy: A Study in Their Development in Syria and Palestine from the Qumran Text to Ephrem the Syrian* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 110.

<sup>4</sup> J. Rousse, "Les anges et leur ministère selon saint Grégoire de Nazianze," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 22 (1965): 133. There are a few texts that generally focus upon angels, e.g. John Chrysostom's *In synaxim archangelorum* or Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*. However, these texts are not systematic theological treatises outlining fundamental dogmatic principles in the straightforward manner of Basil of Caesarea's *De spiritu sancto* or Augustine's *De trinitate*.

The contentious nature of Christological and angelological discussion in the fourth century resulted from the situation that emerged with the accession of Constantine, Rome's first Christian emperor, and the unprecedented patronage that he and his successors bestowed upon Christianity. Fourth-century imperial patronage made it advantageous to be a Christian—or rather, a Christian of “correct” belief. Although controversies over doctrinal concerns had long occurred between rival Christian factions, Constantine's accession raised the stakes of such strife: imperial sponsorship caused emperors to raise some Christian leaders while reducing others, finance some communities while ignoring others, protect some thinkers while denouncing others. These factors established an arena of competition in which various Christian groups vied against one another for religious and political legitimacy; influential theologians clashed on doctrinal battlefields where they fought to acquire spiritual *and* temporal power. In the eastern empire such disputes usually addressed theological questions about Jesus Christ: his humanity, his divinity, his standing in the Godhead. Angels, as we have seen, occasionally proved relevant to these dialogues. Key doctrinal conceptions about these beings were thus crafted amidst the fourth century's heated Christological quarrels.

In the fourth-century Greek East two rival theological systems, Arianism and Nicene theology, emerged as primary contenders for imperial favor and dogmatic authority. It is important to recognize that these neat categorical terms insinuate clear-cut boundaries which in reality did not exist. That is, “Arianism” and “Nicene theology” were not monolithic systems defined by authoritative sets of shared doctrines. A variety of late ancient doctrinal systems—some conflicting with one another—are traditionally jumbled together and categorized under each broad appellation. Nonetheless, for our purposes dual notions of “Arianism” and “Nicene

theology” are useful since these terms effectively organize certain overarching Christological themes.

Arianism and Nicene theology advanced discordant Christologies, which conflicted especially in their disparate understandings about the Son’s standing in the Godhead. Arian theologians accepted Christ’s divinity but also reduced the Son beneath the Father; such thinkers portrayed Christ as “a subordinate deity and could thus reconcile belief in the Trinity with monotheism.”<sup>5</sup> The Son was firstborn, greatest, most noble of creations—but he was still a creature, one subject to his Creator and of a different essence than the Father. Nicene theology, on the other hand, markedly exalted the Son and defined his essence as equal (“consubstantial”) with that of the Father; “for the Nicenes, “the Son, their head, consubstantial with God, true God from true God, was King of Kings.”<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, Nicene theologians, in contrast to their Arian rivals, rejected dogmatic principles that subordinated the Son beneath the Father.

These disparate Christologies in turn informed both Arian and Nicene doctrinal conceptions of angels. Some Arian theologians advanced ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY in order to subordinate the Son to the Father by associating Christ with angels, created beings inherently inferior to the absolutely divine Father. This identification blurred ontological and cosmological distinctions between the Son and angels; Arian angels were therefore beings closely linked with Christ. Conversely, Nicene theologians, whose doctrines emphasized an exalted Son consubstantial with the Father, rejected such subordinationist associations between angels and Christ; they instead espoused doctrines elevating the Son wholly above the forms and functions of a mere angel. Accordingly, angels in the Nicene doctrinal

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<sup>5</sup> Leo Donald Davis. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 72.

<sup>6</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 74.

system were inferior, subservient beings entirely separate from Christ and created by the consubstantial Trinity. These conflicting angelologies were meticulously crafted by various Arian and Nicene writers over the course of the Arian-Nicene conflict. The following sections consider notable examples of the aforementioned process, focusing especially upon responses to ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY and portrayals of angels within the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa, along with the Nicene Creed.

### **Eusebius of Caesarea**

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 339) rose to the bishopric of Caesarea shortly after Constantine's accession. Early on he refused to countenance the condemnation of Arius and sided with Eusebius of Nicomedia in his defense. Despite his forced underwriting of the Nicene Creed at the Council of Nicaea, Eusebius soon recanted and continued to support Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia against Athanasius, who styled himself champion of the Nicene formula.<sup>7</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea was also a prolific author. His *Historia Ecclesiastica*—an important work that describes the history of the Church from the time of Christ until Eusebius's own fourth century—proves useful for reconstructing the state of Arian ideas about the Son and angels during the early years of the Arian-Nicene conflict.

From the opening chapters of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Eusebius reveals his subordinationist Christology. The following excerpt describes Christ through language illustrative of Eusebius's consistent relegation of the Son beneath the Father:

The first and only begotten of God which was before every creature and creation visible and invisible, the commander-in-chief of the rational and immortal host of heaven, the angel of great counsel, the executor of the Father's unspoken will, the creator, with the Father, of all things, the second cause of the universe after the Father, the true and only-begotten Son of God, the Lord and God and King of all created things, the one who has received dominion and power, with

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<sup>7</sup> Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos*, 2.6.87. Eusebius of Caesarea played a leading role in ensuring Athanasius's first exile (335), a notable coup in light of this study's consideration of each theologian's writings. Also see H.A. Drake, "Athanasius' First Exile," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 27 (1986): 193-204.

divinity itself, and with might and honor from the Father . . .<sup>8</sup>

According to Eusebius the Son is God, but also a subordinate agent, an “executor of the Father’s unspoken will.” A key nuance in this title is the Greek word translated as “executor” (ὕπουργόν), which possesses the sense of “rendering service.” Eusebius also defines Christ as the “second (δεύτερον) cause of the universe after the Father.” The Father—as the first cause—is superior. The statement that the Son “has received dominion and power, with divinity itself . . . from (παρὰ) the Father” is particularly subordinationist; its wording even strays close to Adoptionism since the Greek construction includes a participle (ὕποδεδεγμένον) often meaning “to receive into one’s house.”<sup>9</sup> Together, these Arianizing descriptions forcefully emphasize the Son’s inferiority to the Father.

Moreover, the above passage also includes striking forms of ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY sandwiched among (and thus accentuated by) these other titles relegating Christ. Eusebius declaims the Son as the “commander-in-chief” of the heavenly host to insinuate Christ’s place *among* heaven’s angelic legions as their captain. Indeed, it is telling that the title “commander-in-chief,” transliterated *arxistrategos* (ἀρχιστράτηγος), is the same word used to describe Michael in the hagiography cited at the beginning of this chapter. Eusebius then even goes so far as to dub Christ the “angel (ἄγγελος) of great counsel.”<sup>10</sup> Because ἄγγελος can also

<sup>8</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.2.3. πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως καὶ δημιουργίας ὁρωμένης τε καὶ ἀοράτου τὸ πρῶτον καὶ μόνον τοῦ θεοῦ γέννημα, τὸν τῆς κατ’ οὐρανὸν λογικῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου στρατιᾶς ἀρχιστράτηγον, τὸν τῆς μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελον, τὸν τῆς ἀρρήτου γνώμης τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπουργόν, τὸν τῶν ἀπάντων σὺν τῷ πατρὶ δημιουργόν, τὸν δεύτερον μετὰ τὸν πατέρα τῶν ὄλων αἴτιον, τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ παῖδα γνήσιον καὶ μονογενῆ, τὸν τῶν γενητῶν ἀπάντων κύριον καὶ θεὸν καὶ βασιλέα τὸ κύριος ὁμοῦ καὶ τὸ κράτος αὐτῆ θεότητι καὶ δυνάμει καὶ τιμῇ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑποδεδεγμένον . . . Some modern editors translate ἄγγελον as “messenger.” In light of this passage’s ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY, the word is far better translated as “angel.”

<sup>9</sup> Adoptionism proponed that the Son, a creature, was only *adopted* into a Godhead governed by the Father because of his outstanding merit.

<sup>10</sup> This title is derived from Isaiah 9:5. “. . . a child was born to us, a son was given to us . . . and in his name he is called ‘Angel of Great Counsel.’” . . . παιδίον ἐγεννήθη ἡμῖν, υἱὸς καὶ ἐδόθη ἡμῖν . . . καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος. Here, Origen’s influence is apparent (as it often is in Eusebius’s theology). Also see Joseph Trigg, “The Angel of Great Counsel: Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen’s Angelology,” *JTS* 42 (1991): 35-51.

be translated as “messenger,” here this term indicates function rather than nature—that is, Eusebius did not intend to identify Christ, who was still God, as a pure ontological angel (i.e. ANGEL CHRISTOLOGY). Still, the use of the word ἄγγελος alongside this passage’s other relegating language epitomizes Eusebius’s consistent use of ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY to advance subordinationist themes.

The *Historia Ecclesiastica* also inserts the Son into many of the Hebrew Bible’s most obtrusive angelophanies, thereby inflecting these scriptural accounts according to Eusebius’s Arianizing Christology. Eusebius identifies the preincarnate Christ as the angelic character who appeared to Abraham at Mamre, destroyed Sodom, wrestled with Jacob, met Joshua before battle, and spoke to Moses from the Burning Bush.<sup>11</sup> The ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY found within Eusebius’s response to the Book of Joshua is aggressive:

Joshua, also, the successor of Moses, calls him [Christ], as leader of the heavenly angels and archangels and of the supramundane powers, and as lieutenant of the Father, entrusted with the second rank of sovereignty and rule over all, “captain of the host of the Lord” . . . .<sup>12</sup>

Christ, as “leader (ἡγούμενον) of the heavenly angels and archangels,” is superior to these beings but his title also again ranks him among them. The Son, “entrusted with the second rank of sovereignty,” certainly remains subordinate to the Father. Coupled with Christ’s title as “captain of the host of the Lord” (ἀρχιστράτηγον δυνάμεως κυρίου) Eusebius’s identification of the Son as “lieutenant of the Father” (τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπάρχον) voices an especially dramatic relegation—the Greek word translated as “lieutenant” (ὑπαρχος) has the sense of a lieutenant-governor, a viceroy, or one-commanding-under-another. Significantly, all the material cited above occurs

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.2.7-13.

<sup>12</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.2.11. τοῦτον καὶ ὁ Μωυσέως διάδοχος Ἰησοῦς, ὡς ἂν τῶν οὐρανίων ἀγγέλων καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων τῶν τε ὑπερκοσμίων δυνάμεων ἡγούμενον καὶ ὡς ἂν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπάρχον καὶ τὰ δευτερεῖα τῆς κατὰ πάντων βασιλείας τε καὶ ἀρχῆς ἐμπεπιστευμένον, ἀρχιστράτηγον δυνάμεως κυρίου ὀνομάζει.

within the first two chapters of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*: ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY steers Eusebius's influential work from the outset.<sup>13</sup>

A final excerpt from another Eusebian text, the *Oration of Eusebius in Praise of Constantine*, ties together many of the themes examined throughout this section. The passage describes Christ:

The heavenly hosts are his attendants; the myriads of God's angelic ministers; the super-terrestrial armies, of unnumbered multitude; and those unseen spirits within heaven itself, whose agency is employed in regulating the order of this world. Ruler and chief of all these is the royal Word, acting as Regent of the Supreme Sovereign. To him the names of Captain, and great High Priest, Prophet of the Father, Angel of mighty counsel . . . are ascribed in the oracles of the sacred writers.<sup>14</sup>

Eusebius affirms the Son's subordinate position by employing now familiar terminology: Christ is "regent" (ὑπαρχος), "captain" (ἀρχιστράτηγος), and "angel" (ἄγγελον), a potent blend of subordinationist language and ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY. Notably, angels are deliberately named as God the Father's "ministers" (λειτουργῶν, or "servants") but then Christ's "attendants" (περιπολοῦσι). Here, the Greek word translated as "attendants" is a verb literally meaning "to go around or about," indicating Christ's cosmological place enwrapped among

<sup>13</sup>Manuscript traditions indicate a deliberate rejection of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*'s severe ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY by scribes copying Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. One translator makes the following observation regarding the passage in which Eusebius defines Christ as "lieutenant":

The manuscripts differ greatly at this point. A number of them followed by Valesius, Closs, and Crusè, read, ὡσανεὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπερχοντα δύναμιν καὶ σοφίαν ["the power and wisdom arising from the Father"]. Schwegler, Laemmer, Burton, and Heinichen adopt another reading which has some manuscript support: ὡσανεὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπαρχον ["the lieutenant of the Father"].

Late ancient and medieval copyists potentially found the blatant subordinationism of the latter reading's ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY too offensive for transmission—they therefore elected to transcribe the milder content of the former reading. This explanation also accounts for the abundance of manuscripts containing the former reading; after the decisive condemnation of Arianism this reading would have been preserved and transmitted whereas the latter subordinationist reading would have become increasingly neglected.

<sup>14</sup>Eusebius of Caesarea, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 3. στρατιαὶ δὲ τοῦτον οὐράνιοι περιπολοῦσι, μυριάδες τε ἀγγέλων θεοῦ λειτουργῶν πλήθη τε στρατοπεδείας ὑπερκοσμίου τῶν τε εἰσω οὐρανοῦ πνευμάτων ἀφανῶν τῆ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου τάξει διακονουμένων, ὧν πάντων ὁ βασιλικὸς καθηγεῖται λόγος οἷά τις μεγάλου βασιλέως ὑπαρχος, ἀρχιστράτηγον αὐτὸν καὶ ἀρχιερέα μέγαν προφήτην τε τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελον . . . θεσπίζουσιν ἀναφωνοῦσαι θεολόγων φωναί . . .

heaven's angels, rather than above and apart from them alongside the Father.<sup>15</sup> The presence of these themes within the *Oration* reveals their endurance across multiple Eusebian texts.

Eusebius's writings thus demonstrate that from the beginning of the Arian-Nicene controversy Arian churchmen identified Christ with angelic forms and functions, a strategy that reciprocally affected conceptions of angels within Arian doctrine. Eusebius compares angels with Christ (he elevates the Son as captain *among* their ranks) and even indicates that these entities are faintly akin. Correspondingly, by indicating that angels are similar to Christ, Eusebius places angels and Christ on the same cosmological tier, a conclusion implying vague ontological connections between them. Eusebius's Arianizing Christology thus subtly blurred distinctions between angels and Christ: Arian angels were simply not beings immeasurably inferior to the subordinate Son. These theological principles commanded far-reaching dogmatic implications in the religious milieu of Late Antiquity, which featured meticulous dogmatic statements and precisely worded creeds quite sensitive to such insinuations. Indeed, such Arianizing conceptions about the Son and angels challenged Nicene cornerstones in a manner that compelled Nicene theologians like Athanasius of Alexandria to respond in turn.

### **Athanasius of Alexandria**

Athanasius (c. 300-373) considered himself the pillar of Nicene doctrine throughout much of the fourth century, presiding as bishop of Alexandria for a tumultuous forty-five years, sixteen of them in exile. The youthful Athanasius was present at the Council of Nicaea (325) where he served as a secretary. Shortly thereafter Athanasius ascended to the Alexandrian see, establishing himself there as a forceful, vigorous bishop. In 335 Athanasius was sent into his first exile, ordered by Constantine at the behest of an Arian coalition; this first dismissal was

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<sup>15</sup> The noun *περίτολος* (derived from the verb used by Eusebius) does in fact mean "attendant."

only one of five over the course of the bishop's tumultuous episcopacy. Despite these repeated exiles, however, Athanasius continued to exert a primacy over Egypt. The Bishop of Alexandria's popularity and outspoken allegiance to the Nicene Creed fortified the Nicene cause during many of the most heated seasons of the fourth-century's doctrinal controversies. With this in mind, his writings are useful for reconstructing Nicene angelology.

In his *Third Oration against the Arians* Athanasius affirms the Son's consubstantiality by challenging Eusebius's technique of inserting the preincarnate Christ into the Hebrew Bible's angelophanies. Athanasius first contends that if God is not mentioned in a biblical angelophany then the appearance of an angel, and not the preincarnate Christ, must be interpreted. On the other hand, Athanasius then concedes that one must read the preincarnate Son into angelophanies where the ambiguous language of scripture irremediably conflates God with angelic beings.<sup>16</sup> Instead of the subordinate Son observed in Eusebius's texts, however, Athanasius evinces that the preincarnate Christ appearing in biblical angelophanies is in fact consubstantial with the Father and not at all akin to angels: "Who has seen the Son, knows that, in seeing him, he has seen not an angel, nor one merely greater than angels . . . nor in short any creature, but the Father himself."<sup>17</sup><sup>18</sup> Here, Athanasius exalts Christ above Arianizing titles like "*arxistrategos* of the heavenly host" when he asserts that the Son is "not one merely greater than angels." Such pointed comments reveal the deliberate nature of Athanasius's attacks against

ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY.

<sup>16</sup> Athanasius, *Third Oration against the Arians*, 25.14 cites Gen 18, Exod 3, Josh 5, etc.

<sup>17</sup> Athanasius, *Third Oration*, 25.14. και ὁ μὲν φαινόμενος ἦν ἄγγελος, ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐλάλει . . . ἃ δὲ λαλεῖ ὁ θεός, πρόδηλον ὅτι διὰ τοῦ λόγου λαλεῖ καὶ οὐ δι' ἄλλου. ὁ δὲ λόγος οὐ κεχωρισμένος τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲ ἀνόμιος καὶ ξένος τῆς οὐσίας τυγχάνων ἃ ἐργάζεται, ταῦτα τοῦ πατρὸς ἐστὶν ἔργα, καὶ μίαν ποιεῖ τὴν δημιουργίαν.

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius, *Third Oration*, 1.25 και ὁ ἑωρακὼς τὸν υἱὸν οἶδεν, ὅτι τοῦτον ἑωρακὼς οὐκ ἄγγελον οὐδὲ μείζονά τινα τῶν ἀγγέλων οὐδὲ ὅλως τινα τῶν κτισμάτων, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἑώρακε τὸν πατέρα.

Another Athanasian text, the *First Oration against the Arians*, further showcases the bishop's concentrated hostility against Arian ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY. Sections 1.1–8 and 1.53–64 of the *First Oration* respond to Arian interpretations of angelological content within the New Testament's Epistle to the Hebrews. Given the coherence of these sections, Ellen Muehlberger suggests the following:

These themes and the time that Athanasius spent interpreting the passage from Hebrews 1 reveal a literary relationship between *Oration* 1.1–1.8 and 1.53–1.64. They are logically paired, make sense together without the intervening arguments in the middle of the *Oration*, and thus may have been the building blocks of an original, shorter composition. All this is to say that Athanasius's case against his opponents seems to have originated with his attempt to correct their readings of a passage in which Christ was compared to angels.<sup>19</sup>

Muehlberger's astute observation further illustrates the weight of the angelological concerns reconstructed throughout this chapter, and the focused attention assigned to them by late ancient theologians.

Correspondingly, Athanasius' *First Oration* charges that Arian ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY stems partly from incorrect readings of the canonical Epistle to the Hebrews. The controversy centers upon Hebrews 1.4, which describes Christ as it reads, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."<sup>20</sup> According to Athanasius Arian theologians adduced this passage as a scriptural basis for their comparisons between Christ and angels since Hebrews itself seems to make such a comparison; Arians also then insisted that "comparison in consequence implies oneness of kind, so that the Son is of the nature of angels."<sup>21</sup> The *First Oration*'s counterargument centers upon the meaning of "superior" (κρείττων) within Hebrews:

For it is written . . . 'Become so much better than the angels,' wishing to show that, as much as the Son excels a servant, so much also the ministry of the Son is better than the ministry of

<sup>19</sup> Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65.

<sup>20</sup> Heb 1.4. τοσούτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσω διαφορώτερον παρ' αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα

<sup>21</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration against the Arians*, 1.56. συγκριτικῶς εἰρησθαι τὰ ῥητὰ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εἶναι τὰ συγκρινόμενα ὁμογενῆ, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων εἶναι φύσεως.

servants . . . This is why throughout he uses no comparison, such as ‘become greater,’ or ‘more honorable,’ lest we should think of Him and them as one in kind, but ‘better’ is his word, by way of marking the difference of the Son’s nature from things originated . . . Are not wisdom and stones of the earth different in essence and separate in nature? Are heavenly courts at all akin to earthly houses? Or is there any similarity between things eternal and spiritual, and things temporal and mortal? . . . In like manner there is nothing akin between the Son and the angels; so that the word ‘better’ is not used to compare but to contrast, because of the difference of his nature from them. And therefore the Apostle also himself, when he interprets the word ‘better,’ places its force in nothing short of the Son’s excellence over things originated, calling the one Son, the other servants; the one, as a Son with the Father, sitting on the right; and the others, as servants, standing before him, and being sent, and fulfilling offices . . . Had then the Apostle said, ‘by so much has the Son precedence of the angels,’ or ‘by so much greater,’ you would have had a plea, as if the Son were compared with the angels; but, as it is, in saying that He is ‘better,’ and differs as far as Son from servants, the Apostle shows that He is other than the angels in nature.<sup>22</sup>

Athanasius argues that Christ and angels cannot be “compared” (συγκριτικῶς) because they are fundamentally different. Instead, the Son can only be “contrasted” (διακριτικῶς) with angels, a method revealing Christ’s pure divinity and perfect separation from these beings in accordance with Nicene notions of his consubstantiality. Athanasius’s *First Oration* therefore dismisses Arianizing ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY by arguing that the identifications between Christ and angels which it inherently relies upon are impossible to make in the first place because of the absolute ontological disconnect between these entities.

Therein lay the roots of Nicene angelology. The Nicene theological system mandated that the cosmological position of angels in doctrine must rest infinitely below that of the exalted Christ enthroned in the consubstantial Trinity—angels and Christ were not at all comparable.

