

**ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AS 'ICON' IN THE BYZANTINE
AND POST-BYZANTINE PERIODS**

by

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To my parents



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INTRODUCTION

In the year 330 A.D., the East Roman Empire became the Byzantine Empire and in the process, three different basic cultural components, Hellenism, Roman Civilization and Christianity (including Judaism), merged into a new civilization.¹ Byzantine culture and art are essentially religious in character and the primary aim of Byzantine art was to capture that which was holy and mysterious in a concrete form such as icons, murals, and architecture.²

This dissertation will focus on the perception of Archangel Michael as an ‘icon’ in the pure Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox context of a ‘theological art picture; a religious, sacred image’, subject to the theological and artistic Byzantine prescriptions.³

Indeed, Archangel Michael was arguably the most popular and venerated figure among the Judeo-Christian angels, saints, and arch-fathers (of the Byzantine Church) and in Greek society. He was hugely popular across the entire spectrum of Greek society, but especially amongst the Byzantine youth. So much so, for example, that young students venerated him in order to pass their exams, young advocates venerated him so that they may have rich clients, and soldiers venerated him so that they may win their battles. Even the Imperial family elevated him, as leader of the heavenly army, to a status equivalent to that of Emperor. He was eventually venerated by all mortals as the guardian of Paradise and collector of souls.⁴ Because of his broad overall popularity in Greek society in general, we have to specifically examine the functions and status of Michael as ‘icon’ in a Greek Orthodox context.

One cannot however ignore the fact that contemporary society has ‘created’ a similar phenomenon called the modern day icon: “*someone greatly admired, often seen as a*

¹ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing Byzantine History*, Paris, 2001, pp. 29-31.

² Yanagi, M., Takahashi, E., Tsusuka, S., & Nagatsuka, Y., *Byzantium*, London, 1978, pp. 7-13.

³ Theunissen W. P., *Ikonen*, Den Haag (no date) – Hendrix, P., Skrobucha H & Janssens, A. M., *Ikonen*, Amsterdam/Brussels, 1960 – Zografidis, G., *Βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία της εικόνας* (2nd ed.), Athens, 1997.

⁴ Hendrickx, B., “Agathias se epigramme oor ‘ikone’,” in *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 5, 1994, pp. 66-75. – Danforth L. M., *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1982.

perfect example or an idealised role model".⁵ It would therefore be interesting to see how these modern day icons compare to Michael.

1. Research Aims and Justification

This study aims to provide a clean and scholarly sound explanation of why and how Archangel Michael became the main 'icon' in Greek society for more than ten centuries.⁶ No such study has ever been undertaken and I am convinced that a study like this will contribute greatly to the understanding of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine value system, mentality and worldview.

2. Problem Statements

a. Iconography

In a Byzantine and Post-Byzantine context, serious consideration must be given to the question 'What exactly contributed to the 'iconic status' of Michael?' To fully address this question, we need to look at the following:

- Did traditional Byzantine iconography play a part in the role model status and/or functions of Michael?
- Was this iconography influenced by Michael's status and if so, how and to what extent?

b. Syncretism

- Did syncretism play a role in Michael's 'icon' status?
- Did (and how) ancient pagan elements blend in with the Biblical and Christian traditions?
- Did the Christian 'promise of paradise' alter the negative image of Charon⁷ into a figure capable of bridging earthly life with the eternal one?

⁵ Collins, *Today's English Dictionary*, London, 1995, p. 388 – (Compare also Eco, U., *On Beauty*, London, 2004, pp. 418 – 430.)

⁶ Zografidis, *Βυζαντινή – Tsakiridis, L., Παμμέγιστοι Ταξίαρχαι Μιχαήλ και Γαβριήλ (Οι Αρχάγγελοι)*, Κατερίνη (2nd ed.), 2001.

⁷ For a definition, see Hyperidis, "Αυτοκράτορες", *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν λεξικόν Ελευθερουδάκη*, vol. VIII, Athens, 1930, pp. 376-377: Charon, also known as Charos, Charondas or Haros.

c. The different roles attributed to Michael

- How did the different ‘roles’ attributed to Michael fit in with his status and did this status enhance his popularity?

d. Contemporary Icons

- In this modern day, what elevates an ordinary person to the status of ‘icon’?
- Can the ‘icon’ of today be compared to the Byzantine icon of Michael?

3. Methodology

A combination of socio-historical, anthropological and literary approaches will be applied within a contextual (such as texts and icons) analysis, to highlight the socio-historical and artistic religious relationships between the different interpretations of the term ‘icon’ (also against a literary background). The relationship between the perceptions/concepts, both in a Byzantine and Post–Byzantine context, will be examined.

For the period under consideration, a broad spectrum of Byzantine and Post–Byzantine sources will be used: icono-hagiography (icons, murals, mosaics), literary sources (poems, inscriptions, graffiti) and laography (study of folklore; *in casu* recorded visions and dreams) as well as an eclectic and exemplary selection of important and representative pictorial, literary and laographic ‘images’ of Archangel Michael. For the Byzantine iconographic stereotypes and their theological meaning,⁸ the 18th Century text of the *Ερμηνεία της ζωγραφικής τέχνης*, by Dionysius of Fourna, is most important.⁹

4. Structure

This dissertation will consist of seven chapters in the following order:

Chapter 1

The first chapter will present the terminology and meaning of icons and angels in general with special attention on the Byzantine and Post–Byzantine society.

⁸ Romaios, K., *Κοντά στις ρίζες*, Athens, 1980 – See also Danforth, *The death rituals*.

⁹ Papadopoulo-Kérameus, A. (ed.), *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά: Ερμηνεία της ζωγραφικής τέχνης*, Thessaloniki, 2004.

Chapter 2

In this chapter a historical overview of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox society and the degree of importance of iconography and hagiography therein will be discussed. Essential historical events will be examined in terms of religious, social, cultural and political influences with special attention to influences and transformation of pagan themes on early Christian art with regard to the Byzantine iconography and hagiography.

Chapter 3

It will mainly examine the artistic and symbolic iconographic representation of Archangel Michael in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods while referring to the writings of Dionysius of Fourna.

Chapter 4

This chapter invites us to analyse the conceptualisation, characteristics and functions of Archangel Michael in the Post-Byzantine Period.

Chapter 5

Chapter five will present a critical overview and discussion of funeral laments and death rites in the Orthodox Greek Society as well as the role which Archangel Michael played in that context. We will also see how mythological figures such as Charon, Hades and Thanatos, blend in with the Biblical and Apocalyptic image of Archangel Michael.

Chapter 6

The Byzantine society consisted of a diverse group of people who shared more or less a similar culture; therefore, this study will include various elements found on Archangel Michael in Ancient Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian and Islamic civilisations. This is of utmost importance as these elements may have been absorbed in the Post-Byzantine Orthodox society as a result of syncretism, synthesis and parallelism.

Chapter 7

In the final chapter we will examine and compare the parallelisms found in the Post-Byzantine ‘icon’ with those in the modern – day society. Lastly, this will be followed by a conclusion.

* * * * *



Chapter 1

Icons and Angels

In this chapter the terms *icon* and *angel* will be defined and analysed in their historical and socio-cultural context. This is especially important in order to comprehend Michael's position in the hierarchical order of angels, who have always played a very significant role in the Orthodox iconography. Moreover, modern interpretations of these terms will be discussed.

1. The term 'icon': etymology and early references

The term 'icon' indirectly derived from the Greek verb 'εἰκέναι' which means 'to be like', and directly from the noun 'εἰκών', which means 'image, a likeness, portrait' or 'similitude, semblance, simile' also 'form, appearance; statue'.¹ It therefore indicates an image or likeness, usually of a religious subject.



In the Septuagint,² the word 'icon' was used to refer not only to man who was created in the image of God, but also to pagan idols.³ In the New Testament the term is used for man who was created in the image of God: “*Ἀνὴρ μὲν γάρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι*

¹ Hendrickx B, “The Byzantine Icon: Some aspects of its Historical and Theological Significance” *Apollonia*, 1982, pp. 77-96 – Liddell & Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1978 p. 485 – Babiniotis, G., *Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας*, Athens, 2002, p. 556.

² The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures used by the early Christians.

³ Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon” pp. 77-96.

τὴν κεφαλὴν, εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων.”⁴ It also refers to Christ being the exact representation of the invisible God⁵ and to the Roman emperor being portrayed on coins:

“Δεῖξάτω μοι δηνάριον· τίνος ἔκονα καὶ ἔπιγραφον.”⁶ Finally, in the Apocalypse of John, it refers to the horrible likeness to the beast.⁷ The first instance of an image or icon is found in the Bible (Septuagint⁸), when God made man in his own image.

1.1 The Byzantine Orthodox Icon

In the Byzantine context, an icon is the most important implement in the Orthodox Church. In a pure Byzantine Orthodox sense, an icon is a religious and devotional portrait of the sacred ‘image’ of Christ, Christian angels or the saints, painted on small wooden panels subject to theological as well as artistic Byzantine prescriptions. Icons which were believed to have come into existence miraculously and not painted by a human hand are known as *acheiropoieta* (ἄχειροποίητα, literally ‘not made by hand’). These images were seen as authoritative as to the true appearance of the subject and acted as important references for other icons.