<sup>22</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration*, 1.53-57. Γέγραπται μὲν γὰρ . . . «τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων» δεῖξαι θέλων ὅτι καὶ ὅσον υἱὸς διαφέρει δούλου, τοσοῦτον τῆς διακονίας τῶν δούλων ἢ τοῦ υἱοῦ διακονία κρείττων γέγονε . . . διὰ τοῦτο γοῦν οὐδὲ τὸ ὅλον συγκριτικῶς εἶρηκε «μείζων» ἢ «τιμιώτερος» γενόμενος, ἵνα μὴ ὡς περὶ ὁμογενῶν τοῦτου κάκεινων τις λογίσηται, ἀλλὰ «κρείττων» εἶρηκεν, ἵνα τὸ διαλλάττον τῆς φύσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ πρὸς τὰ γενητὰ γνωρίση . . . πῶς γὰρ οὐχ ἑτεροοῦσια καὶ ἄλλα τὴν φύσιν ἢ σοφία καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ γῆς λίθοι; ποία δὲ συγγένεια ταῖς ἐν οὐρανοῖς αὐλαῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκοῖς; ἢ τί ὅμοιον τῶν αἰώνιων καὶ πνευματικῶν τὰ πρόσκαιρα καὶ τὰ θνητά; . . . οὕτως ἄρα οὐδεμία συγγένεια τῷ υἱῷ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους ἐστί· μηδεμίαν δὲ οὐσης συγγενείας, οὐκ ἄρα συγκριτικῶς ἐλέχθη τὸ «κρείττων», ἀλλὰ διακριτικῶς διὰ τὸ διαλλάττον τῆς τοῦτου φύσεως ἀπ’ ἐκείνων. καὶ αὐτὸς γοῦν ὁ ἀπόστολος τὸ «κρείττων» ἐρμηνεύων οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ διαφορᾷ τοῦ υἱοῦ πρὸς τὰ γενητὰ τίθησι λέγων, ὅτι ὁ μὲν υἱός, τὰ δὲ δοῦλα· καὶ ὁ μὲν ὡς υἱὸς μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς «ἐν δεξιᾷ κάθηται», τὰ δὲ ὡς δοῦλα παρέστηκε καὶ ἀποστέλλεται καὶ λειτουργεῖ . . . εἰ μὲν οὖν εἰρηκῶς ἦν ὁ ἀπόστολος «τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον ὁ υἱὸς τῶν ἀγγέλων προάγει» ἢ «τοσοῦτω μείζων ἐστίν», ἦν ἂν ὑμῖν πρόφασις, ὡς συγκρινομένου τοῦ υἱοῦ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους· νῦν δὲ λέγων «κρείττονα» αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ «τοσοῦτω διαφέρειν», ὅσῳ διέστηκεν υἱὸς δούλων, δείκνυσιν αὐτὸν ἄλλον εἶναι τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων φύσεως.

The Nicene Son was assuredly proper to the Father's own divine essence, whereas Nicene angels, ontologically dissimilar from Christ, were "servants, standing before him, being sent, and fulfilling offices."<sup>23</sup> Angels were created beings "made by Him [Christ] . . . and He sits with the Father, but they stand by ministering." Here the division between the consubstantial Christ and angels is explicit; the Son sits together with the Father and angels stand apart from both.<sup>24</sup> In the Nicene doctrinal system, angels and Christ were wholly unlike and immeasurably incomparable. No vague boundaries or commingled frontiers existed between the heavenly host and the consubstantial Son. Angels were servants and Christ was God.

Implications for the differences between Arian and Nicene angelology were significant. Later Christian doctrine inherited the Nicene view due to the historical endurance of Nicene theology. What would basic dogmatic conceptions about angels have been like if Arian angelology had instead prevailed? Athanasius paints that picture:

If the Son be in the number of the Angels, then let the word "become" [used to describe created beings] apply to Him as to them, and let Him not differ at all from them in nature; but let them be either sons with Him, or let Him be an angel with them; let them sit one and all together on the right hand of the Father, or let the Son stand with them all as a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister Himself as they are.<sup>25</sup>

Quite a different image than familiar conceptions of Christian angels. Of course, this is not how mainstream angelology turned out. Rather, the enduring Nicene theological system formed rigid boundaries between angels and the Son in a way that Arianism, which blurred these distinctions through ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY, simply did not. Ultimately, in the Arian doctrinal system angels were Christ's "attendants" (cf. Eusebius) whereas in the Nicene system

<sup>23</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration*, 1.55. ὡς δοῦλα παρέστηκε καὶ ἀποστέλλεται καὶ λειτουργεῖ.

<sup>24</sup> Similarly, it is telling that the Athanasian corpus never ranks Christ among the angelic host as its "commander-in-chief."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration*, 1.62. Εἰ μὲν ἐκ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἐστὶν ὁ υἱός, ἔσται καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐπ' ἐκείνων τὸ «γενόμενος» καὶ μηδὲν αὐτῶν κατὰ φύσιν διαφερέτω· ἀλλ' ἔστωσαν ἢ καὶ οὗτοι «υἱὸν ἢ κάκεινος ἄγγελος» καὶ κοινῇ πάντες καθεζέσθωσαν ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ πατρὸς ἢ μετὰ πάντων καὶ ὁ υἱὸς παραστηκέτω ὡς «λειτουργικὸν πνεῦμα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενος» καὶ αὐτὸς ὁμοίως ἐκείνων.

they were his “servants” (cf. Athanasius). Arianism and Nicene theology proposed radically different Christologies—it is no surprise then that they also advanced conflicting angelologies.

Athanasius was an early proponent of Nicene angelology during the outbreak of the Arian-Nicene conflict. Over the course of the fourth century, like-minded theologians provided additional mortar to the foundations which he laid. The efforts of these subsequent patristic writers ensured that in later Christian doctrine conceptions of angels would implicitly assume the separation of these beings from the Godhead and expand upon their quintessential role as ministers that, in the words of Athanasius, “stand and serve in their place below the Triad.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Gregory of Nyssa**

Gregory of Nyssa (331/340-c. 395) wrote in Anatolia at the end of the fourth century alongside his brother Basil of Caesarea and their companion Gregory Nazienzen, together the patristic era’s three great “Cappadocian Fathers.” Gregory’s theology was not purely “Nicene” but nonetheless staunchly Trinitarian; he supported the full divinity of Christ and his “coinherence” with the Father while arguing against subordinationist theologies.<sup>27</sup> Following Basil’s death in 379, Gregory of Nyssa assumed his brother’s role as a leading opponent against Arianism in the Greek East. In 381 the emperor Theodosius armed Gregory with weighty dogmatic authority by decreeing that any bishop seeking to be recognized as orthodox must first be in communion with the Bishop of Nyssa.<sup>28</sup> Gregory’s episcopacy also saw his involvement in

<sup>26</sup> Athanasius, *First Oration*, 1.58. τὰ δὲ γενητὰ κάτω που τῆς τριάδος ἐστὶ παραστήσοντα καὶ δουλεύοντα. In context the passage means angels where it reads “τὰ δὲ γενητὰ.”

<sup>27</sup> Daniel F. Stramara, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Aug., 1998): 257-263.

<sup>28</sup> *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.1.3. Episcopis tradi omnes ecclesias mox iubemus, qui unius maiestatis adque virtutis patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum confitentur eiusdem gloriae, claritatis unius, nihil dissonum profana divisione facientes, sed trinitatis ordinem personarum adsertione et divinitatis unitate, quos constabit communioni episcopi in pontica dioecesi . . . Gregorio episcopo Nysseno, hos ad optinendas catholicas ecclesias ex communione et consortio probabilium sacerdotum oportebit admitti: omnes autem, qui ab eorum, quos commemoratio specialis expressit, fidei communione dissentiunt, ut manifestos haereticos ab ecclesiis expelli neque his penitus posthac obtinendarum ecclesiarum pontificum facultatemque permitti, ut verae ac nicaenae fidei sacerdotia casta permaneant nec post

the reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed and the decisive condemnation of Arianism in the eastern empire at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381). With this in mind, his works reveal the persistence of heated angelological conflicts into the last days of the Arian-Nicene controversy; they also express a basic continuity with those ideas about angels set forth decades earlier by Athanasius.

Gregory of Nyssa's heated polemical tract attacking the Arian writer Eunomius of Cyzicus (d.395), aptly entitled *Against Eunomius*, best reflects the Cappadocian condemnation of Arian angelology. Eunomius was at one point an influential leader of the Anomoean party, a faction of radical Arians who subordinated Christ by asserting that the Son and the Father were dissimilar in essence. By the late fourth century, however, Eunomius's political and doctrinal authority had crumbled as a result of failing imperial support for Arianizing doctrines. From 380 to 383 Gregory of Nyssa authored the fervently polemical *Against Eunomius* to assault his tottering position. This contentious Christological tract frequently relied upon understandings about the Son in relation to angels.

An impassioned section of *Against Eunomius* addresses Eunomius's use of ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY to subordinate Christ. Gregory's summary of his opponent's doctrines parallels similar concerns dating from the early Arian-Nicene conflict:

For as he proceeds, he says that the Son is the same distance below the Divine Nature as the nature of angels is subjected below His own . . . The reader may judge for himself the meaning of his words: they run as follows—"Who [Christ], by being called 'Angel,' clearly showed by Whom He published His words, and Who is the Existent, while by being addressed also as God, He showed His superiority over all things. For He Who is the God of all things that were made by Him, is the angel of the God over all."<sup>29</sup>

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evidentem praecepti nostri formam malignae locus detur astutiae. dat. iii kal. aug. heracleae eucherio et syagrio cons. (381 iul. 30).

<sup>29</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.26-27. "Οὐδὲ γὰρ κατὰ τινα προπετῆ καὶ ἀνεπίσκεπτον ὀρμὴν ἅπαξ που τὸ τοιοῦτον παραφθεγγόμενος εἶτα ἐπανορθοῦται τοῖς ἐφεξῆς τὸ πλημμέλημα, ἀλλ' ἐμφιλοχωρεῖ τῇ κακίᾳ, τοῖς δευτέροις φιλονεικῶν ὑπερβαλέσθαι τὰ φθάσαντα. λέγει γὰρ προϊῶν τοσοῦτον αὐτὸν εἶναι κάτω τῆς θείας φύσεως, ὅσον ἀπ' ἐκείνου πρὸς τὸ ταπεινότερον ἢ τῶν ἀγγέλων ὑποβέβηκε φύσις . . . ἔξεστι δὲ κρῖναι τὸν λόγον τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν. ἔχει γὰρ οὕτω τὰ γεγραμμένα· ὅς τῳ μὲν ἄγγελος ὠνομάσθαι σαφῶς ἐδίδαξε δι' ὅτου

Eunomius, an heir to portrayals expressed decades earlier by Eusebius of Caesarea, thus posited a bold ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY that identified Christ as “the angel of God over all.” Similar identifications abound throughout Gregory’s summary of Eunomius’s Christology:

And yet, though there are so many that proclaim the glory of the Only-begotten God, against them all Eunomius lifts up his single voice, calling the Christ “an angel of the God over all,” defining Him, by thus contrasting Him with the “God over all,” to be one of the “all things,” and, by giving Him the same name as the angels, trying to establish that He in no wise differs from them in nature . . . For it is by this means that he tries to show that the Word Who was in the beginning, the Word Who was God, is not Himself the Word, but is the Word of some other Word, being its minister and “angel.”<sup>30</sup>

Gregory alleges that these flawed readings derive from Eunomius’s misinterpretation of various biblical passages, exemplifying the continued role of conflicts over ambiguities in scripture during the fourth century’s intertwined efforts to establish doctrinal conceptions of angels and Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa’s counterargument responds by employing alternative scriptural reading techniques that reinforce Christ’s ontological superiority over angels. For example, Gregory shrewdly reverses Eunomius’s subordinationist interpretation of a passage from Exodus to confirm that the “Angel of the Lord” is in fact the exalted Christ.<sup>32</sup> The Bishop of Nyssa also argues that certain scriptural passages naming Christ as an angel (e.g. Isaiah 9.5, which describes a messianic figure as the “angel of great counsel”) must be attributed to the Son’s role as a divine

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διήγγειλε τοὺς λόγους καὶ τίς ὁ ὢν, τῷ δὲ καὶ θεὸς προσειρησθαι τὴν ἰδίαν ἔδειξε κατὰ πάντων ὑπεροχὴν. ὁ γὰρ τῶν δι’ αὐτοῦ γενομένων θεὸς ἄγγελος τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων θεοῦ.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.30. καὶ τοσοῦτων ὄντων τῶν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ μονογενοῦς θεοῦ διαγγελλόντων μόνος τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀντιβοῶ ὁ Εὐνόμιος ἄγγελον αὐτὸν τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων λέγων θεοῦ, τῆ μὲν πρὸς τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων ἀντιδιαστολῆ ἓνα τῶν πάντων εἶναι διοριζόμενος, τῆ δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ ὀνόματος κοινωνία τὸ μηδὲν ἐκείνων παρηλλάχθαι τῆ φύσει κατασκευάζω . . . διὰ γὰρ τούτου δείκνυται ὅτι ὁ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὢν λόγος [θεὸς λόγος] οὐκ αὐτὸς λόγος ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ ἐτέρου τινὸς λόγου γίνεται λόγος, διάκονός τε· καὶ ἄγγελος ἐκείνου γινόμενος. Note the use of “διάκονός,” translated as “minister” but also used to denote a “servant” or “waiting-man.”

<sup>31</sup> Gregory cites Eunomius’s interpretations of by now familiar passages like Exodus’s “Angel of the Lord” tradition, Hebrews, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.35.

messenger rather than any ontological similarity between him and angels.<sup>33</sup> One final excerpt reveals the passion underlying these seemingly endless rounds of doctrinal debates. Gregory's rage steams upward from the page—these issues were important in Late Antiquity:

When the Apostle [the author of Hebrews] has gone through all this argument to demonstrate the unapproachable majesty of the Only-begotten God, what must I feel when I hear from the adversary of Christ that the Lord of Angels is Himself only an Angel—and when he does not let such a statement fall by chance, but puts forth his strength to maintain this monstrous invention?<sup>34</sup>

Gregory names Christ as “Lord of Angels.” However, the Greek word translated as “Lord” is not “lieutenant” (ὕπαρχος) nor “captain” (ἀρχιστράτηγος), as found in Eusebian works, but instead “Κύριος,” the title used again and again in scripture to describe the Father. Through such materials Gregory of Nyssa's angelological system—in opposition to that of his Arian rivals—demanded that angels be separate from and inferior to the exalted Christ. At this point the dogmatic implications of these themes require little explanation; the above review mainly intends to demonstrate the persistence of such Christological and angelological issues into the end of the fourth century and last days of the eastern empire's Arian-Nicene conflict.

### **The Nicene Creed and the Resolution of the Arian-Nicene Controversy**

In 325 the Council of Nicaea acclaimed the Nicene Creed as the cardinal dogmatic profession of Nicene theology. Eastern churchmen proceeded to argue over this confession's doctrinal validity for the remainder of the fourth century—hitherto we have observed skirmishes within this broader debate. In 381, however, the definitive reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed at the Council of Constantinople established that within contexts of imperially sanctioned religion

<sup>33</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.37. Gregory's argument is based upon the notion that the Greek word for “angel” (ἄγγελος) can mean both a simple messenger as well as a celestial being φαμέν και τὸν ἀληθινὸν λόγον τὸν ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντα διαγγέλλοντα τοῦ ἰδίου πατρὸς τὴν βουλὴν τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τῆς ἀγγελίας ἐπονομαζόμενον ἄγγελον λέγεσθαι.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.28. Πάντα πρὸς ἐνδειξιν τοῦ μονογενοῦς θεοῦ ταῦτα τοῦ ἀποστόλου διεξιόντος, τί πάθω τὸν τῶν ἀγγέλων κύριον ἄγγελον εἶναι παρὰ τοῦ χριστομάχου ἀκούων, οὐ κατὰ τὸ συμβὰν τὸν τοιοῦτον ἀπορρίψαντος λόγον, ἀλλ' ἐναγωνιζομένου τῇ ἀτοπία, ὡς μηδὲν πλέον Ἰωάννου καὶ Μωϋσέως τὸν κύριον ἔχειν κατασκευάζεσθαι;

Nicene doctrines would henceforth stand as dogma whereas Arianizing theologies would be denounced as heresy. The Council of Constantinople therefore generally signified the decline of Arianism and resolution of the Arian-Nicene controversy in the Greek East.

The Nicene Creed advocated the Trinity's consubstantiality, a theological premise that presupposed an exalted Son wholly separate from inferior angelic beings. Therefore, the reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed at Constantinople marked a decisive embrace of both Christ's exalted nature and, reciprocally, the role of angels as ministers inferior to the consubstantial Triad. Indeed, the version of the Nicene Creed confirmed in 381 carefully guarantees the cosmological and ontological separation of angels from the Godhead. The word "angel" does not appear in the Creed; nonetheless, its language pronounces firm judgment on the standing of angels in Nicene doctrine through discussion of "all that is unseen" and "all things":

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. And [we believe] in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made.<sup>35</sup>

The Nicene Creed as it was reaffirmed at Constantinople thus confirmed the reduced position of angels in doctrine by identifying the Father as the creator of all things "invisible" and the consubstantial Christ as the maker of "all things," each category including angels. That is, angels were beings ontologically and cosmologically inferior to the consubstantial Trinity because of their status as the Trinity's creation—creation, after all, is subject to its creator in Christian doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup>August Hahn, ed., *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, in *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der Alten Kirche*, (Breslau: Verlag Von E. Morgenstern, 1877), 81-82. Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀορατῶν· καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο,

<sup>36</sup> A principle that we have seen in Arian attempts to subordinate the Son by naming the Father as his creator.

It is essential to recognize that the Nicene Creed’s naming of “all that is unseen” deliberately targeted angelic beings—this language simply reflects theological jargon common among contemporary patristic treatises. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, defines the Nicene Creed’s reference to “all things visible and invisible”:

The whole creation is divided into two parts: that “which is seen,” and that “which is not seen,” to use the Apostle’s words—the second meaning the intelligible and immaterial, the first, the sensible and material; and being thus divided, the angelic and spiritual natures, which are among “the things not seen,” reside in places above the world, and above the heavens.<sup>37</sup>

Gregory himself uses the word “angelic” (ἀγγελικῆς) in this definition, explicitly confirming that late fourth-century writers conceived of “things unseen” as pertinent to angels.<sup>38</sup> With this in mind, the Nicene Creed reads “all things invisible” “in heaven” instead of the more precise “angels” simply in order to project a broad, flexible category capable of resisting challenges arising from loopholes in wording.<sup>39</sup>

The Nicene Creed’s careful consideration of angels is not surprising: angelological concerns could prove quite urgent in contemporary doctrinal circles. As we have seen throughout this chapter, fourth-century patristic writers consistently included material concerning angels in order to fortify their all-important Christologies against the competing claims of rivals. The reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed at Constantinople represented the consummation of this process.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On Infants’ Early Deaths*, 78. εἰς δύο τοῖνον ταῦτα διηρημένων πάντων τῶν ὄντων (εἷς τε τὸ αἰσθητόν, λέγω, καὶ εἰς τὸ κατ’ ἔννοιαν θεωρούμενον) καὶ τῆς μὲν ἀγγελικῆς τε καὶ ἀσωμάτου φύσεως, ἥτις τῶν ἀοράτων ἐστίν, ἐν τοῖς ὑπερκοσμίσις τε καὶ ὑπερουρανίοις διαιτωμένης.

<sup>38</sup> In addition to the example given above, see also Basil of Caesarea, *Spiritu Sanctu*, 16.38. Basil echoes the Nicene Creed’s language as he discusses “the Maker by whom all things were made, visible and invisible, principalities and powers, authorities, thrones, and dominions.” τὸν ποιητὴν ἐν ᾧ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, εἴτε ὀρατά, εἴτε ἀόρατα, εἴτε ἀρχαί, εἴτε ἐξουσίαι, εἴτε δυνάμεις, εἴτε θρόνοι, εἴτε κυριότητες. “Principalities,” “Powers,” “Authorities,” “Thrones,” and “Dominions” are simply orders of angels categorized according to hierarchical rank. For this second conclusion, see Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy* or Daniel F. Stramara, “The Angelology of Cyril of Jerusalem as Source for Pseudo-Dionysius’ Celestial Hierarchy,” *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 27 (2009): 11–21.

<sup>39</sup> That is, the Nicene Creed effectively limited all beings beneath Christ by saying creatures “in heaven and earth.”

Yet along with its Christological precepts, the confirmation of the Nicene Creed both reflected and precipitated the widespread acceptance of Nicene ideas about angels among late ancient theologians scattered throughout the eastern empire. This patristic consensus resulted in the long-term endurance of Nicene angelology. Indeed, after the fourth century angelological discussions in Christian doctrinal settings would build upon the role of angels as ministering beings created by and subservient to the consubstantial Godhead, all principles informed by Nicene dogma. Over the course of Late Antiquity and into the Middle Ages these once contentious conclusions became increasingly accepted as implicit natural principles, which formed a generally unchallengeable foundation for further angelological speculation.<sup>40</sup> Coupled with the scriptural sources that they interpreted, Nicene conclusions about angels formulated in the fourth-century comprised the bedrock of later Christian angelology

### **Michael in Patristic Texts**

What of Michael? Because he himself was of course an angelic being, the doctrinal discussions reviewed above surely applied to his character. Nonetheless, late ancient Christological and angelological dialogues usually address only the heavenly host's unnamed angels. Michael himself appears very rarely in fourth-century Christological contexts. The Archangel was simply not a major figure in these discussions. On the other hand Michael is also not entirely absent from patristic discourses; his character occasionally surfaces within doctrinal texts addressing Christological and angelological issues relevant to the Arian-Nicene controversy. To my knowledge, such mentions of Michael are found only in sources favoring Nicene theological perspectives. However, the Archangel's absence from Arianizing texts probably stems only from the fact that very few such sources survive, for his inclusion in Nicene

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<sup>40</sup> David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 69. Keck summarizes the immense contributions of Nicene angelology to medieval angelology.

settings betokens the likelihood of at least some rival Arian counterpart. Complementing this chapter's previous conclusions, Nicene inflected patristic tracts take deliberate care to affirm Michael's cosmological and ontological inferiority to Christ and the Trinity on doctrinal planes.