The origin of icons can be traced back as far as the portraits of Egyptian mummies dating from the Roman period.⁹ “*Aan de andere kant zijn de ‘dodenportretten’*” - writes Theunissen – “*en juist deze hebben een treffende overeenkomst met de oudste ikonen.*”¹⁰ These Egyptian portraits not only gave a resemblance to the dead person, but also a sort of idealised image of the ‘immortal’ nature of man. This idealised image found in these encaustic portraits may be regarded as the first influences on icon art.¹¹ As Hendrix explains, those were portraits of individuals dating back to pre-Christian Egypt; painted on wood, attached to the body of the deceased. Their influence on the Byzantine painting

⁴ 1 Cor 11:7.

⁵ Heb 1:3.

⁶ Lk 20:24: “*Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?*” Compare also Mt 22:20, Mk 12:16 and Rm 8:29 – Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon” pp. 77-96.

⁷ Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon” pp. 77-96 – Rv 13:4.

⁸ Gn 1:26-27. The Septuagint’s numbering and names do not correspond to the English Bible and are not uniformly identical.

⁹ Yanagi et al, *Byzantium* p. 180.

¹⁰ Theunissen, *Ikonen*, p. 17.

¹¹ Theunissen, *Ikonen*, p. 17.

is remarkable as seen in the shape of their big expressive eyes, the long thin nose, small mouth and bright colours.¹²

Around the 4th Century A.D. the term 'icon' referred to mosaics, paintings and bas-relief displaying religious themes but was later applied to small wooden panels for devotion in church or at home. From the 15th century onwards, the term 'icon' seemed to be used only for small painted panels.¹³

In the Byzantine Church the iconostasis remained relatively low until the 16th century. In 14th century Russia,¹⁴ however, the iconostasis had already appeared in its final form being that of a solid high barrier completely blocking the congregation's view of the sanctuary and its sacred mysteries. The Russian iconostasis symbolised the basic dogma of the manifestation of Christ as foretold in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the New Testament, and re-enacted in the daily sacramental liturgy to award final salvation to the faithful.¹⁵

Today, on entering a Greek Orthodox Church, one is confronted with the *iconostasis* (image stand), called the 'Hieron', the Holy Temple. This iconostasis is not only the 'icon screen' that separates the sanctuary from the area around the altar; it also blocks the immediate view of the area around the altar.¹⁶ Only the clergy is supposed to enter the 'Hieron' and an essential characteristic of Eastern Liturgy is the symbolic passing of clergy through its doors.

Small icons also hang in Christian households where they became objects of everyday veneration (δουλεῖα) and sometimes of 'anti-canonical' adoration.¹⁷ These small private wooden icons, in some way, approached the *adoration* (λατρεῖα) of the images of the ancient gods by substituting God himself. Painted portraits of saints and of Christ were

¹² Hendrix, et al., *Ikonen*, pp. 68 – 69.

¹³ Hendrickx, "The Byzantine Icon" pp. 77-96.

¹⁴ Hendrickx, "The Byzantine Icon", p. 83. Hendrickx says that the iconostasis in its full form does not come from Byzantium, but from Russia, where it originated in the 11th century, probably under influence of the altar-fences of Asia Minor.

¹⁵ Huges, L., "Art and Liturgy in Russia: Rublev and his successors", in Angold, M., (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 283-287.

¹⁶ Hendrickx, "The Byzantine Icon" pp. 77-96.

¹⁷ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium* p. 180 – Hendrickx, "The Byzantine Icon", p. 80.

developed from symbols or simple illustrations of non - Christian ideas. This meant they created the essence of an *eidolon*, an idol.¹⁸

In some cases the icon itself would become an object of veneration (δουλεῖα) as it would be taken along by its owner on travels and by the armies during their campaigns (e.g. the famous *Hodigitria*).¹⁹ It was believed that some icons would protect them and others were *thaumaturgical*.²⁰ In the ritual and religious life of 20th century rural Greece, for example, this phenomenon still takes place at funeral ceremonies where the body of the deceased is accompanied to the burial service by an icon. Danforth notes that the placed over the chest; a large white candle is placed between the hands, and an icon is placed on the legs.²¹

In chapter six it is explained how religious syncretism occurs – i.e. when Christian beliefs are reshaped through cultural accommodation. Van Heerden states that when new forms of Christianity are accepted, they are given traditional meanings. It is therefore believed that people do not hold onto the cross as a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ, but rather as a sign of power. As a result, crosses are worn or placed on their houses as a symbol of power to protect them from evil. Apart from it being a symbol of faith, it is also regarded, like an amulet, as a power object.²² In view of this, one may find that some people regard an icon ‘as a sign of power’ as well.

1.2 The Order of the Byzantine Orthodox Icon

Whether hung in a church or a home, the icon encompassed many different themes.²³ To differentiate between these, the following order²⁴ of importance will be applied:

- i. **Icons of Christ** (*Christ Emmanuel*, the *Acheiropoitos* and the *Pantokrator*).

¹⁸ Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon”, pp. 77-96.

¹⁹ Hendrix, et al., *Ikonen*, pp. 134 – 135.

²⁰ Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon” pp. 77 – 96.

²¹ Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, pp. 38 – 39. The above mentioned ‘picture’ of the deceased was based on fieldwork conducted in the village of Potamia, July 1979, which draws on insights into rural Greek culture.

²² Van Rheeën, G., “World view and Syncretism”, Mongolia 1993, <http://missiology.org/mongolianlectures/worldviewandsyncretism.htm>, 2007/11/15.

²³ Grabar, *Byzantine Painting*, p. 187.

²⁴ Hendrickx, “The Byzantine Icon” pp. 77 – 96; – Theunissen, *Ikonen*, p. 17; – Hendrix, et al., *Ikonen*, p. 143.

- ii. **Icons of Mary** (types being the *Pantassa*, the *Hodigitria*, the *Eleousa*, the *Glykophilousa*, the *Galaktotrophousa*, the *Orante-figure*, and the *Tricheirousa*).
- iii. **Icons of angels and prophets** (prophets painted when foreseeing symbolically events of the New Testament, whilst angels are represented in their different categories being the *Seraphim*, the *Cherubim* and the *Ordinary Angel*).
- iv. **Icons of apostles and evangelists** (usually painted as a group or individually).
- v. **Icons of Saints** (usually painted as a group or individually).
- vi. **Icons referring to Biblical themes.**

1.3 'Icons' in its contemporary meaning

The word icon needs to be understood both in the modern context as well as the Byzantine context. Today the word icon is used to describe a person of fame or importance or 'someone greatly admired', and might even allude to an idealised role model.²⁵ When someone (usually a celebrity) is greatly admired for his or her skills, society can elevate him/her to a messianic role or religious icon.²⁶ In chapter seven we will deal with the question: 'In this modern day, what elevates an ordinary person to the status of 'icon' and can this status be compared to Michael's iconic status?'

1.4 'Icons' as a sign/symbol

There is also another meaning of the word icon. An icon is also used as an indicator of a task, direction, path or command as seen in modern computer technology. These tasks, commands or locations are indicated as little images of the task or command or location of what goes on in our PC. A little image of a printer, for example, indicates both the location of the printer command as well as the command itself. It is literally a reflection of something that otherwise requires lengthy explanation. It indicates a concept which is instantly grasped by the 'user'. Perhaps that is what an icon really is – an image, symbol and concept or idea which is understood by the 'user'. The user has to have 'knowledge' of the concept, symbol or sign in order to understand it.

²⁵ Collins, *Today's English*, p.388 – see also Eco, *On Beauty*, pp. 418 – 430.

²⁶ *Sunday Times* "Christ-like meaning found in Beckham", September 18, 2005, p. 5.

Therefore a Byzantine religious icon can only be understood in the context of Eastern – Christianity, e.g. Mary and Baby have an infinitely greater meaning than just what the image or icon portrays. Jung also states that a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning.²⁷

Thus, an image or depiction that represents something else of greater significance is usually associated with religious, cultural, political and economical standing.²⁸

2 Angels

2.1 Defining the term ‘angel’

The word ‘angel’ derived from the Greek word ‘ἄγγελος’ (angelos) which literally means ‘messenger’, one that announces or tells’, and later, a semi – divine being’.²⁹ In Hebrew the word ‘*mal’akh*’ also means ‘messenger’ and can be used either for spirits or men. According to The Bible, *angelos* is applied directly to John the Baptist, “*Behold I send my messenger (angelos) before your face,*”³⁰ while *mal’akh* is used in the prophecy of Malachi: “*See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.*”³¹ The most common use of the biblical word ‘ἄγγελος’ is that of a godly spirit messenger and only the context can determine whether it is a human or angelic messenger.³²

In the Biblical context, angels are spirit-beings created by God before the creation of the universe: “*You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is in them*”³³ and again “*For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.*”³⁴ They were created to serve God, Christ and

²⁷ Jung, C. (ed.) *Man and his Symbols*, Aldus Books Limited, London, 1979. p. 20 - Compare also an ‘anthropological’ definition of a sign, Seymour-Smith, C., *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p. 258: “*A sign in linguistic and SEMIOTIC theory is defined as a relation between a signifier, a signified and a given context or ground. The different kinds of relationship between signifier and signified give the different types of sign: INDEX, ICON and SYMBOL. The relationship between the signifier and signified in the case of an index is existential, in that of an icon representational and in that of a symbol conventional.*”

²⁸ Images on coins for political and economical standings will be examined in a later stage.

²⁹ Liddell & Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*, p. 7.

³⁰ Mk 1:2.

³¹ Mt 3:1 – Ankerberg, J., & Weldon, J., *The Facts On Angels*, Harvest House Publishers, Oregon, 1995, p. 9.

³² Louw, J.P., & Nida, E. A. (ed.), *Greek – English Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. I, New York, 1989, 33.195, p. 410 – Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, Barker Books, Michigan, 2001, p.462.

³³ Neh 9:6.

³⁴ Col 1:16.

the church to perform the will of God on earth.³⁵ It has been stated that Christ is the ground of creation which signifies that all created things, whether visible or invisible, owe their being to Him, which illustrates the true place of the hierarchy of angelic powers that the heretics were trying to set up in conflict to Christ.³⁶

The impression most people have of angels is that they are winged creatures. Art through the ages has portrayed angels as being cute, chubby, baby-like creatures with swirling wings. It is believed that Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite's³⁷ writings had a large influence on the depiction of angels in art.³⁸ According to Marie Chapien, the idea possibly originated with the description of the cherubim and seraphim.³⁹

Contrary to 'cute and chubby creatures', angels are described in the Bible as being higher, stronger and more intelligent than human beings.

- Man is just under the angels: "*You made him a little lower than the angels;*"⁴⁰
- "*yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful,...*"⁴¹
- "*Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.*"⁴²

Angels are innumerable⁴³ and have different ranks as well as a variety of duties according to their ranks.⁴⁴ In the New Testament, Christ used a military term to refer to them as "*legions*⁴⁵ of angels."⁴⁶

³⁵ Ankerberg, & Weldon, *The Facts On Angels*, p. 9.

³⁶ Davidson, F., Stibbs, A.M., & Kevan, E.F., *The New Bible Commentary*, London, 1963, p.1046.

³⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite is believed to be a fifth century Syrian monk who was the main source for post-New Testament Christian ideas about angels. It states that: "*his writings were taken to be those of a convert of the Apostle Paul, mentioned in Acts 17:34.*" Dionysius writings had a large influence on the depiction of angels in arts: retrieved from Kiefer, J. "Michael and All Angels" <http://satucket.com/lectionary/Michael.htm> 2007/11/16.

³⁸ Kiefer, "Michael and All Angels".

³⁹ Chapien, M., *Angels in our lives*, U.S.A., 2006, p.131.

⁴⁰ Heb. 2:7, Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p.459.

⁴¹ 2 Pt 2:11.

⁴² Dn. 10:14.

⁴³ Ps. 10:21 & Rv 5:11.

⁴⁴ Col 1:16 & Eph 1:21; 3:10.

⁴⁵ Vine, W.E., *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Riverside Book and Bible House, USA, p. 659: The word 'legion' was a Roman military classification for 4,200 to 6 000 soldiers. In the time of Christ it formed a complete army of cavalry, up to 5000 men. (Compare also Chapien, *Angels*, p. 131).

⁴⁶ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 131.

2.3 Angels and their functions

The Bible has it that angels are ministering spirits who are sent to help or serve human beings: “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*”⁴⁷ Angels act as executors of God’s wrath but also deliver Lot from danger.⁴⁸

An angel is appointed leader of the host of Israel and goes before Moses: “*my angel shall go before thee.*”⁴⁹

In the Old Testament, God’s angels carried out His requests; angels were given special commissions regarding men and ordinary affairs. In the New Testament the angels are the intermediaries between God and man. Children have guardian angels and these angels do not lose the vision of God as they have a mission to fulfil on earth.⁵⁰ Christ sets a seal upon the Old Testament by saying: “*See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.*”⁵¹

In order to perform their functions, angels may appear as normal men⁵² or in visions⁵³, as in Isaiah’s vision, or in dreams⁵⁴, as to Joseph⁵⁵ or as beings in shining garments.⁵⁶ When angels appear directly to men, the effect is normally ‘fear and shock’, and therefore the opening phrase, “*Fear not*”.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Heb 1:14 – Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 463.

⁴⁸ Gn 28-29.

⁴⁹ Gn 28-29.

⁵⁰ Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p.469. – www.greatdreams.com/Archangels.htm 2007/09/18.

⁵¹ Mt 18:10.

⁵² Gn 18: 1-8.

⁵³ Taylor, M. D., *The Complete Book of Bible Knowledge*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Illinois, 1992, p.189 – Is 6:1. Nel, M., “Opstanding, en Daniël 12:1-4”, *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, Vol.88, University of Johannesburg, 2006, p.16: Nel states that Dn 9 as well as Dn 10-12 can be classified as epiphany-visions, whilst Dn 7 & 8 are symbolic visions.

⁵⁴ Numbers 12:6: “*When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams*”. See also Dn 7-12. Laography (*in casu* recorded visions and dreams) is another example of visions and dreams. Danforth, *The Death*, p.135. Here Danforth mentions that to many Greeks in Potamia, dreams represent the experiences of the immaterial portion of man. He furthermore states that when a person sees a dream in which he interacts with another person or saint/s of the Orthodox Church, it is considered that the souls of the two beings have come into contact.

⁵⁵ Mt 1:20, “*While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife.”*”

⁵⁶ Lk 24:4: “*They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them.*”

⁵⁷ Ankerberg, *The Facts*, p.10: “*When they appear directly to men, the result is usually one of emotional shock or fear; hence, the common biblical refrain of the angels, Fear not.*” – Lk 1:12-13: “*When Zechariah saw him, he was alarmed and felt afraid. But the angel said to him, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah!...’*”

2.3 Types of Angels

According to the Bible, there are basically two categories:⁵⁸

1. The holy angels:

- Seraphim
- Cherubim
- Thrones
- Archangel
- Ordinary Angels (The Heavenly Host)⁵⁹ and

2. The fallen angels:

- Lucifer
- Dominions, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, evil spirits or demons as described in the Bible.⁶⁰

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,⁶¹ places the angels into nine orders which are subdivided in three categories (three triads of three each): The first category consists of the highest order, the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones. The second: Dominions, Authorities and Forces and the third category, which is the lowest order, consists of Leaders, Archangels and Angels.⁶² Dionysius the Areopagite states that angels refer to all nine choirs and each order helps to reveal and declare God's glory to the order below.⁶³ On the Christian mystical writings of Dionysius, Kenneth Latourette states that *“God, Who is..., exercises His power through nine orders of celestial beings and does so on earth through the hierarchy of the Church, which corresponds to the celestial hierarchy and which begins with bishops as the highest rank, has priests in the second rank, and deacons in the third and lowest rank.”*⁶⁴

⁵⁸ 1 Tm 5:21. Further on this dissertation, the Byzantine example will be followed which will refer to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

⁵⁹ Col 1:16.

⁶⁰ Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts*, p. 9 – Also compare Chapien, *Angels*, pp. 131 – 136.

⁶¹ On Dionysius the Areopagite, see Latourette, K.S., *A History of Christianity*: volume 1: *Beginnings to 1500*, New York, 1975, p. 314: the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, who is mentioned in *The Acts of the Apostles* as a convert of Paul at Athens, carried great weight in Christian mysticism. *“It is significant that for centuries the most widely used writings on mysticism in Christian circles were those ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite and that they were written in the East and were profoundly shaped by Neoplatonism.”* Compare also Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 459.

⁶² Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁶³ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁶⁴ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 210.

Pope Gregory I, referring to his *Homilies on the Gospel*, records the same nine orders but in different hierarchy. Then, it is said that:

“Dante in the *Convivio* gives still a third ranking, but affirms the ranking of Dionysius in the *Comedy*, canto 28. Aquinas discusses the matter in the *Summa T.*, part I, Q 108.”⁶⁵

Today many scholars, such as Dee Finney, place the angels in nine orders believed to be based on Scripture: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels, and Angels.⁶⁶ Modern theologians, such as Graham, also refer to ‘medieval theologians who divided angels into nine grades’. However, he organises the angels in the following order: Archangels, Angels, Seraphim, Cherubim, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, Thrones, Might and Dominion.⁶⁷

The following table illustrates the different interpretations of the nine hierarchical orders of the angels.⁶⁸

<u>Dionysius the Areopagite</u>	<u>Pope Gregory I</u>	<u>Convivio</u>
<i>Category 1</i>	<i>Category 1</i>	<i>Category 1</i>
1. Seraphim	1. Seraphim	1. Seraphim
2. Cherubim	2. Cherubim	2. Cherubim
3. Thrones	3. Thrones	3. Powers
<i>Category 2</i>	<i>Category 2</i>	<i>Category 2</i>
1. Dominions	1. Dominions	1. Principalities
2. Virtues	2. Principalities	2. Virtues
3. Powers	3. Powers	3. Dominions
<i>Category 3</i>	<i>Category 3</i>	<i>Category 3</i>
1. Principalities	1. Virtues	1. Thrones
2. Archangels	2. Archangels	2. Archangels
3. Angels	3. Angels	3. Angels

⁶⁵ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁶⁶ Finney, D., “Archangels”.