For example, Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373), a fourth-century hymnographer who intoned against Arianizing tenets through musical odes composed in Syriac, keenly argued for Michael's inferiority to the Son in Christological contexts. Consider this hymn:

Gabriel chief of Angels, called Him [the Son] "My Lord":  
 He called Him "My Lord," to teach that He was his Lord, not his fellow.  
 Gabriel had with him, Michael as fellow:  
 The Son is Lord of the servants; exalted is His Nature as His Name.  
 No servant can search Him out; for the greater the servant,  
 He is great above His servant.<sup>41</sup>

Ephraim's message is pointed. Michael is the companion of Gabriel, his fellow angel, but certainly not the companion of Christ, for the Son is greater than mere angelic servants. Of course, the corrective tone of this passage also indicates that Ephrem likely did in fact encounter contemporary theologians whose ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY named Gabriel and Michael as Christ's fellows. Similar identifications concerning the relationship between Michael and Christ abound in Ephrem's works; elsewhere the theologian describes "Michael and his followers, that ministered to the Son in the highest" and "Michael and his hosts who were wont to serve the Son on high."<sup>42</sup> Through such material Ephrem typifies an author who consistently emphasized Michael's inferiority in response to fourth-century Christological concerns.

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<sup>41</sup> Ephrem Syrus, *Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh*, 14.23, trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 12* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1987), 252.

<sup>42</sup> Ephrem Syrus, *Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh*, 13.7; *Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany*, 2.7. trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 12* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1987), 248 and 267.

Deliberate relegations of the Archangel in doctrinal contexts also surface within other assorted patristic writings. In the following passage, John Chrysostom (d. 407) excludes Michael from the Trinity while intending to emphasize the Godhead's consubstantiality:

Neither angels nor archangels, neither Gabriel nor Michael, but rather the Father himself heralded the Son from the heavens, and the Holy Spirit together with the Father soared to him with a sound and remained upon him. Thus on account of these things the Apostle said, "We have seen his glory, just as the only begotten Son of the Father." [John 1.14]<sup>43</sup>

Chrysostom insinuates Michael's inherent unworthiness to herald the Son, a role reserved here for Christ's fellow *hypostases*. Didymus the Blind (d. 398) similarly argued for Michael's place apart from the Trinity. In this passage Christ's own exalted nature is not questioned. Didymus instead focuses attention upon the Holy Spirit:

Therefore will they number the Father and the Son just as the Holy Spirit among other ministering spirits? If not, then the Holy Spirit must not be considered together with the other spirits. For the Holy Spirit is not an archangel. Michael and Gabriel and those like them are archangels.<sup>44</sup>

Although Didymus's concerns are primarily Pneumatological rather than Christological, this passage proves useful: it illustrates that Michael's character was also employed to vault the Holy Spirit into the Trinity through language paralleling the Christological discourses examined above. This observation, of course, raises new questions for future researchers.<sup>45</sup> It seems that

<sup>43</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Joannem (homiliae 1–88)*, 83.1–5. οὐδὲ ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀρχάγγελοι, οὐδὲ Γαβριὴλ καὶ Μιχαὴλ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς αὐτὸν ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐκήρυττεν ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ὁ Παράκλητος, ἐπιπτάμενος αὐτῷ μετὰ τῆς φωνῆς, καὶ μένων ἐπ' αὐτόν. Ὅντως διὰ ταῦτα ἔλεγεν· Ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς Μονογενοῦς παρὰ Πατρός.

<sup>44</sup> Didymus Caecus, *De trinitate*, 2.4.11. ἄρα καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἅτε πνεῦμα τοῖς ἄλλοις συναριθμήσουσι λειτουργικοῖς πνεύμασιν; εἰ δὲ τοῦτο οὐχ οὕτως, οὐδὲ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα νοεῖται μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων πνευμάτων. ἀρχάγγελος γὰρ οὐκ ἐστίν. ὁ γὰρ Μιχαὴλ καὶ Γαβριὴλ καὶ οἱ κατ' αὐτοὺς εἰσὶν ἀρχάγγελοι•

<sup>45</sup> The relationship between patristic Pneumatology and angelology is an entirely unexplored field. It is certain, however, that questions about likenesses between the Holy Spirit and angels arose in patristic contexts. For example, Basil of Caesarea, *De Sanctu Spiritu* 13.29: "It follows that the mention of the Spirit and that of angels are not made under like conditions. The Spirit is called on as Lord of life, and the angels as allies of their fellow-slaves and faithful witnesses of the truth." Ὡστε οὐκ ἐφ' ὁμοίους Πνεύματός ἐστι καὶ ἀγγέλων ἢ μνήμη, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν Πνεῦμα, ὡς ζωῆς κύριον, οἱ δ' ἄγγελοι ὡς βοηθοὶ τῶν ὁμοδούλων καὶ πιστοὶ μάρτυρες τῆς ἀληθείας παραλαμβάνονται.

in patristic treatises Michael the Archangel could serve across both Christological and Pneumatological contexts as a foil character exhibiting the nature of the Godhead's divinity.

Finally, there is the question of Michael's title as "*arxistrategos*" of the heavenly host, which appears in the fifth-century hagiography cited at the beginning of this chapter. As noted above, Eusebius of Caesarea applied this title to Christ in order to locate the Son among the angelic host; this interpretation derived from a popular tradition that identified Christ as Joshua's unnamed visitor in Joshua 5.<sup>46</sup> However, apocryphal post-New Testament accounts, late ancient hagiographies, and post-fourth century doctrinal tracts conversely instead label Michael *arxistrategos* over heaven's angelic legions.<sup>47</sup> It is thus peculiar that Nicene theologians alone singularly and wholly refrained from applying the title *arxistrategos* to Michael, especially since they must have been aware of its contemporary popular usage.

Why did they refrain? Johannes Rohland suggests that "Die Unsicherheit darüber, ob unter dem Archistrategen nun Christus oder Michael zu verstehen sei, mag dazu beigetragen haben, dass die Kirchenväter den Archistrategentitel für Michael in ihre Exegesen zunächst noch nicht aufgenommen hatten."<sup>48</sup> Rohland's conclusion can be accepted with caution. It seems fairly likely that in fourth-century doctrinal contexts *arxistrategos* was a dangerously loaded title since among learned commentators it was linked to both Michael and Christ. Rohland also then notes that beginning from the fifth and sixth century doctrinal texts name Michael *arxistrategos* increasingly frequently.<sup>49</sup> This also fits our timeline. By these later centuries, the entrenchment of Nicene theology had caused the angelological issues of the Arian-Nicene debate to become

<sup>46</sup> cf. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, cap. 6. Τίνα νοητέον τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον τῆς δυνάμεως Κυρίου; τινές φασι τὸν Θεὸν λόγον ὀφθῆναι· ἐγὼ δὲ οἶμαι Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχάγγελον εἶναι.

<sup>47</sup> e.g. *Slavic Book of Enoch*; the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*; the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*; Theodoret's *Interpretatio in Daniele*.

<sup>48</sup> Johannes Peter Rohland, *Der Erzengel Michael Arzt und Feldherr: Zwei Aspekte des vor- und frühbyzantinischen Michaelskultes* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 74.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 64-65.

less acute; theologians were no longer willfully compelled to avoid applying the title *arxistrategos* to the Archangel because of contemporary Christological concerns.

Taken together the materials discussed in this section reveal that fourth-century Nicene theologians deliberately identified Michael as the consubstantial Trinity's ontological and cosmological inferior. Moreover, litigious instances of this technique probably comprised a response to no longer extant Arianizing portrayals of the Archangel—polemic supposes practice. Ultimately, presentations of Michael's character in extant doctrinal texts closely mirror issues from the broader Arian-Nicene angelological debate. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Michael was at least a peripheral character in the fourth-century angelological and Christological dialogues reconstructed over the course of this chapter. As previously recounted, the resolution of the Arian-Nicene debate in favor of Nicene theology ushered hosts of anonymous angels into their increasingly familiar doctrinal position as servile ministers of the consubstantial Trinity. This final section has shown that Michael himself was among them. We have thus returned to where our inquiry began: “O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—God—succor me through the gifts of Michael the Arxistrategos!”<sup>50</sup> By the end of Late Antiquity, this fundamental conception of Michael had become preponderant among literary circles operating in the Roman Empire.

### Conclusion

The victory of Nicene Christology at the end of the fourth century signified the endurance of Nicene angelology. Hereafter, on literary planes of Christian doctrine angels would be ontologically and cosmologically inferior servants created by the consubstantial Trinity. Of course, the triumph of Nicene theology by no means heralded the end of angelological debate in Christian doctrinal settings; however, this outcome did supply the platform on which future

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<sup>50</sup> Bonnet. ὁ πατήρ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ὁ θεός, διὰ τῶν πρεσβειῶν Μιχαὴλ τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου βοήθει μοι.

discourses could reasonably take place. Throughout antiquity and into the Middle Ages literary conceptions of angels in Christian doctrine would build upon Nicene precepts. This influence was not confined to the Arian-Nicene conflict's original eastern battlegrounds: "Un important travail d'assimilation, de transmission et de diffusion des données patristiques . . . entraîne la formation d'une tradition angéologique occidentale."<sup>51</sup> Nicene angelology therefore determined later doctrinal conceptions of Michael relevant to both his eastern and western cultus.

Did doctrinal debates and their literary conceptions of angels affect the development of late ancient Michaeline veneration in separate domains of common ritual practice? The answer is a tempered "sometimes." As we shall see in the next chapter, sanctioned forms of Michaeline veneration that first arose in the Greek East were influenced by clerical efforts to ensure ecclesiastical control over practitioners, rather than any abstract Christological notions. Nonetheless, the fifth-century hagiography cited above—a popularizing narrative intended for readerships at a Michaeline shrine, and not in doctrinal contexts—betrays at least some hint of these issues through its deliberate affirmation of the Trinity's consubstantiality before invoking the Archangel. Finally, the growth of Michael's originally eastern cult in the Latin West arose during the sixth century within Italian settings both removed from the control of the peninsula's Arian Ostrogoths and influenced by Byzantine imperial religion (which was of course Nicene). Ultimately, then, it appears that doctrinal issues usually entrapped on elevated literary planes permeated the separate sphere of common ritual practice on at least some discernible level.

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<sup>51</sup>Philippe Faure, "L'ange du haut moyen-âge occidental IV<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècles: création ou tradition?" *Médiévales* 15 (1988): 32.

## CHAPTER III

### **Michael's Cult in the Greek East**

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This chapter examines the emergence within the eastern empire of imperially sanctioned Christian cultic practices revolving around the character of Michael the Archangel. During antiquity, cultic sites devoted to angel invocation had long abounded in the Greek East, many of them hotbeds for forms of magical ritual and syncretic worship condemned by both leading ecclesiastics and imperial officials. The rise of sanctioned Michaeline veneration in the Greek East over the course of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries grew in part out of the efforts of churchmen who sought to purge elements from these sites that they regarded as unacceptable. Additionally, angels were introduced into church-based liturgical settings where clergymen shaped Michael's character from the pulpit, associating the Archangel with human saints. The success of these efforts conferred a vital legitimacy upon Michael's cult, leading to its imperial sponsorship and the construction of churches consecrated in his name throughout the eastern empire. Therefore, by the early sixth century Michael was truly "Saint Michael," an angelic character venerated like flesh-bound mortal saints across the Greek East.

#### **Unsanctioned Cults of Angels**

Forms of angel worship distinct from identifiably Christian practices permeated the Roman world long before the rise of the Christian angel cults of Late Antiquity. Multiple scholarly works treat such "pagan" cults of angels. Franz Cumont demonstrated the presence of pagan angel worship across the Roman world from Rome to Syria.<sup>1</sup> F. Sokolowski investigated

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Cumont, "Les Anges du Paganisme," *Révue de l'histoire des religions* 12 (1915): Pp. 159–82.

a series of inscriptions located in Stratonikeia dedicated to angelic deities.<sup>2</sup> A.R. Sheppard attributed an underlying Jewish influence to pagan cults of angels in Asia Minor, and revealed the existence of a peculiar “Society of Friends of Angels” in mid third-century Anatolia.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, Rangar Cline analyzed the “conceptualization and veneration of *angeloi* in various non-Christian and non-Jewish contexts” through a study focusing upon pagan angel worship in the eastern empire from c. 150-c. 450 CE.<sup>4</sup> Together, this body of work confirms that angel cults independent from Christian traditions existed throughout the Mediterranean world both before and after the dawn of the Christian Roman Empire.

Following the rise of Christianity in the fourth century, however, sites of angel invocation in the Roman world were often syncretic centers incorporating Christian, Jewish, Gnostic, and pagan elements. These were zones of pronounced religious blending. With this in mind, forms of angel worship at such locations generally revolved around practices of syncretic magic ritual.

Magic—“the exercise of a preternatural control over nature by human beings, with the assistance of forces more powerful than they”—was ubiquitous in Late Antiquity.<sup>5</sup> Its practice commonly manifested itself through spells written or engraved by professional magicians on papyrus scrolls, lead tablets, bowls, gems, and amulets. Magic was employed for many different reasons. Spells might take the form of malevolent curses or gentle petitions for healing. Patrons visited magicians to purchase supernatural aid in charming love interests, destroying enemies, and gambling on horseraces. Moreover, virtually the entire population of the Roman world

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<sup>2</sup> F. Sokolowski, “Sur le culte d’Angelos dans le paganisme grec et romain,” *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1960): 226. e.g. “Θείῳ Ἀγγέλῳ,” “Θείῳ Ἀγγελικῶ,” “Ἀγαθῶ Ἀγγέλῳ,” “Ἀγγέλῳ Ὁσίῳ Δικαίῳ.” Sokolowski prints “Ἀγγέλῳ” rather than “Ἀγγέλω” in the final example.

<sup>3</sup> A. R. Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor.” *Talanta* 12–13 (1980–81): 77–101. The name of this society was Φιλανγγέλων συνβιῶσις. Text and translation after Sheppard (1980/81) 87–88, no. 8, plate 1.

<sup>4</sup> Rangar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill Press, March 2011), xvii.

<sup>5</sup> Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3.

believed in the efficacy of these practices: “It made little difference who you were—man or woman; Greek, Roman, Jew, or Christian; commoner or aristocrat; unlettered peasant or wise philosopher . . . anyone could play the role of client or target . . . for there was no one who did not fear the power of *defixiones* [curse magic].”<sup>6</sup>

Late ancient magicians attempted to ensure the efficacy of their spells by imbuing them with pleas, invocations, and prayers directed toward deities and spirits indiscriminately derived from Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, and pagan traditions. Angels were often the targets of these appeals: “the role of angels as guarantors of spells and curses is ubiquitous in Late Antiquity.”<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, angelic characters from Jewish and Christian traditions—including Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and other Hebraic-named angels absent from the biblical canon (e.g. Raguel)<sup>8</sup>—entered the eastern magical tradition, but became entirely “paganized” along the way, thus joining a commingled pantheon that also incorporated deities such as Zeus, Helios, Osiris, Anubis, Abrasax, and the Judeo-Christian God.<sup>9</sup>

Michael himself was certainly invoked in magical contexts: his name appears hundreds of times within forms of magic extant from Late Antiquity.<sup>10</sup> For example, the following Greek

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<sup>6</sup> John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 245.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>8</sup> Marvin Meyer, Richard Smith, et al., ed., *Ancient Christian Magic, Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 230.

<sup>10</sup> Although churchmen generally condemned magic, scripture itself provides precedents for associating angels with magical ritual. The apocryphal Book of Tobit contains an account linking the angel Raphael with an efficacious healing ritual:

Raphael said to Tobias, before he had approached his father, “I know that his eyes will be opened. Smear the gall of the fish on his eyes; the medicine will make the white films shrink and peel off from his eyes, and your father will regain his sight and see the light” . . . Tobias went up to him, with the gall of the fish in his hand, and holding him firmly, he blew into his eyes, saying, “Take courage, father.” With this he applied the medicine on his eyes, and it made them smart. Next, with both his hands he peeled off the white films from the corners of his eyes. Then Tobit saw his son and threw his arms around him, and he wept and said to him, “I see you, my son, the light of my eyes!” (Tob. 7.11-14)

This ritual certainly finds parallels among the magic spells of Late Antiquity. A Coptic “spell for good fishing” written on a papyrus scroll even references the Book of Tobit’s account:

spell preserved on a papyrus scroll intends to fulfill the personal request of a magician's client.

Its instructions—although rather sinister—typify ritualistic practices prescribed by magic scrolls:

Take a cat, and [make] it into an *Esies* [by submerging] its body in water. While you are drowning it speak [the formula] . . . Take the cat, and make [three] lamellae, one for its anus, one for . . . [?], and one for its throat; and write the formula [concerning the] deed on a clean sheet of papyrus with cinnabar [ink] . . . wind this around the body of the cat and bury it . . . Then take up the water in which the drowning took place, and sprinkle it [on] the stadium or in the place where you are performing [the rite] . . . The formula to be spoken, while you are sprinkling the drowning water, is as follows . . . "I conjure you, the daimon that has been aroused in this place, and you, the daimon of the cat that has been endowed with spirit; come to me on this very day and from this very moment, and perform for me the NN deed" (add the usual, whatever you wish)<sup>11</sup> . . . On the second metal leaf, that is to be put [through the earholes], there should be this: I conjure you, **the powerful and mighty angel of this animal in this place**; rouse yourself for me, and perform the NN [deed] both on this very day and in every hour and day . . . Proceed toward the sunset and, / taking the right-hand and left-hand whiskers of the cat as a phylactery, complete the rite by saying this formula to Helios: . . . I am Adam the forefather; my name is Adam. Perform for me the NN deed, because I conjure you by the god Iao, by the god Abaoth, by the god Adonai, **by the god Michael, by the god Souriel, by the god Gabriel, by the god Raphael**, by the god Abrasax Ablathanalba Akrammachari, by the lord god Iaiol . . . Come to me, hearken [to me] . . . perform for me the NN deed. This is the ritual of the cat, suitable for every ritual purpose: A charm to restrain charioteers in a race, a charm for sending dreams, a binding love charm, and a charm to cause separation and enmity.<sup>12</sup>

Another Greek spell preserved on a papyrus fragment exemplifies Michael's integration into a syncretic magical pantheon juxtaposing characters drawn from many disparate traditions:

First angel of [the god], great Zeus. IAO  
 And you, Michael, who rule heaven's realm,  
 I call, and you, archangel Gabriel,  
 Down from Olympos, Abrasax, delighting,  
 In dawns, come gracious who view sunset from  
 The dawn, / Adonai. Father of the world,  
 All nature quakes in fear of you Pakerbeth.<sup>13</sup>

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Greetings Father! Greetings, Son! Greetings, Holy Spirit! Come to me today, O life breath of God almighty, from the four sides of the earth and the four corners of the entire world. O you who granted a collection to Tobias son of Tobit, who appointed his archangel Raphael for him! He walked with him upon the sea and caught a fish; its gall gave light to the blinds, its liver cast out a demon . . . so you must ordain Raphael the archangel for me, and must collect every species of fish for me [to the place] where your figure and your amulet will [be].<sup>10</sup> (Meyer et al., *Ancient Christian Magic*, 281)

The above spell thus presents a not uncommon instance in which authoritative scriptures themselves were cited in magical practices revolving around the invocation of angels.

<sup>11</sup> This spell served as a template. Magicians would fill in whatever deed their client wished to be done where the text reads "NN."

<sup>12</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 18. For spells in original Greek, see K. Preisendanz, *Papyri magicae graecae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* second edition, (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1974, 33-39.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 11.

In light of the doctrinal dialogues discussed in previous chapters, it is notable that many spells conflate Michael's role with Christ's.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, not all spells were written on papyrus: a magic gem (Fig. 1) recovered in Egypt includes the names "Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel" alongside numerous magic words and an image of a cock-headed snake-legged god.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 1 (Obverse)



Figure 1 (Reverse)

The widespread invocation of Michael in magical contexts undoubtedly resulted from his character's prominence in Jewish and Christian traditions.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, by depicting Michael as a mutable pagan god operating alongside spirits derived from various Greek, Near Eastern, and Egyptian religious traditions, magical spells introduced portrayals of the Archangel evoking

<sup>14</sup> Meyer et al., *Ancient Christian Magic*, 123. For example, a Coptic exorcism spell invokes "the power of Michael the Archangel, who came from heaven and offered salvation." Another Coptic spell describes Michael as "the angel who stands on [the] right side of the Father."

<sup>15</sup> Accompanying image printed from Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 188.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Michael (along with Gabriel and Raphael) is one of the three angels named in both canonical scripture and popular apocryphal texts. Chapter 1 reviewed Michael's role in scripture. In light of Michael's invocation in magical settings, it is also useful to note the apocryphal *Testament of Solomon*, which associates Michael with magic. In this story Michael gives a magic ring to Solomon; Solomon then uses the ring to bind demons and enlist their aid in building his temple. See James Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume 1 (Doubleday; New York, 1983).

thoroughly non-Christian settings.<sup>17</sup> Such syncretic magical rituals, along with their paganized portrayals of Michael, pervaded sites of angel worship scattered throughout the Greek East.

Scholars have identified a handful of these sites. Sozomen's fifth-century account of the Oak of Mamre (named in Gen 18 as the site of Abraham's three angelic visitors) describes a Palestinian location with vivid detail:

I consider it necessary to detail the proceedings of . . . what is called the oak of Mamre. This place is now called Terebinthus, and is about fifteen stadia distant from Hebron, which lies to the south, but is two hundred and fifty stadia distant from Jerusalem. It is recorded that here the Son of God appeared to Abraham, with two angels who had been sent against Sodom. . . here the inhabitants of the country and of the regions round Palestine, the Phœnicians, and the Arabians, assemble annually during the summer season to keep a brilliant feast; and many others, both buyers and sellers, resort thither on account of the fair. Indeed, this feast is diligently frequented by all nations: by the Jews, because they boast of their descent from the patriarch Abraham; by the pagans, because angels there appeared to men; and by Christians, because He who for the salvation of mankind was born of a virgin, afterwards manifested Himself there to a godly man.<sup>18</sup> This place was moreover honored fittingly with religious exercises. Here some prayed to the God of all; some called upon the angels, poured out wine, burnt incense, or offered an ox, or he-goat, a sheep, or a cock. Each one made some beautiful product of his labor, and after carefully husbanding it through the entire year, he offered it according to promise as provision for that feast, both for himself and his dependents . . . No one during the time of the feast drew water from that well; for according to pagan usage, some placed burning lamps near it; some poured out wine, or cast in cakes; and others, coins, myrrh, or incense.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Thomas J. Krauss, "Angels in the Magical Papyri, the Classic Example of Michael, the Archangel," in *Angels, the Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. by Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook, 2007), 616.

<sup>18</sup> Compare Sozomen's Christological interpretation with the angelological dialogues discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>19</sup> Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2.4. Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ διεξελθεῖν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν δρῦν τὴν Μαμβρῆ καλουμένην . . . τόπος δὲ οὗτος, ὃν νῦν Τερέβινθον προσαγορεύουσιν, ἀπὸ δέκα καὶ πέντε σταδίων γείτονα τὴν Χεβρὼν πρὸς μεσημβρίαν ἔχων, Ἱεροσολύμων δὲ διεστῶς ἀμφὶ διακόσια καὶ πενήκοντα στάδια. οὗ δὲ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθὴς ἅμα τοῖς κατὰ Σοδομιτῶν ἀποσταλεῖσιν ἀγγέλοις καὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανῆναι τῷ Ἀβραάμ . . . ἐνταῦθα δὲ λαμπρὰν εἰσέτι νῦν ἐτήσιον πανήγυριν ἄγουσιν ὥρα θέρους οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καὶ οἱ προσωτέρω Παλαιστῖνοι καὶ Φοίνικες καὶ Ἀράβιοι· συνίασι δὲ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἐμπορείας ἕνεκα πωλῆσοντες καὶ ἀγοράσοντες. πᾶσι δὲ περισπούδαστος ἡ ἑορτὴ, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν καθότι πατριάρχην αὐχοῦσι τὸν Ἀβραάμ, Ἑλλησι δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐπιδημίαν τῶν ἀγγέλων, τοῖς δ' αὖ Χριστιανοῖς ὅτι τότε ἐπεφάνη τῷ εὐσεβεῖ ἀνδρὶ ὁ χρόνιος ὑστερον ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους διὰ τῆς παρθένου φανερῶς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδείξας. προσφόρως δὲ ταῖς θρησκείαις τιμῶσι τοῦτον τὸν χώρον, οἱ μὲν εὐχόμενοι τῷ πάντων θεῷ, οἱ δὲ τοὺς ἀγγέλους ἐπικαλοῦ μενοὶ καὶ οἶνον σπένδοντες καὶ λίβανον θύοντες ἢ βοῦν ἢ τράγον ἢ πρόβατον ἢ ἀλεκτρυόνα. ὃ γὰρ ἕκαστος ἐσπουδασμένον καὶ καλὸν εἶχε, διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ἔτους ἐπιμελῶς τρέφων, καθ' ὑπόσχεσιν εἰς εὐωχίαν τῆς ἐνθάδε ἑορτῆς ἐφύλαττεν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς οικείοις . . . περὶ δὲ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς πανηγύρεως οὐδεὶς ἐντεῦθεν ὑδρεύετο. νόμῳ γὰρ Ἑλληνικῷ οἱ μὲν λύχνους ἡμμένους ἐνθάδε ἐτίθεισαν, οἱ δὲ οἶνον ἐπέχεον ἢ πόπανα ἔρριπτον, ἄλλοι δὲ νομίσματα ἢ μύρα ἢ θυμιάματα. See Chapter 1 for a review of angels as portrayed in Gen 18.

Material finds reveal that in the fourth century cultic practices at Mamre centered upon angels.<sup>20</sup> Excavations at the Oak of Mamre have also uncovered fourth- and fifth-century votive lamps, coins, jewelry, and other decorative objects, further corroborating Sozomen's account. Citing such evidence one historian has labeled Mamre a "regional cult" for the inhabitants of its surrounding area.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, archaeological projects conducted at the "Fountain of the Lamps" in Corinth—another site of angel worship—revealed a Roman bath, which collapsed before 400 CE, causing its courtyard to flood:

As a ruined water source the complex became a place of magic: the Corinthians came to stand above the court, or on a sloping earth and rubble wall they built across it, or in the half-filled tunnels around it, and made their incantations. They tossed thousands of terracotta lamps into the water as votives, some of them carrying graffiti. One graffito refers to the "angels below" (ἄγγελοι οἱ κάτω) . . . four lead curses were also recovered from the interior.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, in the fourth century a location in Jerusalem traditionally identified as the Pool of Bethesda (named in John 5:3 as a place where an angel of the Lord stirred healing waters) featured ponds associated with pagan deities.<sup>23</sup> Comparing the sites listed above reveals their inherent similarity: each exemplifies a secluded<sup>24</sup> and ambient<sup>25</sup> setting of angel invocation and syncretic ritual, especially practices involving magic.

Ultimately, then, we can be sure that Jews, Christians, Gnostics, and pagans joined together at sacred centers in the eastern empire to practice syncretic forms of angel worship hinging upon magic ritual. As the most prominent angel of the Judeo-Christian milieu, Michael

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<sup>20</sup> Rangar Cline, "A Two-Sided Mold and the Entrepreneurial Spirit of Pilgrimage Souvenir Production in Late Antique Syria-Palestine," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7.1 (2014): 28-48. As examined in Cline's article, a fourth-century mold used to manufacture clay pilgrimage souvenirs sold at the site depicts the three angels of Gen 18.

<sup>21</sup> Aryeh Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?" in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land, First-Fifteenth Centuries CE*, ed. by Arieh Kofsky and Guy Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998): 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> James Wiseman, "The Fountain of the Lamps," *Archaeology* 23 (1970), 136.

<sup>23</sup> P. Benoit, "La Piscine de Bethesda," in *Jerusalem through the Ages: The Twenty-Fifth Archaeological Convention*, October 1967, (1968) 51-53. Benoit suggests the pagan deity associated with the site was Serapis.

<sup>24</sup> i.e. discrete locations removed from the supervision of churchmen and imperial officials.

<sup>25</sup> i.e. sites dependent on natural environmental features like ponds and springs.

was regularly invoked during these practices. Settings of such commingled angel worship remained physically secluded and thus independent from churches and other traditional seats of clerical control; such clandestine locations consequently allowed visitors to invoke angels while veiled from the eyes of clergymen. Ecclesiastics responded by attacking the propriety of these practices.

### The Formation of Sanctioned Cults of Angels

Both late ancient churchmen and imperial officials condemned magic.<sup>26</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea upbraided anyone seeking “to attract to themselves as spiritual assistants those invisible powers which flutter about in the air, using both forbidden curse tablets of magic and illegal coercion based on chants and spells.”<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom praised any woman who would prefer to watch a sick family member die rather than seek a cure by means of an amulet.<sup>28</sup> Along with such churchmen, political leaders also established laws against magic: the law codes of Valentinian I (r. 364-375) mandated that anyone gathering at night to perform “evil imprecations, magic rituals, or necromantic sacrifices” be put to death.<sup>29</sup> Together, emperors and bishops considered magic to be dangerous because its practice eluded their control: such rituals “symbolized the invisible world of Rome—a world of gods, spirit, and *daimones* on the one side,

<sup>26</sup> However, this distinction is not absolute: it seems that clergymen sometimes (perhaps even occasionally) encouraged and became involved with magical practices. See Meyer et al., *Ancient Christian Magic*, 260.

<sup>27</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *De laudibus*. και οὐδὲ μέχρι τούτων ἔστησαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς καταδέσμοις τισὶν ἀπειρημένης γοητείας, ἐκθέσμοις τε καὶ ἐπανάγκοις ᾠδαῖς καὶ ἐπωδαῖς, δυνάμεις ἀφανεῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν ἀέρα ποτωμένας παρέδρους ἑαυτοῖς ἐφειλκύναντο.

<sup>28</sup> John Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8.3.

<sup>29</sup> *Codex Theodosianus*, 9.16.7. Ne quis deinceps nocturnis temporibus aut nefarias preces aut magicos apparatus aut sacrificia funesta celebrare conetur. Detectum atque convictum competenti animadversione mactari, perenni auctoritate censemus.

of aspirations, tensions and implicit power on the other—in short, a world where emperors, senators, and bishops were not in command.”<sup>30</sup>

The earliest evidence for the condemnation of a religious site centering on magic and angel invocation features the aforementioned Oak of Mamre. Three ancient authors—Eusebius of Caesarea, Sozomen, and Socrates Scholasticus—relate that in the fourth century Constantine attempted to suppress the syncretic forms of angel worship practiced there. According to these authors,<sup>31</sup> Constantine's mother-in-law, returning from a visit to the Holy Land, reported to the emperor that the Oak of Mamre—where “the Savior himself, with two angels, vouchsafed to Abraham a manifestation of his presence”—had become defiled by “the superstitious” (τινων δεισιδαιμόνων).<sup>32</sup> Constantine thus sent a letter to the bishops of Palestine ordering them to destroy pagan objects at Mamre and ensure the cessation of its “impure sacrifices” (θυσίας ἀκαθάρτους). Finally, the emperor ordered the site to be hallowed with a Christian church.<sup>33</sup>

Based upon the content of Sozomen's fifth-century account, the language of which implies that rituals blending Jewish, Christian, and pagan elements continued at Mamre into his own day, scholars often suggest that Constantine's efforts did not realize enduring success. Eusebius certainly possessed a marked tendency to exaggerate destructions of pagan sites.<sup>34</sup> Rangar Cline argues that the imagery of a limestone mold dating from the 350s or 360s used to manufacture clay pilgrimage souvenirs sold at Mamre further indicates that the site maintained a

<sup>30</sup> Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Socrates and Sozomen likely based their fifth-century accounts upon Eusebius's earlier version. Each text therefore follows the same basic narrative.

<sup>32</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 3.53. ἐκεῖ πρῶτον ὁ σωτὴρ αὐτὸς μετὰ τῶν δύο ἀγγέλων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιφάνειαν τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἐπεδαγγιλεύσατο. Compare this reading of Christ as an angel with the discussion of Eusebius's ANGELOMORPHIC CHRISTOLOGY recounted in Chapter 1. Although fundamentally similar to Sozomen and Eusebius' narratives, Socrates Scholasticus' account makes no mention of Constantine's mother-in-law.

<sup>33</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 3.53.

<sup>34</sup> Cline, “A Two-Sided Mold,” 40.

syncretic nature even after Constantine's reign.<sup>35</sup> However, the account of the Bordeaux Pilgrim (ca. 333) observes that in the place "where Abraham lived and dug a well beneath the Terebinth tree, and spoke and ate with the angels . . . an exceptionally beautiful basilica has been built by the command of Constantine."<sup>36</sup> The presence of this church suggests that the site's Christianization was already well underway during the early fourth century. Moreover, it is problematic to suppose that Mamre's opulent festivals, with their blatant displays of paganism, survived the proscriptions against pagan religion—and more specifically, pagan holidays—enacted during the later reign of Theodosius (379-395).<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Michele Salzman has studied late ancient Roman calendars and posits that "pagan festivals and holidays, so unequivocally outlawed in 395, nevertheless continued to be celebrated . . . in some cases well into the fifth and sixth centuries."<sup>38</sup> In light of such conflicting evidence, firm conclusions regarding the state of Mamre in the fourth century remain elusive.

Nonetheless, Constantine's response to the "unhallowed impurities" (τῶν ἀνοσίων) performed at Mamre certainly constituted a deliberate effort to control forms of angel invocation in the Roman Empire.<sup>39</sup> Under his orders, churchmen sought to mold Mamre into a place where "nothing hereafter may be done . . . except the performance of fitting service to the Almighty

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 40-44.

<sup>36</sup> *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 599. Ubi Abraham habitauit et puteum fodit sub arbore terebintho et cum angelis locutus est et cibum sumpsit . . . ibi basilica facta est iussu Constantini mirae pulchritudinis.

<sup>37</sup> e.g. *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.7. Ut profanos ritus iam salubri lege submovimus, ita festos conventus civium et communem omnium laetitiam non patimur submoveri. Unde absque ullo sacrificio atque ulla superstitione damnabili exhiberi populo voluptates secundum veterem consuetudinem, iniri etiam festa convivia, si quando exigunt publica vota, decernimus.

<sup>38</sup> Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 235-246.

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 3.52.

God.”<sup>40</sup> That is, political and religious leaders acted together to ensure that Mamre would become a center of sanctioned angel veneration subsumed under firm institutional control.

Shortly thereafter, the Synod of Laodicea (ca. 360) issued a crucial canon addressing the permissibility of cultic practices involving angels.<sup>41</sup> On first glance this Laodicean canon—almost certainly influenced by Col 2.16-18—seems to prohibit all forms of angel invocation:

[Canon 35] It is forbidden for Christians to abandon the church of God, and to depart, invoke angels, and hold gatherings. Therefore, if someone should be discovered taking part in this secret idolatry, let him be anathema, because he has abandoned our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and entered into idolatry.<sup>42</sup>

However, the Laodicean canon's prohibition must be considered in context. As this chapter has demonstrated, unsanctioned forms of angel worship—i.e. those involving magic and syncretic religious ritual—proliferated throughout the Greek East during the fourth century. With this setting in mind it is essential to recognize that the Synod of Laodicea did not intend to censure angel veneration *per se*, but only unsanctioned forms of this practice.<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, the thirty-fifth Laodicean canon forbade “secret idolatry” (κεκρυμμένη εἰδολατρεία), a label referring to the discrete magic rituals and clandestine locations associated with unsanctioned angel worship. The canon also enjoined that Christians should not “invoke angels and hold gatherings,” a prohibition directed toward interactions like the syncretic

<sup>40</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 3.53. μηδὲν ἕτερον ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ πράττεσθαι, ἢ τὴν πρέπουσαν τῷ παντοκράτορι.

<sup>41</sup> This synod was held in Phrygian Laodicea ad Lycum, and not the city of the same name located in Syria.

<sup>42</sup> *Concilium Laodicenum*. Ὅτι οὐ χριστιανοὺς ἐγκαταλείπειν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἀπιέναι, καὶ ἀγγέλους ὀνομάζειν, καὶ συνάξεις ποιεῖν, ἅπερ ἀπηγόρευεται. Εἴ τις οὖν εὐρεθῇ ταύτῃ τῇ κεκρυμμένῃ εἰδολατρεία σχολάζων, ἔστω ἀνάθεμα, ὅτι ἐγκατέλειπε τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ εἰδολατρία προσῆλθεν. See Chapter 1 for a review of Col 2.16-18. A number of features indicate Colossians' influence on the Laodicean canons. The sixtieth Laodicean canon features a list of the synod's proposed collection of canonical scriptures. Unsurprisingly, the list includes Colossians. In addition, both Colossians and the Laodicean canons were composed in Anatolia.

<sup>43</sup> Both Cline and Arnold recount elements of the argument given below regarding the Synod of Laodicea; Cline's work in particular is extremely thorough. See Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 137-168 and John Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c. 300-c. 800* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 97-100.

religious festival held annually at Mamre. These identifications are reinforced by the content of the Laodicean canons that immediately follow the thirty-fifth canon:

[Canon 36] They who are of the priesthood, or of the clergy, shall not be magicians, enchanters, mathematicians, or astrologers; nor shall they make what are called amulets, which are chains for their own souls. And those who wear such, we command to be cast out of the Church.

[Canon 37] It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts of Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them.

[Canon 38] It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety.

[Canon 39] It is not lawful to feast together with the heathen, and to be partakers of their godlessness.<sup>44</sup>

Together, then, canons thirty-five through thirty-nine form a cohesive unit: while the thirty-fifth Laodicean canon censures improper angel worship, ensuing canons proceed to elaborate upon this prohibition by attacking various practices (e.g. magic, syncretic ritual, interreligious gatherings etc.) commonly correlated with unsanctioned cults of angels.

Furthermore, the Synod of Laodicea mandated that Christians should remain in churches instead of departing to visit external sites of unsanctioned angel worship. The thirty-fifth Laodicean canon decrees that “it is forbidden for Christians to abandon the church of God, depart, and invoke angels.” Scholars often interpret the canon’s language of τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ as designating the “Church of God,” meaning the universal body of Christian believers. However, this phrase is better understood as “church of God,” as in a physical structure of Christian worship. The thirty-fifth Laodicean canon thereby sought to prevent Christians from worshiping angels at clandestine sites steeped in magical rituals and Jewish, Gnostic, and pagan

<sup>44</sup> *Concilium Laodicenum*. [XXXVI] Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἱερατικούς μᾶγους ἢ ἐπαοιδούς εἶναι ἢ μαθηματικούς ἢ ἀστρολόγους ἢ ποιεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα φυλακτήρια, ἅτινα ἐστὶ δεσμοτήρια τῶν ψυχῶν αὐτῶν. Τοὺς δὲ φοροῦντας ῥίπτεισθαι ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκελεύσαμεν.

[XXXVII] Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ παρὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἢ αἰρετικῶν τὰ πεμπόμενα εὐρταστικά λαμβάνειν, μηδὲ συνεορτάζειν αὐτοῖς.

[XXXVIII] Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ παρὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἄζυμα λαμβάνειν ἢ κοινωνεῖν ταῖς ἀσεβείαις αὐτῶν.

[XXXIX] Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ τοῖς ἔθνεσι συνεορτάζειν καὶ κοινωνεῖν τῇ ἀθεότητι αὐτῶν.

traditions. Instead, the canon dictated that Christians remain in churches—bastions of clerical power—under the close supervision of wary ecclesiastics.

Ultimately, then, the Synod of Laodicea did not intend to banish angel invocation entirely. Rather, its canons sought to ensure that such practices occurred in sanctioned form:

By prohibiting Christians from departing from the church and invoking *angeloi*, the Synod of Laodicea was attempting to bring the popular and potentially heterodox practice of *angelos* invocation out of secrecy, and into the church where it could support, rather than challenge, clerical authority . . . one sees the transformation of *angelos* invocation from something Laodicea considered a “secret idolatry” into something found to be acceptable in Christian shrines and churches.<sup>45</sup>

By ensuring that angel veneration would adopt a form determined by ecclesiastical leadership, the Laodicean canons thus proved to be a definitive impetus behind the rise of sanctioned Michaeline devotion in the Greek East.

Late ancient sources confirm the Synod of Laodicea's success. Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393-c.457) makes the following observation in his *Commentary on Colossians*:

For a long time this calamity remained in Phrygia and Pisidia. On this account a synod was assembled in Laodicea of Phrygia and has prohibited by law the offering of prayers to angels. But even now shrines dedicated to Saint Michael are seen among them and their neighbors.<sup>46</sup>

The perfective aspect of the Greek verb translated as “prevented” (κεκώλυκε) implies completed action with an enduring result, meaning that forbidden forms of angel worship had indeed been prevented into Theodoret's fifth century. The inclusion of the adjective “saint” (ἁγίου) modifying Michael's name reveals that Theodoret understood contemporary Michaeline centers

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<sup>45</sup> Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 151-158. Note that Cline translates the Laodicean Canon's τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ as “Church of God” (with a capital C).

<sup>46</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretatio epist. ad Coloss.* (*Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli*) PG 82.613. “Ἐμεινε δὲ τοῦτο τὸ πάθος ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ καὶ Πισιδίᾳ μέχρι πολλοῦ. Οὗ δὴ χάριν καὶ συνελθοῦσα σύνοδος ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ τῆς Φρυγίας, νόμῳ κεκώλυκε τὸ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις προσεύχεσθαι· καὶ μέχρι δὲ τοῦ νῦν εὐκτήρια τοῦ ἁγίου Μιχαὴλ παρ' ἐκεῖνοις καὶ τοῖς ὁμόροις ἐκεῖνων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν. Based upon this passage scholars consistently conclude that Theodoret disapproved of the Michael shrines of his own day. With the above review of the Laodicean canons in mind, however, I see no reason for such an interpretation. Indeed, elsewhere Theodoret describes angels as “very perfect creatures, wholly devoted to the service of God for the benefit of mankind,” showing that he had no aversion to the concept of angels as intercessors. See Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*. 3.87-94.

as locations dedicated to a holy Christian character rather than the pagan deity encountered in magical spells. The word “shrines” (εὐκτήρια) does not possess any obvious pagan connotation; moreover, other late ancient Christian texts employ this same word to describe sanctioned Michaeline sites.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the use of the preposition “among” (παρά, understood here like French *chez*) suggests that by the fifth century these sanctioned Michaeline shrines had managed to subsume the illicit sites targeted by the Laodicean canons. The Synod of Laodicea caused sanctioned cultic veneration of Michael to flourish. The Greek East was changed: as Theodoret’s fifth-century account attests, “even now shrines dedicated to St. Michael are seen.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Michaeline Shrines and the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae***

A late ancient hagiographical narrative entitled the *Narration of the Miracle of Michael at Chonae* by modern editors recounts the legendary origins of one such prominent Michaeline shrine located in Roman Anatolia, where these cultic structures proliferated.<sup>49</sup> Scholars agree that the hagiography’s extant text dates from the eighth century; nonetheless, most scholars also conclude that this eighth-century version is a recension derived from an earlier fifth-century account.<sup>50</sup> Thus, much of the content found within the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* proves useful for reconstructing the emergence of Michaeline shrines in Anatolia over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The first part of the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* tells the story of a pagan—introduced as “a certain man from Laodicea,” thus evoking the canons of the synod held there<sup>51</sup>—who hears about the efficacious healing powers of Chonae, a spring where visiting pagans (Ἕλληνας) are

<sup>47</sup> e.g. The hagiographical *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* (discussed below).