⁶⁷ Graham, B., *Angels: God’s Secret Agents*, London, 1976, p. 54.

⁶⁸ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

2.4 Seraph/ Seraphim

Dionysius the Areopagite places the Seraph in the highest class of angels. ‘Seraph’, mentioned only in Isaiah 6, derives from the root word ‘burn’, thus ‘burning’. The word is used in Numbers 21:6, 8; Deuteronomy 8:15, Isaiah 14:29 & 30:6; where it is translated as ‘fiery serpent’.⁶⁹ The Seraphim (plural of Seraph) have six wings; two for flying, two to cover their face and two to cover their feet.⁷⁰ They are the guardians who stand before God’s throne praising and adoring God night and day. They are consumed with personal devotion to God.⁷¹ When Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision, he saw Seraphim worshipping Him and described them as human in form with six wings.⁷² This also confirms Dionysius of Fournas’s⁷³ description of the Seraph having six wings, who furthermore states that the two last wings not only support their flight but also hold sprayers with the following words:

“ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος,” (Holy, Holy, and Holy).⁷⁴

He says that the Seraphim devote themselves to contemplating God, living and praising Him.⁷⁵ He then describes the six winged creatures as having one head with four faces (that of an angel, an eagle, a lion and a calf) with a crown on the head and a Gospel in their hands placed against their chest. Their feet also hold Gospels whilst they look upwards.⁷⁶

2.5 Cherub/ Cherubim

It’s uncertain what the Hebrew word ‘Cherub’ means. The letters of the Hebrew root word mean ‘holding something in safekeeping’ and the plural, Cherubim, means ‘to be near’.⁷⁷ In the book of Ezekiel⁷⁸ the Cherub is linked to the glory and worship of God. Ezekiel records two visions in which the Lord appears to him, enthroned above four

⁶⁹ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁷⁰ Is 6:2.

⁷¹ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 131 – Is 6:3.

⁷² Is 6. (Compare also Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 136).

⁷³ Regarding Dionysius of Fournas’s contribution to the development of the Byzantine Hagiography, see chapter three.

⁷⁴ Papadopoulou-Kérameus (ed.), *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 45.

⁷⁵ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁷⁶ Papadopoulou-Kérameus (ed.), *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 45.

⁷⁷ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 138.

⁷⁸ Ezk 1 & 10 - Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, pp.20-21, – Chapien, *Angels*, pp. 138-139.

living creatures. He describes these living creatures as Cherubim with four faces (that of a human, a lion, a calf and an eagle) having four wings whilst Dionysius of Fourna describes the Cherub as having one head and two wings.⁷⁹ Furthermore, it is most probable that the ‘living creatures’ referred to in the book of Revelations were Cherubim.⁸⁰ Here, John describes the four separate winged creatures:

- firstly as a lion
- secondly as an ox
- thirdly a human and
- lastly an eagle.⁸¹

There were two carved, gold-plated cherubim placed on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant and in Solomon’s Temple and two larger gold-plated cherubim spread their wings above the Ark.⁸² Also, ancient middle Eastern art often depicts, at the sides of the throne of a king, a figure with the body of a lion or a bull, the face of a man, and the wings of an eagle. Not only flanking a throne, but also placed at the gates or doorways of a city or a temple. Then, in Greek folklore, a griffin is portrayed as having a head, chest, claws and the wings of an eagle, joined to the posterior of a lion.⁸³

The Cherubim must have been angels who were close in the presence of God. Although the Bible does not specify if all angels have wings, the Cherub is presented as a winged being. The Cherubim are never referred to as angels because they are not specifically messengers.⁸⁴ In the Old Testament God enthrones and even rides a Cherub.⁸⁵ It is the Cherubim (also first mentioned in the Bible) that guard the Garden of Eden with flaming swords,⁸⁶ and are stationed around God’s throne to guard the throne and His glory.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus (ed.), *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Rv 4:6, 9, 5:8 & 14.

⁸¹ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”. In both cases the creatures are symbolically associated with the attributes of God, being power, love, justice and wisdom, as well as the four Gospels. Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus and thus correspond this Gospel with Man. Then, Mark begins with John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness, and is associated with the wild animal, the Lion. Luke starts with Zacharias in the Temple and is paired with the Ox, a sacrificial animal. Lastly, John starts with the Logos (Eternal Word), which is connected with the Eagle, rising towards the heaven.

⁸² Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 136.

⁸³ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁸⁴ Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ 2 Ki 19:15; 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 18:11.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 136. In Gn 3:24 it is noted that the word ‘sword’ is used and not ‘swords’ as referred to by Taylor. Compare also observations on the Angel of the Lord.

From these texts it is derived that Lucifer was part of the class of Cherubim before his fall.⁸⁸

2.6 Thrones/ Thronoli

Thronoli or thrones refer to those who sit upon them. These may be either good or evil angels.⁸⁹ These are also described as the ruling angels in Ephesians,⁹⁰ Colossians⁹¹ and Peter⁹² and form part of Dominions, Principalities and Powers. Dionysius the Areopagite, however, gives the hierarchy as Dominions, Virtues and Powers. Then, Dionysius of Fourna describes the thrones as wheels in flames, surrounded by wings. In the midst of these wheels there are eyes which are entwined to form a royal throne.⁹³

2.7 Principalities, Authorities, Rulers and Powers

In the Biblical context, it appears that one third of the angels were fallen angels.⁹⁴ Principalities, powers and dominions are considered to be the names of different kinds of angelic beings while demons are considered to be fallen or rebellious angels.⁹⁵ According to a definition by Collier,⁹⁶ it is stated that the word ‘demon’ derived from the Greek word *δαίμων* and is believed to be a human soul. Alexiou comments that the angel who was appointed at baptism to guard the soul “*is exactly parallel to Plato’s daimon*”⁹⁷ to whom each man is assigned during his lifetime. Then, Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan comment that the terms *thrones, dominions, etc.*, were being used in current angelology and that Paul used these terms to show that “*all possible existences are included*”,⁹⁸ and are subordinate to Christ.⁹⁹

⁸⁷ Ezk 28:14 & 16.

⁸⁸ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 135. Compare also observations on Lucifer.

⁸⁹ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 131 – Col 1:16.

⁹⁰ Eph 1:21 & 3:10.

⁹¹ Col 1:16 & 2:10.

⁹² 1 Pt 3:22.

⁹³ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p.45.

⁹⁴ Rv 12:4, Eph 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Col 1:16, 2:10, 2:15, Rom 8:38. Compare also Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts*, p. 11 as well as King, M., “Chief Rainbow Warrior: Archangel Michael”, 2007 <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=5580> 2007/11/16

⁹⁵ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

⁹⁶ Halsey, W.D. (ed), *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Macmillan Educational Company, New York, Vol. 8, 1989, p. 96.

⁹⁷ Alexiou, Margaret., *The Ritual Lament In Greek Tradition*, Great Britain, Cambridge University Press 1974, p. 26.

⁹⁸ Davidson, et al., *The New Bible*, p. 1046.

⁹⁹ Davidson, et al., *The New Bible*, p. 1046.

Paul lists four kinds of angels among those who rebelled with Satan:¹⁰⁰

- i. **Principalities:** *The Chief rulers, the highest rank in the demonic kingdom.*
- ii. **Authorities:** *The Fallen angels who are under Satan's command.*
- iii. **Rulers of darkness:** *The Spirit-world rulers who assist the operations of Satan, and*
- iv. **Spiritual wicked spirits:** *Those who operate from the heavenlies.*

2.8 Archangels

The prefix 'Arch' means chief-, head-, leader- or upper- (angel) – a chief among angels.¹⁰¹ An Archangel thus is a heavenly being of higher rank than angels. Today, many scholars¹⁰² believe that this implies that there is only one such angel. Therefore, they regard Michael as the principal angel based on the fact that the Bible only refers to 'The Archangel' and not the Archangels.¹⁰³ Then again in, Jewish and Christian literature, four Archangels are given as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel.¹⁰⁴ An alternative tradition¹⁰⁵ gives seven Archangels. Also, in the book of Tobit¹⁰⁶ and Enoch¹⁰⁷ it is believed that there are seven Archangels. The seven lamps of Revelations are symbolically viewed by many scholars as the seven Archangels.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Col 1:16-18, 2:10, Eph 1:21, 6:12 – Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132.

¹⁰¹ Graham, *Angels*, pp. 55-56 – Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132 – Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 196.

¹⁰² Graham, *Angels*, pp. 55-56 – Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132 – Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 462.

¹⁰³ Dn 10:13, 21, 12:1 - Th 4:16 - Jude 9 - Rv 12:7. Compare also Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 462 : "The term archangel appears in two passages, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9. In the latter, Michael is named as an archangel."