<sup>48</sup> Theodoret of Cyrillus, *Interpretatio epist. ad Coloss.* PG 82.613. τοῦ νῦν εὐκτήρια τοῦ ἁγίου Μιχαήλ . . . ἔστιν ἰδεῖν.

<sup>49</sup> M. Bonnet, ed., *Narratio de miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis patrato*, Paris (1890).

<sup>50</sup> Glenn Peers, “Apprehending the Archangel Michael: Hagiographic Methods,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 101.

<sup>51</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. τις ἀνὴρ ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς Λαοδικεάς.

healed and converted to Christ. The man brings his mute daughter to the site. Those already there tell the man to invoke the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Michael the Commander-in-Chief (ἀρχιστράτηγον).”<sup>52</sup> The man avoids this formula, replying that “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—God—succor me through the embassy of Michael the Archistrategos.”<sup>53</sup> He then sprinkles water on his mute daughter, who speaks for the first time, proclaiming that “the God of the Christians is truly the great power of you, O Michael Archistrategos.”<sup>54</sup> Overjoyed, the man builds a shrine (εὐκτήριον) dedicated to Michael and departs, praising God.

Indicators relevant to sites of unsanctioned angel worship are present within this story. Like Mamre, the Fountain of the Lamps, and the Pool at Bethesda, the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* reveals that the Chonae spring was an ambient location associated with angels and healing. The hagiography's account also implies that it was not uncommon for Christians to visit Chonae alongside non-Christians (cf. the syncretic festivals at Mamre) in order to invoke angels and perform magical rituals (the man's daughter is healed through the pouring of water on her head and the recitation of a formula). Indeed, upon his arrival the man is also instructed to recite a blasphemous incantation, which, like many magical spells, makes no firm distinction between Michael and the Trinity.<sup>55</sup> Despite the text's redaction by a later Christian author, vestiges of unsanctioned angel worship lurk within the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*.

<sup>52</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἡμεῖς ἐπικαλούμεθα πατέρα υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον.

<sup>53</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ὁ πατὴρ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, ὁ θεός, διὰ τῶν πρεσβειῶν Μιχαὴλ τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου βοέθει μοι.

<sup>54</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ὁ θεὸς τῶν χριστιανῶν ἀληθῶς μεγάλη σου ἡ δύναμις Μιχαὴλ ἀρχιστρατάτηγε, 292.

<sup>55</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἡμεῖς ἐπικαλούμεθα πατέρα υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον. Those already present at Chonae are described only as “θεραπευομένοις,” which, if understood as a middle participle, may be translated as “those serving the gods” (i.e. pagans) or also “healers” (i.e. magicians using spells).

On the other hand, this story also contains strong indications of those forms of sanctioned angel veneration that displaced their unsanctioned predecessors to form Michaeline sites compatible with the Laodicean canons. For example, the man bluntly rejects the heretical formula. He instead pronounces a Trinitarian theology by calling upon “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—God—through the embassy of Michael the Archistrategos”; this invocation deliberately separates Michael from the Trinity and depicts the Archangel as servile *arxistrategos* of the Godhead, a position in stark contrast to his deified role in magical texts.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the shrine built by the man comprises an obtrusive structure quite unlike the clandestine zones of “secret idolatry” condemned at Laodicea. The *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*’s pattern of sanctioned elements overlaying unsanctioned ones likely captures the state of a recently legitimized Michaeline shrine bearing memories of its dubious antecedent. Moreover, certain elements of this hagiography (e.g. the pagan man’s blunt refusal to employ the heretical formula and his building of a shrine at the once vacant site) might have been included as a reproachful commentary of the legitimized shrine’s unsanctioned predecessor.

After recounting the story of the pagan man, the narrative of the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* springs forward ninety years, telling the story of Archippus, a pious Christian hermit who now lives at the Chonae shrine. Michael appears to Archippus, declaring that “I am Michael, the Arxistrategos of the host of the Lord . . . I am he who has stood before God.”<sup>57</sup> Soon, a pagan mob, angered by the Christian site, attacks the shrine by flooding it with water diverted from two nearby rivers. As the rivers rush forward Michael appears, opening a chasm

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<sup>56</sup> In addition, the hagiography’s collective use of “God” (θεός) in syntactic apposition to the naming of the Trinity’s three *hypostases* comprises a conscious affirmation of the consubstantial Godhead. See also Arnold, *Footprints of Michael the Archangel*, 100. Arnold concludes that “By addressing each person of the Triad separately and then collectively as one God, the latter faith profession clearly emphasized both the parity and the unity of the Trinity, first established at Nicaea and finally accepted as orthodox dogma at the First Council of Constantinople.”

<sup>57</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἐγώ εἰμι Μιχαήλ ὁ ἀρχιστράτηγος τῆς δυνάμεως κυρίου . . . ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

in the earth which swallows the oncoming surge to save Archippus and the shrine. Michael then speaks to Archippus, guaranteeing his angelic presence at Chonae to the reader:

In this place will be ground to dust every disease and every weakness and witchcraft (φαρμακεία) and enchantment (ἐπαοιδία) and every work of wickedness. In this place the shackled and those disturbed by mobs of unclean spirits will be loosed, and the infirm will be healed and all who rush to this place in faith and in fear, invoking the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and Michael the Arxistrategos, swearing an oath by my name and the name of God, will not leave in despair, but the grace of God and my power will overshadow this place in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Before departing, Michael binds the escaped waters to the site, thereby forming Chonae's healing spring: "You [rivers] were cast in this funnel (χώνη) and you will be molded in this chasm, roaring until the end of days."<sup>59</sup>

The Archippus episode comprises a foundation legend carefully crafted by a well-read author. To begin, it is entirely unlikely that a pagan mob would dare to attack a Christian shrine in the fifth-century empire. The name of the story's hermit also provides a telling clue.

Scripture mentions the name "Archippus" on only two occasions, one of them in Colossians:

Give my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea . . . And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, "See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord."<sup>60</sup>

What better name for a hermit residing at Chonae? The biblical Archippus is assigned a mysterious task involving a "letter from Laodicea"; the Chonae hagiography thus subtly links its

<sup>58</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ συντριβήσεται πᾶσα νόσος καὶ πᾶσα μαλακία καὶ φαρμακεία καὶ ἐπαοιδία καὶ πᾶσα ἐνέργεια τοῦ πονηροῦ· ἐνταῦθα οἱ πεπεδημένοι λυθήσονται καὶ οἱ ὀχλούμενοι ὑπὸ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων [καὶ οἱ ἀσθενοῦντες] ἰαθήσονται καὶ πᾶς ὅστις καταφύγη ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τούτῳ ἐν πίστει καὶ φόβῳ ἐπικαλούμενος πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ Μιχαὴλ τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον, μὰ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὄνομα καὶ τὸ ἐμόν, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ λυπούμενος. ἡ δὲ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δύναμις μου ἔσται ἐπισκιάζουσα ἐνταῦθα καὶ ἀγιάζουσα ἐν ὀνόματι πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

<sup>59</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἀκοντίσθητε [ποταμοὶ] ὑμεῖς ἐν τῇ χώνῃ ταύτῃ καὶ ἔστε χωνευόμενοι ἐν τῷ χάσματι τούτῳ καὶ βρυχώμενοι ἕως τῆς συντελείας

<sup>60</sup> Col 4.15-17. Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικίᾳ ἀδελφοὺς . . . καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικίας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε. καὶ εἶπατε Ἀρχίππῳ Βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν ἣν παρέλαβες ἐν κυρίῳ, ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς. The other instance of the name "Archippus" is an unrelated mention in Philem 1.2.

like-named hermit with a mission to ensure proper angel veneration according to the standards established at Laodicea. Colossians also contains a scriptural condemnation against improper angel worship (Chapter I), content that likely influenced the canons of Laodicea—the Archippus episode's familiarity with this scriptural text is not coincidental. Michael's introduction of himself in the hagiography also parallels Gabriel's introduction in Luke 1.19 nearly word-for-word, further demonstrating the Chonae author's thoughtful presentation of a Christian angel.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, the Archippus episode is didactic. It recounts the legendary origins of the Chonae shrine as a healing spring associated with Michael the Archangel, consummating its narrative with a clever etymological twist explaining the site's name: at story's end Michael binds the rivers in a "funnel" (χώνη), pronounced in Greek as "Chonae" (Χώναι).<sup>62</sup>

The Archippus episode is rather different from the story about the pagan man included within the first part of the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*. Indeed, Victor Saxer has suggested that the hagiography's first three chapters (the pagan man story) developed earlier and at a different site than the latter eight (the Archippus episode). According to this theory, a later editor with ties to the Chonae shrine then acquired the first three chapters and combined them with the final eight to form the extant text.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Compare the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*'s "ἐγώ εἰμι Μιχαὴλ . . . ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ" with Luke 1.19's "Εγώ εἰμι Γαβριὴλ ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ."

<sup>62</sup> For rhetorical purposes the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* includes the word χώνη only once, placing it within the narrative's final sentence. For late ancient readers this would have been a charming conclusion.

<sup>63</sup> Saxer, "Jalons pour servir à l'histoire du culte de l'archange saint Michel," 388-389 proposes that the miracle story of Chonae was originally applied to describe a Michaeline site at Cheretapa, which was older than the site at Chonae. The Chonae site later adapted the Cheretapa story as Chonae became the more famous Michaeline shrine in Asia Minor. Internal evidence agrees with aspects of this hypothesis. For example, the transition between the hagiography's sections is clumsy: following the pagan man story the Archippus episode simply states, "and in the ninetieth year after this . . ." (καὶ μετὰ ἐνενηκοστὸν ἔτος ἀφ' οὗ . . .) before launching into its description of Archippus. Furthermore, the hagiography's two plotlines do not always fit. For example, its latter eight chapters describe the origins of the healing spring at Chonae—in the earlier story of the pagan man, however, the healing waters are already present there.

With this hypothesis in mind, the older account of the pagan man may be cautiously employed to reconstruct the historical emergence of sanctioned Michaeline sites. On the other hand, one must recognize that the Archippus episode comprises an anachronistic work of sacred rhetoric meant to explain the legendary origins of Chonae and assure readers of the Archangel's presence at the site. It reveals what Chonae later became in the eyes of Christian observers, instead of what the site ever was before or immediately after the shrine's founding.

Accordingly, as both the pagan man story and the very endurance of the Chonae site attest, the construction of small shrines—functioning like watchtowers along an uneasy frontier—allowed locations of formerly unsanctioned angel worship now subsumed under clerical supervision to endure as sites of angel invocation following the Synod of Laodicea. While condemning magical ritual, such sites retained their role as ambient places of angelic healing: the Archippus episode itself states, “In this place will be ground to dust every disease and every weakness and witchcraft (φαρμακεία) and enchantment (ἐπαοιδία) . . . the shackled and those disturbed by mobs of unclean spirits will be loosed, and the infirm will be healed.” Sanctioned Michaeline shrines thus in many ways resembled their syncretic predecessors.

Yet the introduction of shrines at Michaeline centers also precipitated lasting changes. A text attributed to Didymus the Blind (d. 398) suggests that rural angel shrines became ornate structures quite unlike their dilapidated antecedents: “Along with churches, O excellent pair of archangels, shrines<sup>64</sup> named after you were dedicated to God not only in cities, but also in the countryside, houses, and fields, and they were adorned with gold, silver, and ivory.”<sup>65</sup> Didymus'

<sup>64</sup> This is the same word used to describe sanctioned Michaeline shrines in both the account of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*.

<sup>65</sup> Didymus Caecus, *De trinitate*, 2.7.8.10. Διὸ μετὰ τὰς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ οἴκοι εὐκτήριοι τῷ Θεῷ, τῆς προσηγορίας ὑμῶν ἐπώνυμοι, ὧ εὐάρεστος ξυνορις ἀρχαγγέλων, οὐκ ἐν μόναις ταῖς πόλεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ στενωποῖς ἰδία, καὶ οἰκίαις, καὶ ἀγροῖς ἰδρύσθησαν, χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου, ἢ καὶ ἐλέφαντι κοσμηθέντες.

account later notes that men traveled from great distances to visit these sites, revealing their popularity. These were not ruined locales of unsupervised ritual.

Again, it is crucial to recognize that the popularity of Michaeline shrines in the eastern empire (specifically Anatolia) represented the fulfillment of the Laodicean canons since these sites eliminated unsanctioned angel worship in favor of supervised ritual. “The existence of shrines to Michael in fifth-century Phrygia and Pisidia . . . can be understood as part of the process of providing an acceptable space for *angelos* invocation.”<sup>66</sup> Such sanctioned centers actually served to buttress clerical authority rather than destabilize it; ecclesiastics throughout the Greek East thus embraced the supervised cultic veneration of angels. John Chrysostom declared, “It is right to praise the angels! For they, lauding the Creator, render him propitious and kindly to men. I tell you, angels are our allies . . . one of them is the archangel Michael.”<sup>67</sup>

The rhetorical nature of the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*'s Archippus episode also typified a burgeoning clerical interest in the crafting of Michael's cultic character. Angels, due to their intangible nature, were malleable figures who could be easily harnessed to advance clerical agendas. Correspondingly, the Archippus episode uses Michael's character for “the basic goal of glorification, edification, and conversion of the worshipper to an orthodox position . . . it lauded the work of the leader of the heavenly host in this world and established a framework of approach for the common worshipper.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae* labors to assure readers of the incorporeal Archangel's presence at the healing spring despite the site's lack of positive proofs of cult (like relics): Michael takes especial care to affirm

<sup>66</sup> Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 158-163.

<sup>67</sup> John Chrysostom, *In synaxim archangelorum*. Ἀγγέλους ἐγκωμιάζειν χρή. Καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τὸν Δημιουργὸν ὑμνοῦντες, ἴλεων αὐτὸν καὶ εὐμενῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παρέχουσιν. Ἀγγέλους δέ φημι, τοὺς ἡμετέρους συμμάχους . . . ὧν εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀρχάγγελος Μιχαήλ

<sup>68</sup> Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, 144.

that his “power will overshadow this place.”<sup>69</sup> Indeed, as popular interest in Michael's efficacious intervention increased across the Greek East, ecclesiastics soon sought to transfer his presence beyond only rural shrines. The Archangel soon entered the late ancient church through a process involving further clerical shaping of his character.

### **Churches, Angels, and Saints: The Canonization of “Saint” Michael**

At the end of the fourth century clergymen introduced angels into churches—the throne rooms of ecclesiastical dominion—by incorporating these celestial beings into liturgical settings. Many late ancient ecclesiastics were involved in this process. John Chrysostom (d. 407) proved particularly eager to invoke angels in his homilies, urging congregations to “imagine with whom you are standing at the time of the mysteries: with the cherubim, with the seraphim!”<sup>70</sup> Ellen Muehlberger has studied the growing presence of angels in late ancient liturgical settings:

Angels stood in the audience with Christians; angels “take their seats” at the opening of the ritual, as if in a stadium; at the moment of the Eucharistic sacrifice, “heaven is opened on high” and “angels are descending.” No longer executing a ritual in heaven that humanity is supposed to imitate, angels instead leave heaven to watch Christians and Christian ritual.<sup>71</sup>

Angels thus entered liturgical rites conducted by ecclesiastical maestros. Churchmen had definitively embraced these celestial beings within settings of common ritual practice.

As clergymen incorporated angels into church settings they emphasized their mastery over these beings. John Chrysostom describes an old man who watched his priest consecrate the

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<sup>69</sup> Bonnet, *Miraculo a Michaele Archangelo Chonis*. ἡ δὲ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δύναμις μου ἔσται ἐπισκιάζουσα ἐνταῦθα καὶ ἀγιάζουσα ἐν ὀνόματι πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος. See Glenn Peers, “Apprehending the Archangel Michael: Hagiographic Methods,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 100-121 for further discussion about rhetorical methods involving Michael in late ancient hagiography. For example, Peers argues that “access to the Archangel is made difficult by his unique angelic nature and this difficulty led to textual strategies that make Michael more firmly entrenched in the texts' levels of narrative . . . the hagiographies reveal Michael's elusive elemental force active in a landscape, and work to bind the Archangel—notionally at least—to places in order to strengthen expectations of devotional return.”

<sup>70</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 14.4. Ἐννόησον μετὰ τίνων ἔστηκας κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῶν μυστηρίων, μετὰ τῶν Χερουβὶμ, μετὰ τῶν Σεραφίμ.

<sup>71</sup> Ellen Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 195.

Eucharist while beholding a vision of “a crowd of angels, clothed in shining garments, circling around the altar bowing down, just as one might see soldiers bowing in the presence of a king.”<sup>72</sup>

Writing in Syriac, Narsai professed the dominion of clergy over angels with utter confidence:

It is you, priest, serving spiritually on earth, whom the spirits do not have the authority to imitate. It is you, priest—the rank that you administer is so great that the ministers of fire and spirit tremble before it. Who is sufficient to evoke the magnitude of your rank, by which you passed by those in heaven, in the name of your authority? The nature of a spirit is more subtle and glorious than yours, but it is not permitted to represent the mysteries in imitation of you. An angel is great, but how should we say he is greater than you, since when he is compared with your service, he is lacking? A seraph is holy, a cherub beautiful, and watcher swift, but they are not able to run with the fluidity of the word of your mouth. Glorious is Gabriel and great is Michael—as their names demonstrate—but they are always yoked under the mystery that is revealed by your hands. By you they are examined when you draw near to minister and for you they wait, until you open the door to their holies.<sup>73</sup>

Ecclesiastics now willfully introduced the awe of angels into the urban church. This process served a purpose similar to that of the Laodicean canons: by using sermons and liturgical rites to emphasize their mastery over these celestial beings, priests gained firm control over them in the minds of congregations, allowing clergy to shape popular conceptions of angels from the pulpit.

While crafting conceptions of angels in liturgical settings, churchmen often employed rhetoric that identified angels with human saints. John Chrysostom, for example, paired angels with martyrs in order to demonstrate that together both served the risen Christ:

The angels are present here. The angels and the martyrs meet today. If you wish to see the angels and the martyrs, open the eyes of faith and look upon this sight. For if the very air is filled with angels, how much more so the church! And if the church is filled with angels, how much more is that true today when their Lord has risen into heaven? The whole air about us is filled with angels!<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 6.4. πλῆθος ἀγγέλων ἰδεῖν . . . στολίδας ἀναβεβλημένων λαμπρὰς καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον κυκλοῦντων καὶ κάτω νεύοντων, ὡς ἂν εἴ τις στρατιώτας παρόντος βασιλέως ἐστηκότας ἴδοι.

<sup>73</sup> Narsai, *Homily 21*, 1:342–43, trans. Richard Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916).

<sup>74</sup> John Chrysostom, *On the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ*, PG 50:443D. Καὶ εἰ βούλει ἰδεῖν καὶ μάρτυρας καὶ ἀγγέλους, ἄνοιξον τῆς πίστεως τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, καὶ ὄψει τὸ θέατρον ἐκεῖνο· εἰ γὰρ πως ὁ ἀὴρ ἀγγέλων ἐμπέπλησται, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐκκλησία· εἰ δὲ ἐκκλησία, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ παροῦσα ἡμέρα, ὅτε ὁ Δεσπότης αὐτῶν ἀναλαμβάνεται.

Like the Laodicean canons, such rhetoric—i.e. the association of angels with martyrs—controlled angel invocation in order to safeguard clerical power. “If the saints could offer their powerful relics in reliquaries, the angels could present themselves almost anywhere, even outside local clerical control.”<sup>75</sup> In response to this dangerous contingency, John Chrysostom, among others, emphasized that angels and saints—together—were present within the church, thereby placing these beings before the bishop’s very eyes and under his immediate control.

Severus of Antioch’s “Homily LXII” (515) provides a particularly keen example of a clerical orator’s attempt to identify incorporeal angels with fleshly human saints in a liturgical context. Appropriately enough, Severus delivered his homily during a ceremony celebrating the deposition of the relics of the martyrs Procopius and Phocas within an Antiochian church dedicated to Michael the Archangel.<sup>76</sup> The homily broaches its discussion of angels in response to “idolatrous” artwork depicting Michael and Gabriel clad in purple and adorned with scepters and crowns, the court dress of emperors. Severus’s homily attacks this imagery, arguing that it conflates angels with God, the true king, and encourages angel worship “in the manner of pagan error.”<sup>77</sup> The homily responds by reducing angels to the status of mere human saints:

Do not suppose, therefore, that even the angels are anything other than ministers and stewards. For this is the teaching and the doctrine: that the martyrs are united with them . . . Therefore we teach and give instruction to the effect that the martyrs are joined as one with the angels, so as to distance ourselves from erroneous doctrine, since the former as well as the latter have only one duty, namely to praise God and to minister to him in respect of our salvation . . . In this sense we bring together the martyrs with the angels, as being the faithful stewards of the one Lord, and since they are a single festal assembly.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 190.

<sup>76</sup> Pauline Allen and C.T.R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23.

<sup>77</sup> Severus of Antioch, *Homily LXII*, 16, trans. Pauline Allen and C.T.R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>78</sup> Severus of Antioch, *Homily LXII*, 14-16.

The rhetorical purpose of Severus's homily is clear. As Cyril Mango notes, "Severus's intention, which was perfectly orthodox, was to 'dilute' the cult of angels . . . with that of the martyrs."<sup>79</sup>

Angels would therefore be the companions of martyrs, each like the other in function, collected together as a "single festal assembly."

Beyond mere clerical rhetoric, however, the liturgical ceremony at the Michaeline church in Antioch reveals the identification of angels with saints in immediate cultic practice. After all, Severus delivered his homily during a rite marking the placement of human relics in a church dedicated to the Archangel. Severus himself recognized the significance of this act:

So then, we too . . . blocking the hidden entrance-ways of demon-worship, consecrate churches which have been built under the dedicatory title of the angels with the bones and sacred limbs of the holy martyrs, or with their victorious dust which has all been bravely burned and has become a sacrifice: by this very deed we proclaim that they, too, like the angels, are mighty powers.<sup>80</sup>

Scholars have even suggested that the transfer of human relics to churches and shrines dedicated to angels (especially Michael) became a practice commonly implemented to make angel veneration more palatable after its dubious origins.<sup>81</sup> P. Canivet summarizes the theory:

Mais puisque, en fait, les fidèles vénèrent les anges et leur dédient des églises, il faut prévenir les excès d'une piété abusive. Aussi, pour que personne ne soit tenté d'oublier que les anges ne sont que des serviteurs de Dieu, comme les prophètes, les apôtres et les martyrs, l'Église a-t-elle pris l'habitude, dans les sanctuaires des anges, d'associer à leur culte celui des martyrs . . . Ainsi . . . le culte de S. Michel est imposé par la dévotion populaire et toléré par la hiérarchie qui propose en même temps la vénération des martyrs, selon une pratique qui semble déjà courante dans l'Église, lorsque Sévère introduit dans le *Michaelion* d'Antioche, entre 512 et 518, les reliques des SS. Procope et Phocas.<sup>82</sup>

Canivet's article later claims to have located a late fifth-century Michaeline church (built in Syria) which deliberately received saintly relics for the purpose of challenging just such an

<sup>79</sup> Cyril Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," *Deltion tes Christianikes Etaireias* (1984): 43.

<sup>80</sup> Severus of Antioch, *Homily LXII*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, 77.

<sup>82</sup> P. Canivet, "Le Michaelion de Huarte (V<sup>e</sup> s.) et le culte syrien des anges." *Byzantion revue internationale etudes byzantines* 50 (1980): 105.

“improper piety.”<sup>83</sup> We must regard Canivet’s conclusions with caution: it is also likely that certain Michaeline churches imported relics—physical remains that bodiless angels inherently could not provide—out of mere necessity to encourage pilgrimage and piety rather than as a means of combating undesirable cultic practices. Nevertheless, the theory recounted above, which remains quite plausible, reveals at least the potential for further cultic associations between angels and human saints in church and liturgical settings.

Peter Brown’s seminal *Cult of the Saints* also provides a useful model. Brown’s work demonstrates the role of the graves of saints as sacred *topos* from which sacred power radiated, a feature causing these locations to become centers of cultic veneration directed toward the holy men and women who slept there beneath the earth. Late ancient angels possessed wings instead of bones and, being deathless, shunned the dark slumber of the grave. Nonetheless, by associating angels with martyrs churchmen captured angels in circumscribed places, binding these celestial beings—like mortal saints who left behind holy flesh—to sites where sanctioned angel veneration occurred. Tied to sacred landscapes angels became invoked within churches, monasteries, and shrines throughout the late ancient Greek East. Therefore, like the moldering remains of human saints, these celestial beings now resided at miraculous earthly locations which drew pilgrims seeking healing and prayer. The saliency of such angelic holy sites equipped Michael, the deathless Archangel, to join eastern Christianity’s parade of mortal saints.

Indeed, the process of identifying angels with saints proved especially relevant to Michael, for by the end of Late Antiquity the named Archangel was venerated like a human saint. Severus of Antioch’s homily itself concludes with an invocation of Michael followed by

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<sup>83</sup> The Michaeline church at Huarte’s construction is dated to 487. Canivet’s conclusion depends upon a multitude of factors, including the presence of two churches alongside one another at Huarte (one dedicated to Michael, the other a human saint), the contents of the Michaeline church’s crypt, and a mosaic recovered from the site possibly depicting the transfer of relics to the Archangel’s church.

an exhortation to “praise Christ, the God of the angels and of the martyrs.”<sup>84</sup> The introduction of Michael's feast day into eastern liturgical calendars (which, of course, also celebrated feast days in honor of saints and martyrs) further confirmed his budding role as an angelic character akin to human saints. Ugo Zanetti has studied the integration of angels into eastern festal calendars:

Déjà au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, et en fait quelques années après l'homélie de Severe d'Antioche . . . la situation des anges dans la hiérarchie des êtres semble comprise par tous, sans exclure le peuple, le culte des anges n'est plus une menace pour l'unicité divine, et il va donc pouvoir se développer sans entrave, ce dont les calendriers et synaxaires portent témoignage.<sup>85</sup>

Regarding Michael, Zanetti notes that an Egyptian festal calendar for the year 535 presents the earliest reliable example of a feast day celebrated in honor of the Archangel.<sup>86</sup> Through the processes recounted above, the angel Michael became *Saint Michael*, a sanctioned Christian character replete with his own saintly feast day. Like other saints, moreover, the Archangel enjoyed imperial sponsorship through the raising of churches consecrated in his name.

### **Imperial Sponsorship of Michaeline Churches**

The widespread dedication of imperially sponsored churches to Michael over the course of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries—a process resulting from, but also contributing to, the thriving legitimacy of his cult—signified that by the end of antiquity veneration of the Archangel had acquired the crucial support of the eastern empire's mighty political institutions. Tenuous literary evidence indicates that in the Greek East imperial edifices dedicated to the Archangel existed from as early as the fourth century; more reliable archeological and literary sources indisputably confirm the founding of Michaeline churches throughout the eastern empire during the fifth and sixth centuries. Such structures—staffed by ecclesiastics, financed and frequented

<sup>84</sup> Severus of Antioch, *Homily LXII*.

<sup>85</sup> Ugo Zanetti, “Fêtes des anges dans les calendriers et synaxaires orientaux,” *Culto e insediamenti micaelici nell'Italia meridionale fra tarda antichità e medioevo: atti del convegno internazionale, Monte Sant'Angelo, 18–21 novembre 1992* (1994), 332.

<sup>86</sup> Zanetti's work also suggests the possibility for a feast day devoted to the Archangel celebrated earlier than 535 in Egypt and other regions, especially Palestine.

by imperial officials—epitomized the legitimacy of the Archangel's cult in the Greek East: through the raising of these edifices, the eastern empire's powerful political and religious institutions together signaled their definitive embrace of the cult of St. Michael the Archangel.

Sozomen's fifth-century *Ecclesiastical History* broaches the idea that imperially sponsored churches were dedicated to the Archangel from as early as the fourth century. While recounting Constantine's founding of Constantinople, Sozomen's account reports that the emperor ordered the construction of the new capital's grand Michaelion:

Constantine further honored this newly compacted city of Christ, named after himself, by adorning it with numerous and magnificent houses of prayer . . . According to the general opinion of foreigners and citizens, the most remarkable church was that built in a place formerly called Hestiaë. This place, which is now called Michaelium, lies to the right of those who sail from Pontus to Constantinople, and is about thirty-five stadia distant from the latter city by water, but if you make the circuit of the bay, the journey between them is seventy stadia and upwards. This place obtained the name which now prevails, because it is believed that Michael, the divine archangel, once appeared there.<sup>87</sup>

Historians often question the accuracy of Sozomen's dating of the Constantinopolitan Michaelion's founding, instead deeming it more likely that the church was constructed only after the reign of Constantine. Still, certain scholars contend that the Michaelion appeared at least sometime during the later fourth century. Cyril Mango offers an insightful conclusion:

Sozomen was, comparatively speaking, a serious historian and when he asserts that the Michaelion had been set up by Constantine, we can at least be reasonably certain that it was of some antiquity when he frequented it; so that even if we may hesitate to ascribe it to Constantine himself, we can hardly doubt that it dated from the fourth century. That would probably make it the most ancient among the attested and documented shrines of St. Michael in the Christian world. This conclusion is of some importance, for the Michaelion on the Bosphorus was not some obscure church in the back country of Asia Minor, surrounded by a rustic population of dubious orthodoxy. It was on the doorstep of the capital, its foundation was ascribed to imperial initiative and it drew its clientele among distinguished lawyers and physicians.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2.3.9. For discussion of the late ancient use of the word "Michaelion" (μικηλιον), see Canivet, "Le Michaelion de Huarte," 89-90. Sozomen goes on to describe miracles that occurred in the church as a result of the Archangel's presence there. Notably, the language of Sozomen's historical narrative parallels the *Miracle of Michael at Chonae*'s similar attempts to assure readers of Michael's presence at its healing spring. By the twilight of antiquity the incorporeal Archangel was thus thought to be present in both imperial churches and rural shrines. John Malalas also attributes the founding of a Michaeline church in Constantinople (the Sosthenion) to the reign of Constantine although the account of its origins seems almost entirely legendary.

<sup>88</sup> Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," 59-60.

As early as the fourth century, then, imperial officials likely consecrated churches to Michael, ensuring his veneration through rites held in urban structures patronized by even the Constantinopolitan elite. Other evidence indicates the existence of Michaeline churches in the fourth century: the contemporary account of Didymus the Blind (quoted above) mentions churches “named after” angels.<sup>89</sup> A general lack of like evidence, however, suggests that in the fourth century such structures remained relatively rare. Nonetheless, they existed.

If Michaeline churches were rare in the fourth century, churches dedicated to the Archangel proliferated in the fifth and early sixth century, especially within the eastern imperial capital of Constantinople. R. Janin has compiled a comprehensive inventory of Michaeline churches and monasteries located in Constantinople and its surrounding area; his study identifies at least nine structures predating the reign of Justinian (527-565). Some of these sites even attained relative historical prominence. For example, in 515 the usurper Vitalian launched his bid for the throne from a Michaeline church at the Sosthenion, located across the Bosphorus from Constantinople. After defeating Vitalian, the emperor Anastasius then marched to this church, hosting a celebration there to thank the Archangel for his aid in securing victory.<sup>90</sup> Michael's character was present in the capital. Indeed, as the influential heart of the eastern empire, Constantinople itself played an important role in spreading Michaeline veneration: the dedication of numerous Michaeline churches there conferred the Archangel's cult with an essential imperial legitimacy and provided a vital platform for its further expansion.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Didymus Caecus, *De trinitate*, 2.7.8.10. In theory, but also probably in practice, churches “named after” angels could mean only Michael, Gabriel, or (less likely) Raphael.

<sup>90</sup> John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 1.16-17. See Glenn Peers, “The Sosthenion Near Constantinople: John Malalas and Ancient Art,” *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 110-120 for discussion touching upon the legendary origins of this site.

<sup>91</sup> Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l'histoire du culte de l'archange saint Michel,” 425-425. “Une fois que le flux michaelien aura atteint la capital, il pourra se déverser de la dans toutes les directions . . . le relais Constantinopolitain est particulièrement important et son influence s'étend loin.”

Beyond Constantinople, Michaeline churches were also established under imperial auspices across disparate regions of the eastern Roman world during the fifth and early sixth centuries. Byzantine literary sources coupled with archeological studies confirm the founding of two Michaeline basilicas in Anatolia under the auspices of a Roman consul, each with a *terminus ante quem* of 454 CE.<sup>92</sup> Excavations have discovered a church built in 487 CE at Huarte in Syria with inscriptions identifying it as a “Michaelion” (μικαήλιον).<sup>93</sup> According to the ancient chronicler John Malalas, another fifth-century Michaeline church was built in Antioch under the emperor Zeno (r. 474-491).<sup>94</sup> Extant inscriptions reveal an Egyptian church dedicated to Michael sometime in the fifth century.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, the above survey reveals that Michaeline building projects were by no means confined to one secluded corner of the eastern empire—churches raised in honor of the Archangel checkered many disparate landscapes of the Greek East.<sup>96</sup> However, this fifth- and early sixth-century growth in many ways constituted only a mere prelude: late ancient Michaeline church building would peak dramatically under the later reign of Justinian (527-565).

### Conclusion

As we shall see in the next chapter, Justinian's extensive patronage of the Archangel's cult heightened its prominence in the Greek East and played a crucial role in transferring

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<sup>92</sup> Cyril Mango, “The Pilgrimage Centre of St. Michael at Germia,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 36 (1986): 124-125. See also Mango, *St. Michael and Attis* 45-47.

<sup>93</sup> See Canivet, P. “Le Michaelion de Huarte (V<sup>e</sup> s.), 89-90, for discussion of the word “Michaelion” (μικαήλιον).

<sup>94</sup> John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 16.17.

<sup>95</sup> Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l'histoire du culte de l'archange saint Michel,” 375.

<sup>96</sup> Late ancient Michaeline structures are thus confirmed in Anatolia, the Near East, Egypt, and Constantinople. The only regions of the eastern empire that lack evidence confirming the presence of late ancient Michaeline structures are the Balkans and Greece. Future studies might attempt to explain the gaping absence of Michael's cult in these regions.

Michaeline veneration into a bold new arena: the Latinized western half of the Mediterranean. Even before Justinian's mid sixth-century reign, however, the cult of St. Michael had emerged as a full-fledged force within the Greek East.

As we have observed, the biblical canon's numerous portrayals of angels provided a raw foundation for late ancient conceptions of these beings (Chapter I). Patristic theologians then interpreted and reinterpreted scripture—coloring its ambiguous content with their own dogmatic stances—to outline fundamental ontological and cosmological roles for angels on elevated planes of literary doctrine (Chapter II). On the plane of common ritual practice, ecclesiastics similarly confronted and corrected illicit forms of angel invocation; these efforts ensured that Michael the Archangel—a celestial character so paradoxically akin to fleshbound saints—would be invoked only under clerical supervision at sanctioned shrines and imperially sponsored churches strewn throughout the eastern empire (Chapter III).

These complex processes often occurred independently from one another but in the end they proved quite complementary. Consequently, by the sixth century the tumultuous environment of the Greek East had forged St. Michael's cult into a popular product suitable for export to the Latin West. Michael therefore joined a long parade of traditional eastern saints whose cults streamed from the Greek East into the Latin West over the course of antiquity, the Archangel marching westward alongside consecrated virgins and bloodstained martyrs.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Greek East to Latin West**

A narrative found within an apocryphal *Acts of Peter* survives only in a Slavonic manuscript. In this story, Christ, disguised as a child, appears to Peter and leads the apostle to a ship. Michael is the vessel's captain. The ship embarks. Steered by Michael, it crosses the Mediterranean and makes port in Rome, where Peter is martyred.<sup>1</sup> The origins of this obscure apocryphal text prove difficult to date. Nonetheless, its narrative can be taken as symbolic of a deep-seated historical process: in this account the character of Michael the Archangel departs from the East, crosses the waters of the Mediterranean, and ultimately arrives in the West.

Over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the cult of Michael the Archangel spread from the Greek East and entered the Latin West via the Italian peninsula. As this study's previous chapters have recounted, by fifth century's end the environment of the Greek East had forged Michael's eastern cult into a popular, doctrinally refined system sanctioned by both leading churchmen and powerful imperial benefactors. Yet Michaeline veneration in the pre-iconoclastic eastern empire peaked only with its lavish patronage under the reign of Justinian (r. 527-565). Correspondingly, Justinian's attempts to reconquer the western empire during the Gothic War coincided with an invigoration of Italian forms of Michaeline veneration—some of which had already existed since the late fifth century—within regions of the peninsula under Byzantine control. Thus established in Italy, the Archangel's cult prospered there during the early medieval period: most notably, a Michaeline shrine at Monte Gargano flourished under the patronage of the peninsula's Lombard kings. Along with such political

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<sup>1</sup> *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. Montague Rhodes James., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 474.

leaders, the pontiffs of the Roman Church also endorsed Italian Michaeline veneration from an early period. Together, then, political and religious institutions of Western Europe embraced the eastern cult of Michael the Archangel at the twilight of antiquity and dawn of the Middle Ages.

### **Michael and Justinian**

The rise of widespread Michaeline veneration in Italy was rooted in developments far across the Mediterranean: the thriving of the Archangel's cult in the late ancient eastern empire. Previous chapters have recounted the burgeoning of this process through the fifth century; following the accession of Justinian in the early sixth century, Michael's cult enjoyed an unprecedented measure of imperial patronage in the Greek East. This process manifested itself primarily through the construction and renovation of churches dedicated to Michael in both Constantinople and other regions of the eastern empire. It is important to note that structures consecrated to the Archangel certainly predated the sixth century. Under Justinian's reign, however, such building projects increased significantly, resulting in the popular efflorescence of Michael's cult throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Justinian renovated or founded at least a handful of Michaeline churches in the imperial capital of Constantinople itself, many of them becoming opulent, well-endowed sites under his tenure. R. Janin's thorough inventory of Constantinopolitan structures dedicated to the Archangel identifies no less than five churches financed during Justinian's reign.<sup>2</sup> Some were dilapidated structures magnified through lavish restoration projects; for example, Procopius's *De aedificiis* includes a lengthy description of a Michaeline church razed and rebuilt with "stones of an infinite variety of colors," "a roof soaring aloft in the form of a dome," and "an extraordinary

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<sup>2</sup> R. Janin, "Les sanctuaires byzantins de saint Michel (Constantinople et banlieue)," *Echos d'Orient* 37 (1934): 28-50.

amount of gold applied to every part of the shrine.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Justinian also founded entirely new Constantinopolitan buildings dedicated to the Archangel—Procopius again provides examples.<sup>4</sup> This rapid increase of Michaeline building projects in the imperial capital proved important, for it signaled the Archangel’s effusive patronage within the very heart of Justinian’s eastern empire: “Une fois que le flux michaelien aura atteint la capital, il pourra se déverser de là-dans toutes les directions . . . le relais Constantinopolitain est particulièrement important et son influence s’étend loin.”<sup>5</sup>

Justinian’s patronage of Michael’s cult extended beyond only Constantinople: under his reign sites consecrated to the Archangel proliferated throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Procopius discusses an “immense church for the archangel Michael” built in Antioch.<sup>6</sup> Similar constructions were also established at a healing spring in Anatolia:

A natural spring of hot water bubbles up in Bithynia, at a place known as Pythia. This spring is used as a cure by many and particularly by the people of Byzantium, especially those who chance to be afflicted by disease. There he [Justinian] displayed extravagance befitting an emperor; palaces were built which had not been there before . . . In addition to this, he enlarged and made much more notable both the church of the Archangel and the infirmary for the sick.<sup>7</sup>

This account is especially resonant because it displays an instance of deliberate efforts to assert imperial control over an ambient<sup>8</sup> healing site associated with angel invocation (a process

<sup>3</sup> Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.8.12-14. τὸ ἱερὸν χρώμασι μυρίοις πεποικίλται λίθων . . . ὄροφος ἐν θόλῳ μετάρσιος ὑπερῴρηται . . . καὶ χρυσοῦ πλήθος ἐξαίσιον πανταχόσε τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Procopius, *Buildings*, 1.3.9

<sup>5</sup> Victor Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l’histoire du culte de l’archange Saint Michel en orient jusqu’à l’Iconoclasme,” in *Noscere Sancta, Miscellanea in memoria di Agostino Amore OFM + 1982*, vol. 1, ed. Isaac Vázquez Janeiro OFM (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1985), 425.

<sup>6</sup> Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.10.25. ἔτι μέντοι καὶ Μιχαὴλ τῷ ἀρχαγγέλῳ νεῶν παμμεγέθη ἐδείματο. προὔνόησε δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀρρωστήμασι πονουμένων ἐνταῦθα πτωχῶν, οἰκία τε σφίσι καὶ τὰ ἐς τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ τῶν νοσημάτων ἀπαλλαγὴν ἐν ἐπιτηδείῳ καταστησάμενος ἅπαντα . . .

<sup>7</sup> Procopius, *Buildings*, 5.3.16-20. Πηγαὶ δὲ θερμῶν φύσει ἐν Βιθυνοῖς ὑδάτων ἀναβλυστάνουσιν ἐν χώρῳ, ὅνπερ ἐπονομάζουσι Πύθια. ταύτας ἔχουσι παραψυχὴν ἄλλοι τε πολλοὶ καὶ διαφερόντως Βυζάντιοι, ἄλλως τε ὅσοις νοσῶδες συμβαίνει εἶναι. ἐνθα δὴ πολυτέλειαν ἐπιδέδεικται βασιλεῖ πρέπουσαν· βασιλεία τε γὰρ ὠκοδομήσατο οὐ πρότερον ὄντα . . . ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ ἀρχαγγέλου τὸ τέμενος καὶ τὸ τῶν νοσοῦντων ἀναπαυστήριον, μείζω τε καὶ κατὰ πολὺ ἐπιφανέστερα κατεστήσατο.