¹⁰⁴ Tobit 12:15 & 1 Enoch 20. In Rv. 7:1-2 reference is made to four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, but there is no mention of them being Archangels. In Finney, D., "Archangels" states that in angelology, Raphael is known as the watcher of the North, Gabriel the watcher of the South, Uriel the watcher of the West, and Michael, the watcher of the East. (Compare also Virtue, D., *Archangels and Ascended Masters*, USA, 2006, pp. 38 & 45. According to Doreen Virtue, Raphael's name means "God heals" or "God has healed" and Uriel's name means "God is light," "God's light" or "fire of God".)

¹⁰⁵ Tobit 12:15, 1 Enoch 20 – Kiefer, "Michael and All Angels". Compare also Finney, "Archangels". Finney comments that the names of the seven Archangels are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and the fallen Lucifer. She also states that there has been some debate on who the seven Archangels were and that most agreed to the four angels being Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. The remaining three Archangels are chosen from Metatron, Remiel, Sariel, Anael, Raguel and Raziel. Also compare the following from www.newadvent.org/cathen/12640b.htm: "Of these seven 'Archangels' which appear in the angelology of post-Exilic Judaism, only three, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael, are mentioned in the canonical Scriptures. The others, according to the Book of Enoch (cf. xxi) are Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and Jerahmeel, while from other apocryphal sources we get the variant names Izidkiel, Hanael, and Kepharel instead of the last three in the other list."

¹⁰⁶ Tobit 12:15.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Enoch 20.

¹⁰⁸ Rv 4:5 & Kiefer, "Michael and All Angels".

In the Bible, only three angels are ever named: Lucifer, Gabriel and Michael.¹⁰⁹ Hendrix confirms in his book that there are indeed three angels mentioned in the Bible, but he refers to Gabriel, Michael and Raphael.¹¹⁰ In Hebrew, Gabriel is a compound of the words ‘strong / great / mighty’ and ‘God’ and could be interpreted to mean “*Man of God*”, “*God is strong / great / mighty*”.¹¹¹ Although the Bible does not refer to him as an Archangel, many define him as one.¹¹² Gabriel is known to be the messenger of God.¹¹³ He announces both the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus.¹¹⁴ Raphael, which means ‘God heals’, is mentioned in the Apocryphal books.¹¹⁵ Raphael is disguised as a man who accompanies Tobias on a quest and gives him a remedy to heal his blind father. Raphael is mentioned in the ‘Book of Tobit’¹¹⁶ whilst Uriel, which means ‘God is my light’,¹¹⁷ is mentioned in the Book of Enoch.¹¹⁸

In Islam, four famous angels are found in the Qur’an and Michael is believed to be one of four Archangels; the other three being Izrail, Israfil and Jibrail. Still, other Muslims believe that there are ten Archangels known to be Mikhail, Izrail, Israfil, Jibrail, Munkar, Nakir, Raqib, ‘Atid, Malik and Ridhwan. It is generally accepted that there are countless angels, therefore the named angels are seen as heads of different departments; e.g. Michael is the chief angel of blessing.¹¹⁹ Hendrix, Skrobucha and Janssens say that the Russian old believers, the *Raskolniki*, knew eight angels by name.¹²⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts*, p.10. Also compare Taylor, *The Complete Book*, pp. 204 & 216.

¹¹⁰ Hendrix, P., Skrobucha, H., & Janssens, A.M, *Ikonen*, Amsterdam/Brussels, 1960, p. 143: “*In de bijbel worden slechts drie engelen met name genoemd: Gabriël d.i. “God is kracht”, Michaël, “Wie is als God” en Rafaël, ‘God schenkt genezing’.*”

¹¹¹ Graham, *Angels*, p. 56 – Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132.

¹¹² Taylor, *The Complete Book*, pp.196 & 216. Taylor refers to Michael and Gabriel as Archangels and the only angels mentioned by name in the Bible. – Chapien M., *Angels*, p. 132. Marie Chapien states that “*Gabriel actually isn’t called an Archangel in the Bible, contrary to John Milton and popular opinion. There is only one Archangel and he’s Michael.*” – Graham, *Angels*, p.56 (Compare also Graham’s comment: “*However, contrary to popular opinion and to the poet John Milton, it never calls him an Archangel. Yet it refers to his work more often than to Michael’s.*”)

¹¹³ Dn 8:16, 9:21, Lk 1:19, 1:26–38. See also Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

¹¹⁴ Lk 1:19 & Lk 1:26– 38.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, *The Complete Book*, pp. 69, 70 & 87. The word ‘*Apocrypha*’ comes from the Greek word meaning ‘hidden’ which means something not true. The Apocryphal books are seven books in the Old Testament that are included in the Catholic Bibles. These books were considered to be of lesser importance than the books which were accepted into the canon. The book of Tobit is one of these seven books.

¹¹⁶ Book of Tobit: Tobias 5, 4’.

¹¹⁷ Kiefer, “Michael and All Angels”.

¹¹⁸ Enoch 1. (Compare Finney, “Archangels” on ‘Uriel’).

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael 2007/09/19. Compare also Najaar, A., *I am a Muslim* (no date & place of publication) p. 158.

¹²⁰ Hendrix, et al., *Ikonen*, 1960, p. 143.

2.9 Archangel Michael

The name Michael means ‘who is like God?’¹²¹ As previously mentioned, many believe that the angel Michael is the only Archangel.¹²² His name is recorded four times in the Scriptures:

1) Daniel 10:13; 2) Daniel 12:1; 3) Jude 9 and 4) Revelations 12:7. In Talmudic tradition, the name Michael means “*Who is like God (El) and literally stands for El’s likeness.*”¹²³

Orthodox Christians refer to him as the *Taxiarch* or *Archistrategos* (Supreme Commander) Archangel Michael whilst Catholics refer to Michael as Saint Michael.¹²⁴ It is also believed that Michael was said to have been the war-cry of the angels in the battle fought in heaven against Satan and his followers.¹²⁵

In the Hebrew Apocrypha Archangel Michael is described as the prince of light, leading forces of good against evil, led by Belial – in the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness : “*He is described as the ‘viceroy of heaven’, a title that is said to have formally belonged to Satan.*”¹²⁶

In The New Testament¹²⁷ Michael is portrayed as the commanding officer of legions of angels who cast Satan and his followers out of heaven, also known as the champion of the Christians, whilst in The Old Testament,¹²⁸ he is called “*the prince of Israel*”¹²⁹ and is regarded as the champion of the Jewish people.¹³⁰ In the book of Jude¹³¹ Michael wins

¹²¹ Graham, *Angels* – Chapien, *Angels* – Holweck, F.G., “St. Michael the Archangel” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm> 2007/11/16.

¹²² Dn 10:13, 21 & 12:1 – 1 Th 4:16 – Jude 9 – Rv 12:7 – Graham, *Angels*, p. 55 – Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132.

¹²³ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)) 2007/11/16.

¹²⁴ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, compare also “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael 2007/09/19 – Holweck, “St. Michael”, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm> 2007/11/16.

¹²⁵ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”.

¹²⁶ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”.

¹²⁷ Rv. 12: 7 – 9.

¹²⁸ Dn 10: 21 & 12:1.

¹²⁹ Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132 – (Compare Graham, *Angels*, p. 55. Thus, God speaks of Michael as prince of His chosen people, “*the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.*” (Dn 12:1).

¹³⁰ Finney, D., “Archangels”, <http://www.greatdreams.com/Archangels.htm> 2007/09/18.

¹³¹ Jude 9.

the battle with Satan over the body of Moses.¹³² In Revelations¹³³ Michael is portrayed as the leader of the heavenly army of the angels of the Lord fighting against Satan.¹³⁴

Michael's rank is in a military sense that of a general. There is a difference regarding Michael's hierarchical rank. Dionysius the Areopagite and other Greek fathers place Michael over all the angels (he is the prince of the other angels) whilst others believe that he is the prince of the Seraphim. St. Thomas place Michael as the prince of the last and lowest choir, the angels.¹³⁵ The following passage in the Coptic Gnostic Gospel of Judas (recently published), seems to indicate that Michael is of a lesser rank than Gabriel. Michael stands in service of a lesser God whilst Gabriel stands in service of God Himself. Judas asks Jesus whether the human spirit dies and Jesus answers as follows:

*“This is why God ordered Michael to give the spirits of people to them as a loan, so that they might offer service, but the Great One ordered Gabriel to grant spirits to the great generation with no ruler of it - that is, the spirit and the soul.”*¹³⁶

The commentary on this passage by the editors is that *“God, apparently the God of this world, gives the spirit of life (the breath of life?) to people, through Michael as a loan, but the Great Spirit gives spirit and soul to people, through Gabriel, as a gift”*.¹³⁷

Furthermore, in the Islamic faith, Michael appears as second to Gabriel. During the creation of Adam, God first sent Gabriel and then Michael to fetch clay to form man. When Adam and Eve were banned from paradise, it is said that Gabriel was sent to Adam whilst Michael to Eve to pass on comfort.¹³⁸ It is also said that Muhammad, on his deathbed, stated that Gabriel would be first and Michael second to pray for him.¹³⁹

¹³² Chapien, *Angels*, p. 132.