<sup>8</sup> That is, sites dependent on natural environmental features like ponds and springs. This phenomenon was observed in Chapter III. Olga Rojdestvensky has described late ancient angels as “vols des éclairs, détonations des orages,

discussed in previous chapters). In addition, archaeological studies suggest that a fifth-century Michaeline structure at Germia—“one of the biggest known churches in the interior of Asia Minor”—was renovated under Justinian.<sup>9</sup> The above review provides only some examples. Other literary and archaeological sources reveal additional Michaeline sites financed by Justinian across the Greek East.<sup>10</sup>

This extravagant patronage was unprecedented. Although churches consecrated to the Archangel had existed long before the sixth century, the peak of Michaeline church building in the pre-iconoclastic eastern empire undoubtedly occurred during Justinian’s reign. R. Janin identifies nine buildings consecrated to the Archangel in Constantinople over the long period (and many emperors) spanning the fourth and fifth centuries. In comparison, Justinian’s reign alone contributed at least five resplendent churches to the imperial capital. Consideration of the timing of Michaeline structures raised across the Greek East reveals similar patterns.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, we can be sure that imperial support of the Archangel’s cult (measured through church consecration) peaked within Justinian’s sixth-century empire.

Evidence indicates the likelihood of Justinian’s own personal devotion to Michael. A magnificent diptych adorned with an angel usually identified as Michael survives as the largest ivory panel extant from the Byzantine period (Figure 2). David Wright suggests that “this enormous ivory diptych of superlative quality was made in connection with Justinian’s rise to power,” and even proposes that it was commissioned for display at a ceremony celebrating his

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chant des sources, bruit des cataractes, mystère des gouffres et des grottes, le silence éternel des sommets.” Olga Rojdestvensky, *Le culte de saint Michel et le moyen âge latin* (Paris 1922) 54.

<sup>9</sup> Cyril Mango, “The Pilgrimage Centre of St. Michael at Germia,” *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 36 (1986): 119.

<sup>10</sup> For useful lists see P. Canivet, “Le Michaelion de Huarte (V<sup>e</sup> s.) et le culte syrien des anges,” *Byzantion. Revue internationale études byzantines* 50 (1980): 107-109 and Victor Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l’histoire du culte de l’archange Saint Michel en orient jusqu’à l’Iconoclasme,” 104.

<sup>11</sup> Janin, “Les sanctuaires byzantins de saint Michel (Constantinople et banlieue), 28-50.

accession in 527.<sup>12</sup> The emperor also maintained a private oratory dedicated to the Archangel in his palace at Hormisdas.<sup>13</sup> Angels bearing crosses and globes appeared on coins during his reign (Figure 3).<sup>14</sup> Additionally, although Justinian was notorious for rarely departing Constantinople, at the age of 81 he embarked from the capital for the first time in over fifty years to make a pilgrimage to Germia's Michaeline church, perhaps seeking healing there in his old age.<sup>15</sup> Taken together such evidence implies that Justinian revered Michael as a favorite personal saint. This was significant for the growth of the Archangel's cult: during his reign the emperor consistently displayed a tendency to use his authority to bolster religious expressions personally favored by him, a trend reflected through the many Michaeline building projects recounted above.

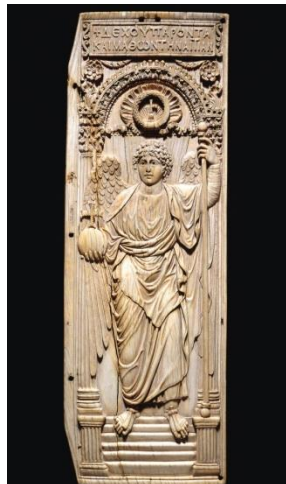


Figure 2



Figure 3

Ultimately, Justinian's deliberate patronage of the Archangel's eastern cult must be considered in light of his overarching political and religious philosophy, which emphasized the

<sup>12</sup> David Wright, "Justinian and an Archangel," *Studien zur Spätantiken und Byzantinischen Kunst* (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1986), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Janin, "Les sanctuaires byzantins de saint Michel (Constantinople et banlieue), 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred R. Bellinger and Philip Grierson, ed., *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection: Volume I, Anastasius I to Maurice, 491-602* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966), A/3d-A/13.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000, Tenth Anniversary Revised Edition* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 181.

unity of church and empire. With this in mind, Deno John Geanakoplos has noted the motives underlying late ancient church building in the eastern empire; he concludes that “the emperor’s building of religious structures constituted an instrument . . . through imperial insistence on ecclesiastical unity as reflected in the aims of their building policy, for promoting the ultimate aim of the unity of the empire itself.<sup>16</sup> As a single facet of this process, Michaeline church building across different regions of the East represented a means of unifying the eastern empire under imperially sanctioned religion. In 533 at a conference of bishops Justinian himself did indeed invoke Michael in order to promote concord. For two days the convocation’s discussions had dragged on without result; on the third day, Justinian declared to those gathered there that before attending the assembly he had visited an oratory dedicated to Michael the Archangel in order to implore God for unity among the squabbling bishops.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, both the ivory diptych and Justinianic coinage discussed above include images of angels holding globes surmounted with crosses, iconography symbolizing the role of angels in assuring the concord of church and empire.<sup>18</sup> Due to his angelic nature Michael was not a figure dependent upon one particular locale; his flexible character was thus ideal for promoting imperial unity through its easy transfer into churches scattered across disparate regions of the eastern empire.

It is tempting, in turn, to apply this rhetoric to explain the growth of Michael’s cult in the Latin West during the Gothic War. After all, the Gothic War was itself a campaign that sought to unify the eastern and western Mediterranean in chase of Justinian’s dream of universal empire. We must approach this argument with caution, however, since it remains preponderantly significant that no Italian church was ever dedicated to the Archangel under imperial auspices.

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<sup>16</sup> Deno John Geanakoplos, *Interaction of the “Sibling” Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330-1600)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 132.

<sup>17</sup> Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima coll.*, t. VIII (Florence, 1761). col. 833.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, “Justinian and an Archangel,” 76.

Nonetheless, certain evidence indicates the possibility that the proliferation of Michaeline veneration in sixth-century Italy—like its counterpart in the Greek East—resulted from calculated imperial design. Regardless of this particular question, the growth of the Archangel’s cult in the Latin West surely remained rooted in its efflorescence throughout the contemporary eastern empire, for nascent Italian Michaeline veneration conspicuously accelerated within those regions of the peninsula steeped in Byzantine influence during the sixth century.

### **Nascent Michaeline Veneration in Italy**

The early rise of Michael’s cult across the Mediterranean in the eastern empire would have perturbed Augustine (d. 430) in the contemporary West. Writing about angels the Bishop of Hippo proffered, “We honor them with love, not with servitude, and we do not dedicate temples to them—for they do not wish to be honored by us in this way!”<sup>19</sup> This comment may have been intended to attack practices then observed by the bishop. However, Augustine’s lack of direct polemic, coupled with his derisively incredulous tone, indicates that the bishop was neither aware of contemporary Michaeline churches in the East nor sought to castigate cultic practices which he himself had observed in the West. Given the absence of similar statements in the treatises of other Latin churchmen, it is likely that as late as the early fifth century cultic veneration of angels in Christian settings remained more or less alien to the western Roman world.

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<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, 55.73. Quare honoramus eos caritate, non servitute, nec eis templa constituimus, nolunt enim se sic honorari a nobis. Note that Augustine uses the word “templa” instead of “ecclesiae,” implying that he associated angel worship with pagan rather than Christian cultic practices. The ensuing sections of Augustine’s treatise are also useful: Recte itaque scribitur hominem ab angelo prohibitum [cf. Revelation 22.8-9], ne se adoraret, sed unum dominum, sub quo ei esset et ille conseruus. Qui autem nos inuitant, ut sibi seruiamus et tamquam deos colamus, similes sunt superbis hominibus, quibus si liceat similiter coli uolunt. This material is set within a doctrinal context glorifying the divinity of God, rather than a cultic context like the canons of Laodicea seen in Chapter III. Doctrinal material suggesting confections between Christ and angels—again, literary material rather than cultic—occurs occasionally among Latin authors, although such dialogues are much less common in western texts than in their eastern counterparts. Cf. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 14.

By the late fifth century, however, Michael's cult had entered Italy on a muted level. A handful of churches are known to have been consecrated to the Archangel in southern Italy during this period. The earliest Italian Michaeline church is often identified as one located in Rome along the Via Salaria; although details remain obscure scholars date its founding to the mid fifth century.<sup>20</sup> In 493 or 494 Pope Gelasius (r. 492-496) ordered the founding of a Michaeline basilica in Larino; two years later he presented the same demand to the bishop of Potenza.<sup>21</sup> The *Liber Pontificalis*—generally historically reliable in its accounts of early sixth-century popes—attests that Pope Symmachus (r. 498-514) enlarged a basilica of Michael in Rome.<sup>22</sup> Other late fifth- and early sixth-century Michaeline churches are recorded at Perugia, Palermo, and Naples.<sup>23</sup> Still, most of these localized sites prove extremely obscure in the historical record, some eliciting no more than a passing mention in a problematic text. Such early Italian dedications were not prominent centers of Michaeline veneration rivalling the East's magnificent churches and popular healing shrines; moreover, they certainly did not parallel the prominence of subsequent western Michaeline centers like the sanctuary at Monte Gargano.

Despite the paucity of evidence a fundamental eastern influence must be assumed behind the construction of such early Michaeline churches in Italy: the Archangel embraced by the West was first an eastern saint.<sup>24</sup> Timing indicates as much—the Greek East's oldest Michaeline

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<sup>20</sup> D.M. Hope, *The Leonine Sacramentary: A Reassessment of its Nature and Purpose*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 49-50.

<sup>21</sup> S. Loewenfeld, *Epistolae Pontificum Romanorum ineditae*, Leipzig 1885, p.1 no. 2. Gelasius Iusto episcopo Larinati. Priscillianus et Felicissimus viri devoti petitorii nobis insinuatione suggesserunt, in re propria quae Mariana vocatur basilicam se pro sua devotione fundasse, quam in honore sancte archangeli Micahelis et nomine desiderant consecrari. Also A. Thiel, *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae* (Braunsberg, 1868), pg. 449 no. 35.

<sup>22</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 53.9. Item ad archangelum Michahel basilicam ampliauit et grados fecit et introduxit aquam. Raymond Davis, trans. and intro, *Liber Pontificalis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), xlv-xlvi.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel*, 139.

<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, however, this extreme paucity of evidence does not allow for firm identifications regarding the specific source(s) behind the earliest transfer of the Archangel's cult into the West—we may only exclude certain unlikely origins. For example, although the establishment of early Italian churches coincided chronologically with the influx of Theodoric's Ostrogoths into the peninsula, it is unlikely that these easterners brought Michael with

churches predated their western counterparts by no more than a century. The quiet entrance of Michael's cult into Italy also evinces this principle. As Chapter III demonstrated, the gradual crafting of sanctioned Michaeline veneration in the eastern empire was a complex process, which, due to its considerable controversy, vented telltale clouds of evidence in its wake (e.g. restrictive canons, cautionary sermons, polemics). Dialogues concerning the propriety of Michael's eastern cult existed long before its sanction was consummated through the founding of churches raised in his name. Accordingly, the lack of similar evidence preceding the appearance of Michaeline churches in Italy proves revealing through its very dearth, for the presence of such materials would betray processes of organic domestic growth.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, this absence of hostile or even cautionary sources greeting the arrival of the Archangel's cult into Italy reveals the fundamental acceptability of his veneration to contemporary western ecclesiastics. By the time of Michael's export from the Greek East in the late fifth century, eastern churchmen had already molded Michaeline veneration into a cultic practice readily amenable to the sensibilities of their western counterparts. No censures or apprehensive sermons heralded the Archangel's arrival into Italy, but instead only laudatory churches, some even established at the behest of the bishop of Rome himself.

### **Michael and the Gothic War**

As has been discussed, during Justinian's reign the Archangel's cult realized an unprecedented efflorescence throughout much of the eastern empire. Correspondingly,

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them from across the Mediterranean. Theodoric spent his youth in the eastern imperial court, where he would have encountered the Archangel's cult. However, the Ostrogoths whom he commanded had long settled in the Balkans, the one major region of the eastern empire for which no evidence exists confirming the presence of contemporary Michaeline veneration. The first Italian churches dedicated to the Archangel were concentrated entirely in the southern peninsula, whereas Theodoric's Ostrogoths invaded Italy from the north. Similarly, no church was dedicated to Michael in Ravenna—the capital of Theodoric's Ostrogoth kingdom—until after the city's capture by Byzantine forces during the Gothic War.

<sup>25</sup> There is, of course, the Augustinian example cited above.

Justinian's Gothic War invigorated nascent Italian Michaeline veneration by injecting efficacious Greek influences into Italy while in turn advancing expressions of imperially sanctioned religion on the peninsula, including the cult of the Archangel. These processes did not necessarily result from deliberate imperial intervention: no Italian church was ever consecrated to Michael under the auspices of Justinian or an imperial official. On the other hand, numerous features suggest an underlying imperial hand behind the growth of the Archangel's western cult. Despite these oscillations, it nonetheless remains certain that during the Gothic War forms of Michaeline veneration proliferated in landscapes of the Italian peninsula infused with general Byzantine influences, most notably Ravenna, Rome, and possibly Apulia.

Ravenna lacked a church dedicated to the Archangel throughout its half-century tenure as the capital of Ostrogothic Italy; after the city's capture in 540 by imperial Byzantine forces, however, it soon gained a Michaeline structure reflecting traceably eastern influences.<sup>26</sup> The building of the church was sponsored in 545 by the funding of a banker, Julius Argentarius. Its very name comprised a conscious acknowledgement of its eastern predecessors: "In medieval documents it is called San Michele in Africisco . . . Agnellus [a medieval chronicler] says that the church was in the region known as *Ad Frigiselo* . . . this curious term is probably a reference to the famous shrines of St. Michael in Phrygia."<sup>27</sup> Agnellus also transmits the church's dedicatory inscription:

Having received benefits of the archangel Michael, Bacauda and Julian have made from the foundations and dedicated [this church] on 7 May. The fourth year after the consulship of Basilius the younger *vir clarissimo*, consul, in the 8th indiction [the year 545].<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The structure of the church still stands today, although it has been incorporated into a modern fashion store. However, late ancient mosaics removed intact from the church can be viewed in Germany.

<sup>27</sup> Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 250.

<sup>28</sup> Andreas Agnellus, *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, 77. *Ibique inuenietis in camera tribunae ita legentem: Consecuti beneficia archangeli Michelis, Bacauda et Iulianus a fundamentis fecerunt et dedicauerunt sub die Nonis Mai quater p. c. Basilius iunioris uiri clarissimi consulis, indictione .viii.*

The impetus for the church's construction—gratitude for angelic *beneficia*—might have been intended to thank the Archangel for protection during the recent devastations of the Justinianic Plague (541-542).<sup>29</sup> Such a recognition of Michael's healing role would betray further Phrygian influences since, as we have seen, “le Michel anatolien est un archange guérisseur.”<sup>30</sup>

Significantly, the decorative mosaics of San Michele in Africisco supported the imperially sponsored religion of the eastern empire. The church's apse features a rich mosaic depicting Christ dressed in royal purple and holding an open book bearing the inscription, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father: I and the Father are one.”<sup>31</sup> Michael stands on Christ's right side and Gabriel stands on his left, each angel clad in white and labeled by name (Figure 4). Scholarly interpretations of this mosaic consistently note its anti-Arian, Trinitarian content. For example, “the inscription in the book held by Christ conflates two passages from John that were used by orthodox theologians to argue for the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, contrasts between the mosaic's images of Christ (robed in royal purple) and the angels (robed in white, with hands raised in acclamation of the Son) emphasize Christ's exalted nature.<sup>33</sup> Through its mosaics San Michele in Africisco promoted imperially sponsored theology in deliberate opposition to the Arian doctrines of Ravenna's former Gothic masters,

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<sup>29</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 250-254.

<sup>30</sup> Saxer, “Jalons pour servir à l'histoire du culte de l'archange Saint Michel en orient jusqu'à l'Iconoclasme,” 425.

<sup>31</sup> QUI VIDIT ME VIDIT ET PATREM. EGO ET PATER UNUM SUMUS.

<sup>32</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 253-254.

<sup>33</sup> Note that these portrayals align with Chapter 2's discussion of angels in doctrine. In short, Arian theologians of the fourth century regularly associated Christ with angels—created beings—in order to emphasize the Son's subordination to the absolutely divine Father. Nicene theologians responded by exalting Christ above the status of angels in order to confirm his divine nature and consubstantiality with the Father.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Other churches also reveal the introduction of Michaeline veneration into Ravenna following the Byzantine capture of the city. Sant'Apollinare in Classe was consecrated in 549; like San Michael in Africiso it was also financed by Julius Argentarius. The church includes a mosaic of Michael holding a banner with the Greek words “*agios, agios, agios*” (“Holy, Holy, Holy”) written in the Latin alphabet (Figure 5).

The “*agios, agios, agios*” formula—known as the Trisagion hymn—is entirely Trinitarian (another commentary on Ostrogothic Arianism) and tellingly constituted “einen Bezugspunkt zu den christologischen Debatten der Zeit und der darin vom Kaiser vertretenen Position.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the Trisagion hymn depicted upon Michael’s banner at Sant’Apollinare in Classe advanced theological claims personally dear to Justinian himself. The founding of San Michele in Africisco was no anomaly: during the Gothic War Michael’s imperially sanctioned cult entered into other churches of Ravenna in a manner reflecting traceable eastern—and even Justinianic—influences.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Luise Abramowski, “Die Mosaiken von S. Vitale und S. Apollinare in Classe und die Kirchenpolitik Kaiser Justinians,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 5 (2001): 313. Pages 303-313 of Abramowski’s article closely analyze the role of the Trisagion within the mosaic of Michael at Sant’Apollinare in Classe.

<sup>35</sup> Compare with extant mosaics at Theodoric’s earlier palace church in Ravenna (presumably the place where the Ostrogothic king worshipped and royal ceremonies occurred), which feature images of anonymous choirs of angels, but not the particular character of Michael. See Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 146.

It has been emphasized above that no Michaeline church was constructed under Justinian's auspices in Italy. This is generally true. However, it is possible that the eastern emperor patronized Michael's cult in Ravenna through backchannels. The mysterious Julius Argentarius has long intrigued scholars; he is traditionally identified as a wealthy *private* banker who funded the construction of Ravenna's San Michele in Africisco, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, and San Vitale. Reneé Standley has scrutinized this notoriously cryptic character, synthesizing the insights of various historians to propose an important suggestion:

Very little is known of this man whom Millburn termed the "mysterious Julius Argentinarius." Von Simson believed Argentinarius to be the man pictured standing between the emperor and the bishop Maximian in the Justinian panel [at San Vitale]. He termed this portrayal an "altogether astonishing tribute to a man whose name has otherwise vanished from the historical record." Von Simson further states that the property upon which San Vitale was built was donated by the imperial fisc and had been listed in its inventory. Deichmann theorized that San Vitale's construction was begun only *after* the Byzantine reconquest of Ravenna in 540. San Vitale's excessive cost of 26,000 gold solidi, its style, and its lavishness also suggest the probability of imperial financing. Justinian and Theodora had been criticized by their enemies for their extravagant building programs, which were seen as an unwise drain on the empire's resources and carried out solely as a frivolous expression of power. It is not unreasonable to argue that, while attempting to re-establish and legitimize their reign in the West, the imperial couple thought it best to have Argentarius act as their agent.<sup>36</sup>

This suggestion has a profound relevance to understandings about Michael's western cult. If Julius Argentarius was in fact Justinian's Ravennate agent then San Michele in Africisco and Sant'Apollinare in Classe—with their Michaeline mosaics—would represent direct extensions of those many churches dedicated to the Archangel across the Greek East under Justinian's reign. Ultimately, it is possible that the Archangel's late ancient cult proliferated in the West through deliberate imperial intervention; through Julius Argentarius, Justinian himself might have purposefully indoctrinated Italy with Michaeline veneration to promote religious and political unity between East and West under a favorite personal saint. Without certain confirmation of

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<sup>36</sup> Reneé Justice Standley, "The Role of the Empress Theodora in the Imperial Panels at the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna," in *Representations of the Feminine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Derek Baker (Dallas: Academia Press, 1993), 173.

Julius Argentarius's shadowy role, however, these conclusions cannot be fully embraced—they remain merely speculative.

Thus, although the Archangel had long been absent from Gothic Ravenna, well-attested manifestations of his cult arose there shortly after a marked influx of Byzantine influences altered the religious landscape of the city. Moreover, San Michele in Africisco was thoroughly—even consciously—modeled on its eastern predecessors, especially through its support of imperially sanctioned Christology and analogous critiques against Ostrogothic Arianism. This introduction of Michael's cult into Ravenna during the Gothic War was crucial: it signaled the Archangel's enduring presence in an influential religious and political center previously devoid of such cultic practices.

Likewise, the Gothic War spurred Michaeline veneration in Rome by prompting the incorporation of the Archangel's character into liturgical services held there. After serving as papal representative in Constantinople, Pope Vigilius (r.537-555) ascended the throne of St. Peter during the Gothic War through the influence of the eastern imperial court, which installed him in order to replace a papal predecessor linked with Italy's Gothic regime. Following his appointment Vigilius composed a number of Masses preserved in the *Sacramentary of Leo*.<sup>37</sup> Among the liturgical texts usually attributed to him, four invoke Michael; some plead for intercession, while others reveal ceremonies conducted “in honor of the blessed Archangel Michael.”<sup>38</sup> It seems that Vigilius—a pope personally familiar with contemporary eastern cultic practices and one with direct associations to Justinian's imperial court—introduced the

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<sup>37</sup> Hope, *The Leonine Sacramentary*, 78–90. See also Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel*, 143-146.

<sup>38</sup> *Sacramentary of Leo*, 846. In die festivitatis hodiernae, quo in honorem beati archangeli Michael. See also 847, 854, and 858.

Archangel into the western liturgy during the Gothic War, further ingraining the Archangel's cult into Italy from his authoritative seat in the peninsula's venerable traditional capital.