¹³³ Rv 12:7.

¹³⁴ Rv 12:7.

¹³⁵ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel”, – compare also Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)) 2007/09/18.

¹³⁶ Kasser, R.O. (ed.), Meyer, M., & Wurst, G., *The Gospel of Judas* with additional commentary by Ehrman, B. D., Washington, 2006, p. 40.

¹³⁷ Kasser, et al., p. 40, note 124.

¹³⁸ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael 2007/09/19.

¹³⁹ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/09/18.

2.10 The Angel of the Lord (Angelos Kyriou) and the identification with Christ and/or Michael

On many occasions an unnamed heavenly messenger displays the character of Archangel Michael. According to Danforth, ‘The Angel of the Lord’ (Angelos Kyriou)¹⁴⁰ is identified with Archangel Michael.¹⁴¹ It is stated that some Fathers often question the identity of Archangel Michael where his name is not mentioned in Scripture. An example of this is found in Genesis where we read about the Cherubim who were placed at the Garden of Eden and also of a flaming sword that guards the gate of paradise. Reference is made to Michael, who is believed to be the cherub who stood at the gate of paradise.¹⁴²

No reference, however, is made to a cherub but to the cherubim in Genesis, yet reference is made to a flaming sword which places the text in the framework of the Byzantine iconography – the flaming sword refers to the Archangel Michael. The controversy about the above passage is the result of wrong translation. In the Septuagint, Genesis 3:24 is presented as follows:

“Καὶ ἔβαλε τὸν δῆμον καὶ κατέκισεν αὐτὸν πᾶντι τῷ παραδείσῳ τῆς τρυφῆς· καὶ ἔταξε τὸν χειρουβὶμ· καὶ τὸν φλογὸν τὴν ὀμφοῦν τὴν στρεφουμένην, φυλάσσειν τὸν δῆμον τὸν ἐξουίου τῆς ζωῆς”.¹⁴³

The correct translation of this passage should read as follows:¹⁴⁴

“*And he cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the garden of Delight, and stationed the cherubs and the fiery sword that turns about to keep the way of the tree of life.*”¹⁴⁵

Then there is another version which causes confusion as it may indicate that God Himself is holding the fiery sword:

¹⁴⁰ Van der Watt, J. (ed.) Bosman, H., du Rand, J., Janse van Rensburg, F., Nel, M., Smit, D & Venter, P. *Die Bybel A-Z*, 2003, China, p.1074 “Kyrios wat letterlik “heer, meester, eienaar” beteken en word in die Nuwe-Testamentiese teologie gebruik as ‘n titel vir Jesus, veral vanweë sy opstanding en verheerliking”.

¹⁴¹ Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁴² Gn 3:24. Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel”.

¹⁴³ Gn. 3:25

¹⁴⁴ Translation as given by Brenton, L. L., *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation*, London, 1976.

¹⁴⁵ Gn 3:24 (25).

“So het Hy dan die mens weggedrywe en gérubs aan die oostekant van die tuin van Eden laat woon, met die swaard wat vlam en flikker, om die toegang tot die boom van die lewe te bewaak.”¹⁴⁶

The unnamed angel through whom God published the Ten Commandments, the unnamed angel who stood in the way of Balaam¹⁴⁷ and the unnamed angel who destroyed the army of Sennacherib¹⁴⁸ are all associated with Archangel Michael or Christ.¹⁴⁹ In the Book of Joshua, reference is made to ‘the captain of the host of the Lord’ which has the character of Michael the Archangel. This unnamed heavenly herald is said to be supernatural and holy and sent by God:¹⁵⁰

“Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword. Joshua went up to him and asked, ‘Are you for us or for our enemies?’ ‘Neither,’ he replied, ‘but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.’ Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, ‘What message does my LORD have for his servant?’”¹⁵¹

There is again some controversy about the above passage. Modern scholars believe that it was not Michael but Christ who appeared before Joshua.¹⁵² Another interpretation, based on Revelations, is that of the pre-Incarnate Christ,¹⁵³ where it is said that angels do not accept the worship of humans.¹⁵⁴ The willingness of this ‘man’ to accept Joshua’s ‘worship’ suggests that he was a divine being.¹⁵⁵ However, it is worthwhile commenting that Joshua fell, face down to the ground, maybe out of fear or respect and did not necessarily have any intention to worship the man, but to merely manifest his worship to

¹⁴⁶ Gn. 3:25.

¹⁴⁷ Nm 22:22.

¹⁴⁸ 2 Ki 19:35.

¹⁴⁹ Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, pp. 467-468.

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)).

¹⁵¹ Jos 5:13 – 15.

¹⁵² Davidson, et al., *The New Bible*, p. 228. Compare also Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, pp. 467-468.

¹⁵³ Anonymous, “Michael”, <http://www.answers.com/topic/michael>.

¹⁵⁴ Rv 22:9.

¹⁵⁵ Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, pp. 463-464 – Anonymous, “Angels today: all about angels”, <http://angelstoday.net/index.php?lang=en&way=2Archangels/1michael> 2007/11/13 – compare also “Michael”, <http://www.answers.com/topic/michael>.

God. Moreover, Michael is usually depicted as winged and with a sword in his hand.¹⁵⁶ The man who stood in front of Joshua was holding a drawn sword. According to a definition, ‘The Angel of the Lord’ is someone who communicates a message of the Lord, and whose appearance might resemble the Lord Himself. The appearance of the Lord can only be mentioned ‘as no man will see God and live’.¹⁵⁷ The following verse explains it: “...*I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face! But the Lord said to him, Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.*”¹⁵⁸

According to Erickson, the problem with the interpretation of ‘The Angel of the Lord,’ is a problem of identity:

“The problem comes in fact that while there are numerous passages where the angel of the Lord is identified with God, there are many other passages where the two are distinguished. Examples of passages in which the two are equated are Genesis 31:11 and 13, where the angel of the Lord says, ‘I am the God of Bethel,’ and Exodus 3:2 and 6, where the angel of the Lord tells Moses, ‘I am the God of your father.’ Examples of passages in which the two are distinguished are Genesis 16:11, where the angel of the Lord says to Hagar, ‘The Lord has heard of your misery,’ and Exodus 23:20, where the Lord tells the people of Israel, ‘See, I am sending an angel ahead of you.’”

Erickson states that there are three main interpretations of “the angel of the Lord”:

- i. He is an angel with a special commission
- ii. He is God Himself, temporarily in a humanlike form
- iii. He is the Logos, a temporary pre-incarnate visit by the second person of the Trinity.

These interpretations are not fully satisfactory, he concludes, as “...*in light of the clear statements of identity either the second or the third seems more adequate than the first.*”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Grabar, *Byzantine Painting*, p. 186. On the representation of Michael compare also Hendrix, et al., *Ikonen*, pp. 91, 143 - 145.

¹⁵⁷ Van der Watt, (ed.) et al., *Die Bybel A-Z*, p. 204.

¹⁵⁸ Jdg 6:22.

¹⁵⁹ Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 468.

Furthermore, it is written that: “*The LORD Almighty answers, ‘I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the LORD you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger you long to see will come and proclaim my covenant’.*”¹⁶⁰

To support this statement, Ankerberg & Weldon assert that: ‘The Angel of the Lord’ (Malach – YHWH) does not refer to a created angel, but to Jesus Christ. Christ’s appearance goes beyond the New Testament. In the Old Testament the angel is identified as Christ through the attributes of deity He holds. In fact, the Jews themselves held this angel to be the divine Messiah.¹⁶¹ In the Urantia Book, Michael is identified with Christ.¹⁶²

In other Christian doctrines¹⁶³ it is also held that Archangel Michael is believed to be Christ.¹⁶⁴ This belief is based on biblical references to Archangel Michael as ‘the Archangel,’ which, as explained earlier, means ‘chief angel.’¹⁶⁵ The suggestion that there is only one ‘chief angel’ is likened to Christ being the chief angel. This statement is also based on the following verse:

*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”*¹⁶⁶

Archangel Michael is stands for the leader of an army of Angels in Heaven who will defeat Satan in a great battle.¹⁶⁷ Christ is also said to lead such an army.¹⁶⁸ The Bible¹⁶⁹ doesn’t refer to two armies in Heaven who are led by two separate leaders.

¹⁶⁰ MI 3:1.

¹⁶¹ Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts On Angels* 1995, p. 11.

¹⁶² Anonymous, “Michael”, <http://www.answers.com/topic/michael>, 2007/09/19.

¹⁶³ Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Michael is believed to be Christ: Anonymous, “Michael”.

¹⁶⁴ Anonymous, “Michael”.

¹⁶⁵ Graham, *Angels*, pp. 55-56 – Chapian, M, *Angels*, p132 – Dn 10:13, 21, 12:1 – 1 Th 4:16 – Jude 9 – Rv 12:7.

¹⁶⁶ 1 Th 4:16.