It is not surprising that in the mid sixth century more evidence of Michael's cult manifested itself in Ravenna than Rome. Following the city's reconquest by imperial forces Ravenna, of course, became the seat of the Byzantine Exarchate of Italy—and a center dominated by forceful eastern influences. The intervention of Byzantium on the Italian peninsula through the Gothic War energetically catalyzed Michael's nascent western cult; significantly, Justinian himself might have played a careful part in this process. In the end, the Archangel's popularity and patronage in the Greek East presupposed the coterminous flourishing of his cult in the sixth-century Latin West.

### **The Michaeline Shrine at Monte Gargano**

Most notably, Byzantine influences contributed to the founding of a Michaeline shrine located within a grotto atop Monte Gargano in the region of Apulia. The hagiographical *Liber de apparitione sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano* recounts the legendary origins of the site. Supplementing this enigmatic text with external evidence reveals that in the sixth century the Gargano shrine first existed as a small site with only a local following. During the early medieval period the shrine acquired widespread prominence through the patronage of Lombardic kings. Over the course of the Middle Ages the Gargano sanctuary then flourished as one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Christendom, serving as a model for other Michaeline centers arising across Western Europe.

Ancient observers long regarded Monte Gargano as a holy site. In the first century C.E. the eastern geographer Strabo—referring to the mount as “a hill by the name of Drium”—noted that a temple of Calchas stood upon its summit while a temple of Podaleirius rested at its base

(both are characters named in the *Iliad*).<sup>39</sup> Taking their cue from these sources, some scholars have proposed that Michaeline veneration at Gargano developed from ancient pagan cults displaced by Christian worship. According to this theory, the Archangel's early presence at the site typified a not uncommon instance of late ancient "shrine conversion." Although a reasonable hypothesis, this conclusion proves rather unlikely in light of the absence of pagan artifacts recovered by excavations at the site.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, coupled with the presence of a nearby Petrine church on the mountain (dated to the fifth century), the absence of pagan objects similar to those recovered at eastern sites of unsanctioned syncretic angel invocation—e.g. votive lamps, magic tablets, etc.—supports the likelihood that the Michaeline shrine at Gargano represents a late ancient religious site independent of a strong pre-Christian cultic tradition.

On the other hand, excavations at the Gargano cavern have uncovered Christian ruins dating from the late fifth or sixth century beneath a newer crypt and staircase constructed under Lombardic patronage.<sup>41</sup> Archaeological dating of this original structure loosely complements a traditional timeline reflected in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which attributes Gargano's foundation to the reign of Pope Gelasius, although modern editors consistently agree that this detail is a medieval insertion into the text.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, it remains possible, albeit unlikely, that the *Liber Pontificalis* preserves a distant memory of the origins of the Gargano shrine—nearby Michaeline sites attributed to Gelasius's reign were commissioned at Larino and Potenza.<sup>43</sup> Regardless, based upon material evidence we can be sure of the existence of a Christian site in the Gargano

<sup>39</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, 6.3.9. δείκνυται δὲ τῆς Δαυνίας περὶ λόφον ᾧ ὄνομα Δρίον ἠρῶα, τὸ μὲν Κάλχαντος ἐπ' ἄκρα τῆ κορυφῆ.

<sup>40</sup> John Arnold, "Arcadia Becomes Jerusalem: Angelic Caverns and Shrine Conversion at Monte Gargano," *Speculum* Vol. 75, No. 3 (Jul., 2000): 571.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Everett, "The Liber de Apparitione S. Michaelis in Monte Gargano and the Hagiography of Dispossession," *Analecta bollandiana* 120 (2002): 372.

<sup>42</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 53.1. "In his time was discovered the church of the holy Angel on Monte Gargano." LATIN

<sup>43</sup> Everett, "Hagiography of Dispossession," 373.

cavern beginning from no later than the sixth century, a period when Byzantine influences saturated southern Italy.

Indeed, Byzantine influences permeated Apulia during Late Antiquity, a feature which likely accounts for the region's ubiquitous Michaeline veneration. As the easternmost territory of the Italian peninsula, Apulia—the “heel” of the Italian “boot”—certainly lay in close proximity to Byzantium. Apulia had long maintained economic links with Greece.<sup>44</sup> Procopius confirms an analogous lack of Ostrogothic control over the region: his *History of the Wars* tells that Apulia was quickly captured by imperial forces during the Gothic War because of a complete absence of Goths in the region.<sup>45</sup> Other Michaeline sites which might have inspired Gargano's shrine dotted Apulia beginning from the late fifth century; it is telling, in comparison, that the Archangel's cult failed to appear contemporaneously in regions of northern Italy less dominated by Byzantium.<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, the center of the looming diffusion of the Archangel's western cult was “incontestablement l'Italie du sud, très hellénisée, avec le Monte Gargano.”<sup>47</sup> Given Michael's eastern origins the shrine certainly arose in a likely place.

A hagiographical narrative, the *Liber de apparitione sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano*, recounts the appearance of Michael at Gargano and the legendary origins of its shrine. The *Liber's* introduction locates the site “where the city of Siponto is situated.”<sup>48</sup> It first tells the story of an escaped bull that wanders to the empty Gargano grotto. The bull's angry master

<sup>44</sup> Chris Wickham, “Rural Economy and Society” in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-1000*, ed. Cristina La Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120.

<sup>45</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.15.3. καὶ Ἀπούλιοι, Γότθων σφίσι τῆ χώρᾳ οὐ παρόντων, Βελισσαρίῳ ἐθελούσιοι προσεχώρησαν οἱ τε παράλιοι καὶ οἱ τὰ μεσόγεια ἔχοντες.

<sup>46</sup> e.g. those built in Larino and Potenza under Gelasius—see above.

<sup>47</sup> Philippe Faure, “L'ange du haut moyen-âge occidental IV<sup>e</sup>–IX<sup>e</sup> siècles: création ou tradition?” *Médiévales* 15 (1988): 39.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Johnson, ed., *Liber de apparitione sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano*, printed in *St. Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 110-115.

Ubi inter sinum Adriaticum et montem Garganum civitas Sepontus posita est.

(named “Garganus”) shoots a poisoned arrow at it, but the arrow twists around in a blast of wind and strikes the man. Michael then appears to the city’s bishop and proclaims his presence:

This was done by my will. For I am Michael the Archangel, who stands always in sight of the Lord. And resolving to protect this place and the people of this land, I sought to demonstrate by this sign that I am the watcher and guardian of the place and all things which are done there.<sup>49</sup>

Following this revelation the local people “establish the custom of praying there to God and St. Michael” but remain too timid to enter the grotto itself.<sup>50</sup> Soon, pagan Neapolitans attack the city. The nearby Beneventans join the Sipontans in its defense. Michael aids in the fighting:

The Christians met the pagans, and as the battle was joined, Monte Gargano was struck by an immense earth tremor. Lightning bolts flew, and a dark mist covered the peak of the mountain . . . the pagans fled, driven partly by the weapons of their enemies, partly by flaming arrows.<sup>51</sup>

After this victory the “footprints of a man” appear at the Gargano grotto, pressed into its stone.<sup>52</sup>

The people recognize that “blessed Michael wished to show this as a sign of his presence.”<sup>53</sup>

The Sipontans establish an altar in the grotto and call the church “Apodonia” “on account of the sign of the footprints” although they remain unsure about whether to dedicate it.<sup>54</sup> A message is sent to the unnamed bishop of Rome who advises them to seek Michael’s will. The Archangel then appears to the bishop of Siponto, telling him that “It is not your work to dedicate the church which I built. For I, who built it, also dedicated it myself. But enter this place, where I am present as protector, and fill it with prayers.”<sup>55</sup> A description of the church within the

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<sup>49</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Hoc mea gestum voluntate. Ego enim sum Michaelus archangelus, qui in conspectu Domini semper adsisto locumque hunc in terra incolasque servare instituens, hoc volui probare inditio omnium quae ibi geruntur ipsiusque loci esse inspectorem atque custodem.

<sup>50</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Hac revelatione conperta, consuetudinem fecerunt cives hic Dominum sanctumque deprecari Michaelem.

<sup>51</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Obviant christiani paganis, atque in primo belli apparatu Garganus inmenso tremore concutitur; fulgura crebra volant, et caligo tenebrosa totum montis cacumen obduxit . . . fugiunt pagani, partim ferro hostium, partim igniferis impulsu sagittis.

<sup>52</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Hominis vestigia marmori artius inpressa.

<sup>53</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Beatum Michaelem hoc presentiae suae signum voluisse monstrare.

<sup>54</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Ipsa ecclesia ob signa vestigiorum Apodonia est vocata.

<sup>55</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. “Non est vobis,” inquit, “opus hanc quam ego edificavi dedicare basilicam. Ipse enim qui condidi condidi etiam dedicavi. Vos tantum intrate et me adstante patrono precibus locum frequentate.

consecrated grotto follows. The hagiography concludes by declaring that great crowds now assemble at Gargano to partake in Michael's miracles.

Dating the *Liber* proves notoriously difficult, with opinions on its composition ranging from the sixth to the eleventh century.<sup>56</sup> Scholars consistently note the *Liber*'s seemingly deliberate ahistoricism: the text refuses to include historical or chronological points of reference (e.g. the name of its pope or Sipontan bishop) and commonly incorporates sensational elements like the pagan assault against the mount. Nicholas Everett has recently considered the *Liber*'s content in the context of Apulia's regional ecclesiastical history. His study convincingly identifies the *Liber* as a rhetorical "cry for independence" crafted by the ecclesiastical community of Siponto as it sought to reverse its annexation by the bishop of Benevento, an event dated to the 660s.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, Everett proposes that the *Liber* was composed sometime between c. 663-750, emphasizing that a date shortly after Siponto's annexation in the 660s remains most likely.<sup>58</sup> This comprehensive argument is convincing and a composition date in the late seventh century currently remains the most persuasive reckoning of the *Liber*.

Because of its seventh-century dating, rhetorical purpose, and legendary nature the *Liber* is generally an unhelpful source for reconstructing the sixth-century origins of the Gargano shrine. However, one key detail in the *Liber* suggests a Greek influence on the early site: "the church was called *Apodonia* on account of the signs of the footprints."<sup>59</sup> Within the Latin text "Apodonia" is a peculiar Greek loanword alluding to the idea of "footprints" (based upon context and semantic root).<sup>60</sup> In the narrative the name thus provides a "trasparente allusione

<sup>56</sup> Most of the arguments are complicated, and need not be recounted here. See Everett, "Hagiography of Disposition," 365-366 for a survey of past scholarly opinions.

<sup>57</sup> Everett, "Hagiography of Dispossession," 380-387.

<sup>58</sup> Everett, "Hagiography of Dispossession," 389.

<sup>59</sup> *Liber de apparitione*. Ipsa ecclesia ob signa vesigiorum Apodonia est vocata.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. πούς, with diminutive πόδιον to describe the "pusilla vestigial." Ducange notes the appearance of the word "Apodonia" only in the *Liber*. He defines the word as "a pedis vestigio ibi impresso."

all'episodio dell'impronta del piede dell'arcangelo."<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, "Apodonia" was probably not merely an invented name, but instead a traditional historical designation for a section of the shrine, since the site actually possessed relic imprints in the ground resembling feet. Indeed, if the *Liber* was intended to serve as a form of rhetoric (i.e. Everett's "cry for independence") then its account would have sought to appeal to a contemporary readership intimately familiar with the site—manufacturing a false topography from a foreign Greek root would have only bewildered readers. It is therefore reasonable to infer that the *Liber*'s author crafted his account of the origins of the *Apodonia* to explain a preexisting Greek name lingering from the shrine's past, when Byzantine influences had influenced its christening. Despite the *Liber*'s difficulties, this text yields at least one clue suggesting Greek influences on the origins of Monte Gargano.

Ultimately, it seems that as a result of enduring Byzantine influences in Apulia, a Michaeline shrine was founded at Monte Gargano sometime in the late fifth or sixth century, possibly even during the Gothic War. Accordingly, the Gargano shrine, located in a grotto on top of a mountain, closely resembled eastern sites of ambient Michaeline invocation like the healing spring at Chonae discussed in Chapter III. Similarly, the muted presence of Greek elements in the *Liber* also indicates early Byzantine influences. It is important to recognize that following its founding the fledgling Gargano shrine was not a prominent religious center—it is not mentioned in any extant sixth-century literary sources. In the seventh century, however, Monte Gargano soon acquired enduring prominence through lavish Lombardic patronage.

By the mid seventh century control over Apulia and Monte Gargano had been transferred from Byzantium to the Lombards. The earliest mention of Monte Gargano in a literary source outside the *Liber* occurs within Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*, written in the late

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<sup>61</sup> S. Leanza, "Una versione greca inedita dell'*Apparitio S. Michaelis in monte Gargano*," *Vetera Christianorum* 22 (1985): 313.

eighth century. The account narrates a battle waged between Byzantine pirates and Lombards led by Grimoald I (610-671), Duke of Benevento, who later became king:

And since Grimoald was a very warlike man and distinguished everywhere, when the Greeks at that time came to plunder the sanctuary of the holy archangel situated upon Monte Gargano, he came upon them with his army and destroyed them with the utmost slaughter.<sup>62</sup>

Historians have determined that this Lombardic victory occurred as early as 650. By this time, then, Monte Gargano had grown from its early state as a simple cave shrine and become a site worthy of attention from both dukes and pirates.<sup>63</sup> After Grimoald's victory it was also firmly subsumed under Lombardic control.

Royal Lombardic patronage of the Michaeline shrine at Monte Gargano surged under Grimoald's son, Romuald I (662-687). Multiple inscriptions and building projects at Gargano demonstrate Romuald's interest in the site. The letters of the following inscription are elegantly wrought in the epigraphic court style of Pavia, the Lombardic capital: "Here the joint ruler of the realm [dedicates] to his father [this inscription? this building?]; he who erected [this], as he assumed worldly power, did not neglect the heavenly things."<sup>64</sup> Romuald's dedication reveals that he himself financed building projects at Gargano. A later inscription confirms his continued interest in the site: "Duke Romuald, acting with pious zeal, ordered offerings to be made and donated to God and the holy Archangel."<sup>65</sup> These inscriptions show that in the seventh century

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<sup>62</sup> Paulus Diaconus, *History of the Lombards*, 4.46. Qui dum esset vir bellicosissimus et ubique insignis, venientibus eo tempore Grecis, ut oraculum sancti archangeli in monte Gargano situm depraedarent, Grimuald super eos cum exercitu veniens, ultima eos caede prostravit. It has been suggested that this event inspired the "battle" section of the *Liber*.

<sup>63</sup> R. Derolez and U. Schwab, "The Runic Inscriptions of Monte S. Angelo Gargano," *Academiae Analecta* 45 (1983):102.

<sup>64</sup> Printed in Derolez and Schwab, "The Runic Inscriptions," 101.

+ H(I)C PATRI EIVS [R]EGNI [C]VMSOR[T]IOR  
+ E[RE]CTOR SIC TERRE[N]A SV[M]TSIT  
+ [C]ELESTIA N[V]M[Q]VA[M] RELINQVI[T]

<sup>65</sup> Printed in Derolez and Schwab, "The Runic Inscriptions," 103.

+ D[E] DONIS D(E)I ET [S(AN)]C(T)I A[RCHA]N  
+ GELI FIERI IVSSE ET DON[AVIT]  
+ ROMOVALD DVX AGE[R]E PIETATE

powerful Lombardic kings eagerly embraced the Archangel's cult through lavish patronage of the Michaeline shrine at Monte Gargano, which expanded under such royal attention.

Over the course of the Middle Ages Gargano hosted pilgrims from across Europe and served as a model for other western Michaeline sites emerging beyond Italy. Throughout the medieval period popes and emperors, kings and queens, saints and abbots together flocked to the Gargano grotto alongside countless other pilgrims.<sup>66</sup> Eighth-century Anglo-Saxon runes have even been identified at the site.<sup>67</sup> Because of its immense prominence the Gargano shrine's influence on other western Michaeline foundations cannot be underestimated: "Le sanctuaire élevé au Monte Gargano allait servir de prototype aux lieux consacrés à l'archange."<sup>68</sup> For example, the origins narrative of France's famous Monte Saint-Michael (founded c. 708) tells that the site's founder "wished to imitate the shape of that shrine on Monte Gargano," and that he received Michaeline relics from Gargano to place at Monte Saint-Michael.<sup>69</sup> Due to its widespread popularity and role as a channel that informed other Michaeline sites burgeoning across Europe, the grotto shrine at Monte Gargano, itself the heir of eastern sites like the Chonae spring, constituted the most essential bridge in the transfer of the Archangel's cult from Greek East to Latin West via the Italian peninsula.

### Conclusion

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<sup>66</sup> Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel and the Terrors of the Year 1000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, edited by Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, David C. Van Meter, 181-205 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 185-186.

For example, Odo of Cluny, the Holy Roman emperors Otto III, and Henry II.

<sup>67</sup> Derolez and Schwab, "The Runic Inscriptions," 122-125.

<sup>68</sup> Faure, "L'ange du haut moyen-âge occidental IV<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècles," 39.

<sup>69</sup> *Revelatio ecclesiae de Sancti Michaelis, Acta Sanctorum* September 8:76-79. Also see John Arnold, "The Revelatio Ecclesiae de Sancti Michaelis and the Mediterranean Origins of Mont Saint-Michel," *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe* 10 (May 2007), electronic text.

Scholars name Michael the “patron saint” of the Lombards.<sup>70</sup> Evidence certainly supports this conclusion. Cunipert, a late seventh-century Lombardic king, emblazoned images of Michael upon the standards of his army when marching to battle.<sup>71</sup> Multiple accounts describe Lombardic churches dedicated to the Archangel, constructions representing the extension of a building process first begun across the Mediterranean in the eastern empire.<sup>72</sup> Ninth-century Lombardic coins depict Michael on their reverse, paralleling Justinian’s earlier use of images of angels on Byzantine coinage.<sup>73</sup> The cult of Michael the Archangel first embraced by eastern Roman emperors had become the domain of barbarian Italian kings.

Along with patronage from western political leaders, papal sponsorship of the Archangel continued during the Early Middle Ages. Gregory the Great (r. 590-604) was particularly interested in angels. He lauded Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Celestial Hierarchy*, a Greek angelological treatise, and regularly discussed angels in literary contexts.<sup>74</sup> One homily announces that “as often as something of wondrous virtue is done Michael is said to be present.”<sup>75</sup> The pope also commissioned Michaeline structures in Naples and Tropea.<sup>76</sup> Writing to the bishop of Naples Gregory ordered Masses to be celebrated at a monastery dedicated “in honor of blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and the holy archangel Michael.”<sup>77</sup> By pairing Michael alongside St.

<sup>70</sup> Neil Christie, *The Lombards* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 220.

<sup>71</sup> Paulus Diaconus, *The History of the Lombards*, 5.41.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. Paulus Diaconus, *History of the Lombards*, 5.3 and 6.51.

<sup>73</sup> Christie, *The Lombards*, 220.

<sup>74</sup> C. Luiheid et al., trans. and intro, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 27.

<sup>75</sup> Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 2.34.200. Et quotiens mirae uirtutis aliquid agitur, Michael mitti perhibetur.

<sup>76</sup> For discussion, see Jean-Marie Martin, “Le culte de saint Michel en Italie méridionale d’après les actes de la pratique (VI<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècles),” in *Culto e insediamenti micaelici nell’Italia meridionale fraterna antichità e medioevo: atti del convegno internazionale, Monte Sant’Angelo, 18–21 novembre 1992*, edited by Carlo Carletti and Giorgio Otranto. Bari: Edipuglia, (1994): 377.

<sup>77</sup> Gregorius Magnus, *Registrum epistularum*, 5.50. In honore beati petri principis apostolorum et sancti archangeli michaelis.

Peter, progenitor of the papal throne, the Bishop of Rome himself signaled the Archangel's firm cementation into the Roman Church at the dawn of the Middle Ages.

Michael's popularity in the Greek East presaged his cult's enduring growth in the Latin West. Indeed, in many ways the rise of the Archangel's western cult merely constituted an extension of its flowering on the eastern side of the Mediterranean. As this study's previous chapters showed, by the closing centuries of Late Antiquity the tense religious environment of the eastern Roman Empire had forged Michael's nascent cult into a doctrinally elucidated and imperially sanctioned religious system equipped for "export" to the western Mediterranean. Subsequently, over the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the eastern cult of the Archangel was successfully introduced into the Latin West. Therefore, the energetic setting of the late ancient Greek East proved to be the crucible of St. Michael's later efflorescence as a figure of sanctioned veneration in the cultic and liturgical practices of the Roman Church in Western Europe.

It is noteworthy that during the ninth or tenth century Monte Gargano's *Liber de Apparitione Sancti Michaelis* was translated from Latin into Greek.<sup>78</sup> The Archangel's character had first migrated from East to West, but through the *Liber's* translation into Greek this movement was reversed. Indeed, as a result of the processes recounted over the course of this study, Michael's medieval cult represented an ecumenical form of Christian religious expression familiar across polar spheres of the Mediterranean world. Of course, after antiquity forms of Michaeline veneration gradually evolved divergently on each side of the Mediterranean.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> S. Leanza, 'Una versione greca inedita dell' *Apparitione S. Michaelis in monte Gargano*,' *Vetera Christianorum* 22 (1985): 291-316.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel," 189, suggests that conceptions of Michael in the medieval West emphasized his role as a warrior, while Byzantine portrayals were more muted in this regard.

Nonetheless, throughout the Middle Ages in both East and West churchmen invoked Michael during liturgical rites performed before rulers who patronized religious structures consecrated in his name. The *Liber*'s parallel Greek and Latin editions epitomized this development: for in these medieval narratives the Archangel could herald himself to devotees whether he declared “Ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι Μιχαήλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος” or “Ego enim sum Michaelus archangelus.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> S. Leanza, 'Una versione greca inedita dell' *Apparitio S. Michaelis in monte Gargano*,' 301 and *Liber de apparition*.

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