¹⁶⁷ Rv 12:7.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Th 4:16; Rv 12:7 – Compare also Rv 17:14 : “*They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.*” Then, in Rv 19:11-21: “*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and Truth. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them*

2.11 Ordinary Angels / the Heavenly Host

There is a multitude of angels who were the messengers of God; who helped individuals and God's chosen people of Israel on certain occasions. The Heavenly Host are known to be powerful legions of Angels who occupy the heavens. An example of a powerful angel is found in the Bible where a single angel put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian enemy soldiers. Some scholars believe that the angel who destroyed the army of Sennacherib is believed to be the Angel of the Lord who is either associated with Archangel Michael or Christ Himself.¹⁷⁰

2.12 Fallen Angels: Lucifer

The name Lucifer means 'light bearer' and may refer to Satan's attributes before his fall. According to Taylor the name Lucifer is used only once in the King James Version¹⁷¹, and is not used in the New International Version at all. Lucifer is also known as Satan,¹⁷² Belial, Beelzebub, the devil,¹⁷³ the evil one,¹⁷⁴ the old serpent,¹⁷⁵ the great dragon, the destroyer, the accuser,¹⁷⁶ the deceiver¹⁷⁷ and the tempter.¹⁷⁸ Lucifer was a high ranking angel, a cherub with access to the holy mountain of God.¹⁷⁹ According to some modern theologians, Lucifer was an Archangel, perhaps superior to Michael,¹⁸⁰ who rebelled against God and was cast out of the heavens.¹⁸¹

By means of a diachronic approach, our analysis has followed the evolutionary changes of the concepts regarding icons, angels their position and role in the religious formation of the Orthodox Christian faith. In doing so, the position and function of the angel

with an iron sceptre. He treads the winepress of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

¹⁶⁹ 1 Th 4:16; Rv 12:7; Rv 17:14.

¹⁷⁰ 2 Ki 19:35. Also compare Erickson, M. J., *Christian Theology*, p. 466-468 as well as Chapian, *Angels*, p. 133. See also observations on the 'Angel of the Lord'.

¹⁷¹ Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 329 – Is 14:12 – Compare Graham, *Angels*, p. 63: "This Satan, or the devil, was once called Lucifer, the son of the morning."

¹⁷² Job 1:1-6.

¹⁷³ Mt 4:1; Rv 12:9.

¹⁷⁴ Mt 6:13; 1 Jn 2:13-14; Jn 17:15.

¹⁷⁵ Rv 20:2.

¹⁷⁶ Zch 3:1; Rv 12:10.

¹⁷⁷ Book of Revelation.

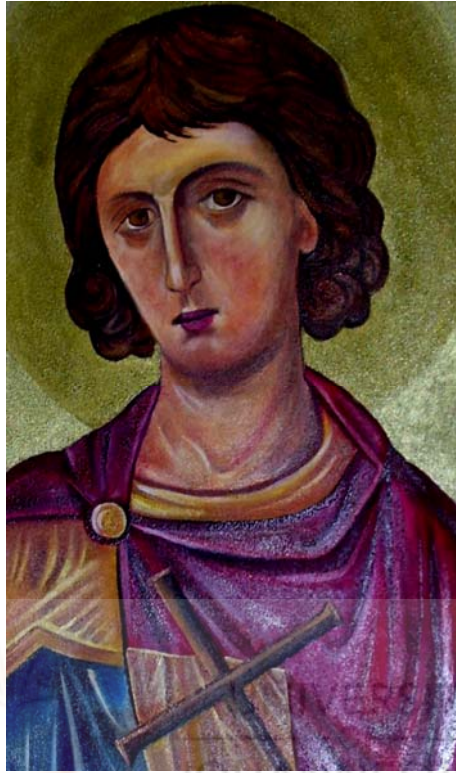
¹⁷⁸ Mt 4:1, 3; 1 Th 3:5.

¹⁷⁹ Ezk. 28: 12 – 19 – Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts On Angels*, p. 11 – Chapian, *Angels*, p. 135.

¹⁸⁰ Graham, *Angels*, p. 55.

¹⁸¹ Graham, *Angels*, p. 63: "Along with Michael he may have been one of the two Archangels, but he was cast from heaven with his rebel forces, and continues to fight." Compare Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 196.

Michael as a leader of the order of angels, i.e. Archangel, has been clearly identified and precisely defined.



Chapter 2

The Byzantine and Post–Byzantine Orthodox Society and the importance of hagiography and iconography in its context

Since the iconic status of Archangel Michael in the Byzantine Orthodox Society is unique, it is necessary to look at the characteristic aspects of this society and to put its hagiography and iconography in context. A chronological overview of essential historical events will be examined by means of religious, social, cultural and political influences. The importance of hagiography and iconography in its context as well as the influences and transformation of pagan themes on early Christian art, will also be discussed. A more intense study of the Byzantine traditional iconography will be examined in chapter three, with reference to the works of Dionysius of Fourna.

1. Byzantium and the Byzantine Empire

The name Byzantium derived from *Byzantion*, which was the name of the former Athenian trading colony founded in 657 by a Greek named Byzas.¹ In 330 A.D, the Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantion whereupon he changed the name to Constantinople. Byzantium, Constantinople and later Istanbul, were the names given to the great city on the Bosphorus.² People who lived in the city referred to themselves as Romans as they considered themselves citizens of the (East) Roman Empire, in which the official language was still Latin until after Justinian's reign (6th Century). Only under emperor Herakleios (7th Century) did Greek become the sole official language. The Byzantine civilization was largely determined by three factors – Hellenism, *Romanitas* and Christianity.³ The term *Byzantine* as referring to this civilization and culture was only introduced by 16th century historians and used since that time.⁴

¹ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium*, pp. 7-13.

² Grabar, A., *Byzantine Painting*, Macmillan London, 1979, p. 11.

³ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing Byzantine History*, Paris, 2001, p.29: “by the foundation of ‘New Rome’ or Constantinople, Byzantium was born out of the merging of imperial Rome with Christian Hellenism – the foundation of medieval Hellenism had been laid.”

⁴ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium*, pp. 7-13.

Although by the end of the 6th century, Latin had disappeared and the population became mainly Greek-speaking, Byzantium did not consist of ‘ethnic Greeks’ but rather of an agglomeration of diverse groups and peoples who shared a common language and a similar culture.⁵ But the Byzantine Empire is also characterised by its multi-dimensional facets, mainly its multi-ethnicity, multi-linguality and multi-dogmatism. Thus, Byzantium can rightly be called “*a mosaic of nationalities.*”⁶

Historically, Byzantine history is divided in three main periods. The *early Byzantine period* itself (ca 284 or 330 – ca 717) is characterised by a formative period (up to ca 518), the age of ‘ecumenicity’, comprising Justinian I and his successors (518-610) and the century of survival from external threats, and Hellenisation (610-717).⁷

The *middle Byzantine period* (ca 717-1025) is, on the one hand, marked by the *iconomachia* (mainly 717-843), and on the other hand, the zenith of Byzantine power, especially under the Macedonian dynasty (610-717).

For the subject of this dissertation, it is important to notice the great iconoclastic movement, which triggered the *iconomachia*, the over-a-century dogmatic and socio – economic confrontation between the supporters of the use and veneration of icons (*iconodouloi*) and the icon persecutors, the *iconoclastai* (literary the *breakers* of icons). The confrontation was finally terminated in 843, with the ‘victory of Orthodoxy’, when it was dogmatically accepted that the icons, which could be ‘venerated’ but not ‘adored’, played indeed an important role in the Orthodox belief and piety.⁸

The *late Byzantine period* (ca 1025-1453) is marked by the crusades, the ‘feudalisation’ of Byzantium (firstly by its own provincial military landowning aristocracy, then by the crusaders), the capture of Constantinople in 1204 by the crusaders and the establishment of ‘Latin’ or ‘Frankish’ states on Byzantine territory), decline of Byzantine power, the coming of the Turks and finally, the final fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in

⁵ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium*, pp. 7-13.

⁶ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing*, pp. 30-33. See also Karayannopoulou, I., *To Byzantinó krátoç*, Thessaloniki, 1996, pp. 54 -59.

⁷ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing*, pp. 19-22 & 35.

⁸ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing*, pp. 35-42.

1453.⁹ The Byzantine world after 1000 was coined the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ by D. Obolensky to indicate the common civilization of East Europe and Asia Minor, where Orthodoxy and an ‘ecumenical’ worldview had become binding factors.¹⁰

2. Political culture and art in Byzantine Orthodoxy

The Byzantine emperor was politically the successor of the Roman emperor, and his authority, which was considered to be founded on the Divine Grace and Providence, was never questioned. The main concepts in political theory were thus based on the theological concepts of *taxis* and *oikonomia*, which were already present in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.¹¹ Helene Ahrweiler defines ‘oikonomia’ as the spiritual principle and power, which organizes what happens (and is thus Providence), thereby noting that the term is inseparable from the concept of ‘taxis’, which expresses the ‘category’ which rules in practice nature, community and human relations.¹² Like God is the *pantokrator*, so the emperor is the *kosmokrator*. This conception is at the basis of the imperial cult in which iconography and the elaborated court ceremony and ritual are important. Everyone has his own place in the world (*taxis*), and the human society on earth mirrors – up to a point – the supernatural one. It is here, as we see in our other chapters, that Archangel Michael plays a role.

Byzantine art developed over a long period while undergoing numerous phases of regeneration.¹³ This art expresses the Orthodox as well as the imperial concepts, discussed above.¹⁴ Content and style goes through a transformation too. Early Christian art shows simple transformation of pagan themes into Christian themes¹⁵, making it almost impossible to recognise any one style that could definitely be called ‘Early

⁹ Savvides & Hendrickx, *Introducing*, pp. 35-36, 46-55, 85-100.

¹⁰ Shepard J, “The Byzantine Commonwealth 1000-1550”, in Angold, *Cambridge History of Christianity*, pp. 3-52.

¹¹ Hendrickx, “The politico-ideological concepts of ‘Oikonomia’ & ‘Taxis’ as illustrated in the Epistle to Diognetos”, *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 73 (New Series 2), 1991, pp. 44-49.

¹² Ahrweiler H, *Η πολιτική Ιδεολογία της Βυζαντινής Αυτοκρατορίας*, Athens, 1973, pp. 148-168.

¹³ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium*, p. 8.

¹⁴ All aspects of the intensively Orthodox Byzantine world are thoroughly discussed in Angold, M., (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 5: *Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006 – Cf. Hendrickx, review of this work in *Neotestamentica* 41.2 (2007), pp. 437- 444.

¹⁵ *Gardner’s Art through the Ages*, revised by De la Croix, H., & Tansey, R.G., USA, 1980, p.213. Margaret Alexiou notes that little has changed with the gradual transformation of paganism to Christianity in Greece, in terms of customs, language and laws. Various sources from the seventh to the twelfth century showed that pagan rituals were still evident. Margaret Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*, Cambridge, 1974, p. 27.

Christian Art'. Christian art brings about the transformation of the naturalistic, classical tradition into an entirely new worldview. This transformation is divided into the following periods:¹⁶

- The period of **Persecution** (in the first century A.D.)
- The period of **Recognition** establishment (A.D. 325, when Constantine established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire)
- Then the period of **Termination** (around A.D. 500, some historians extend the period to A.D. 800, when it was ended by the Iconoclastic storm.)

In early Christian works, for example, Christ is shown as teacher and philosopher whilst in later Byzantine works, He is portrayed as the ruler of heaven and earth, symbolising at the same time the imperial ruler of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁷ Hendrickx comments that the use of portraits seemed to be connected with paintings of the Emperor, and the imperial cult of respecting the portrait of his majesty was based on the theory that the picture of the *basileus* was in fact the *basileus* himself, and that the imperial coinage belonged to the Emperor, because it held his picture.¹⁸ Only when Christianity was recognised as the official state religion, was Christ given imperial attributes such as the purple robe, the halo, the throne and other symbolic traits.¹⁹

According to Grabar, Byzantine painting refers to work that chronologically belonged to a period during which a city ceased to bear the name 'Byzantium' and was named 'Constantinople'.²⁰ There are two important factors that need to be considered in terms of the Byzantine Art:²¹

- a) Art forms were widely used to exalt the Emperor (e.g. In Byzantine churches, the *Pantocrator* occupied the cupola, the place of honour. On the vaulting before the apse, was an empty throne, 'the prepared throne' of Revelation.)

¹⁶ Gardner's *Art through the Ages*, p. 213.

¹⁷ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, pp. 156 -165.

¹⁸ Hendrickx, "The Byzantine Icon", p. 79 – The Gospel according to St. Matthew (20 – 21 & 22). The relationship between the image of the Emperor and Archangel Michael will be analysed further on.

¹⁹ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, pp. 156 -165.

²⁰ Grabar, *Byzantine Painting*, p. 11.

²¹ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, pp. 156 -165.

- b) Art became a medium whereby permanent values of a transcendental world might be symbolised. (E.g. The modifications of the pagan basilica focus on the shrine as the main focal point – being the mystery of the Christian faith. The ‘spiritualising design’ is expressed in its bearing walls and columns, leading to a new orientation toward a spiritual rather than a physical world.)²²

Thus the interior of a Byzantine church reflected the universe or the cosmos, the cupola as heaven, the place of honour holding the *Pantocrator*, the middle zone symbolising paradise and the lowest zone earth. The mosaic artists represented the figures of the heavenly hierarchy in such a way that the worshippers in the church below felt as if these figures were actually present. Hussey refers to Demus, stating that: “*In Byzantium, the beholder was not kept at a distance from the image; he entered within its aura of sanctity, and the image, in turn, partook of the space in which he moved.*”²³

When Christianity became the official state religion under Constantine, there was an urgent need to set up buildings and to decorate them according to the requirements of the Christian Cult.²⁴ The acceptance of Christianity in the Empire was followed by the reconstruction of monasteries and churches and other artefacts which were used for ecclesiastical purposes.²⁵ Mosaic images became the instrument of decoration for churches.²⁶ Being probably the most popular among the angels, saints and arc fathers of the Byzantine Church and society, Michael’s cult²⁷ was expressed in mosaics, murals, icons, dedications in churches and poems. Averil Cameron comments that Agathias

²² Gardner’s *Art through the Ages*, p. 215. Compare also Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, pp. 156 -165.

²³ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, p. 163.

²⁴ Gardner’s *Art through the Ages*, pp. 215-216. It is stated that the Western churches adopted the rectangular basilica church whilst in the classical building type a polygonal domed structure was favoured in the east.

²⁵ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, p. 163.

²⁶ Gardner’s *Art through the Ages*, p. 217: “*It is as if the building imitated the ideal Christian, with grave and plain exterior and a soul glowing and beautiful within.*”

²⁷ Rhodes, R., *Find It Quick Handbook on Cults and New Religions*, Harvest House Publishers, Oregon, 2005, p. 7. According to Rhodes, the word ‘cult’ derives from the Latin word *cultus*, which means worship. Cults are thus groups that have distinguishable forms of worship. He furthermore states that the word ‘cult’ is often used in both a sociological and theological sense: “*sociologically, a cult is a religious or semi-religious sect or group whose members are often controlled or dominated almost entirely by a single individual or organization.*”

Scholastikos's epigrams of Archangel Michael are an important testimony for the beginning of veneration of the icons and for the cult of the Archangel itself.²⁸

In the post – Justinian period the idea was there that an icon was “*an actual bode of the person portrayed.*”²⁹

Archangel Michael was venerated by soldiers and even the imperial family looked at Michael as leader of the heavenly army and therefore the equivalent of the emperor. In his article, Hendrickx³⁰ comments on Agathias's (6th century) three epigrams (i.34, i.35, i.36 on icons of Archangel Michael)³¹ that Michael, heavenly commander of the angels, symbolises the earthly Emperor as earthly commander of the army. Epigrams i.36 illustrates the office bearer, Theodoros, *illustrius* and twice *proconsul* receives the *insignia* of his dignity (office) from Archangel Michael:

Anthologia Palatina i.34:³²

- 1 *Met baie waagmoed het was 'n onsigbare leier van engele,
liggaamloos deur die soort van sy vorm, geskep.
Tog is dit nie nutteloos nie, want 'n sterling wat 'n beeltenis waarneem,
rig sy gees na 'n hoër voorstelling:*
- 5 *nie langer het hy 'n verwarde ontsag nie'
maar in homself skilder hy die oorspronklike beeld,
en hy vrees dit daarom asof dit aanwesig is:
oë wek mos 'n diep begrip op: kuns weet mos*

²⁸ Cameron, *Agathias*, p. 105.

²⁹ Kitzinger, E., “The cult of images in the age before iconoclasm”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* VIII (1954), p. 147.

³⁰ Hendrickx, “Agathias”, p.66-75. For background and importance of Agathias (ca 536-82/3), Byzantine historian and epigrammatist, see Savvides, A., “Agathias”, in Savvides, A., Hendrickx, B., Simpson Alicia and Sansaridou-Hendrickx Thekla, *Encyclopaedic Prosopographical Lexicon of Byzantine History and Civilization*. Vol.1. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, pp. 81-82.

³¹ Waltz, P. (ed.), *Anthologie Greque* I, Paris, 1928.

³² Hendrickx, “Agathias se epigramme”, p. 68:

“□σκοπον □γγελ□αρχον □σ□ματων ε□δει μορφ□ς,
□μ□γα τολμ□εις, κηρ□ς □πεπλ□σατο.
□μης ο□κ □χάριστον, □πε□βροτ□ς ε□κ□να λε□σσων
θυμ□ν □πιθ□νει κρ□σσοι φαντασ□□·
ο□κ□τι δ' □λλοπρ□σαλλον □χει σ□βας, □λλ' □ν □αυτ□
τ□ τ□πον □γγρ□ψας □ς παρε□ντα τρ□μει·
□μματα δ' □τρ□νουσι βαθ□ν ν□ον· ο□δε δ□ τ□χνη
χρ□μασι πορθμε□σαι τ□ν φρεν□ς □κεσ□ην.”

hoe om die smeking van die gees weer te gee.

Anthologia Palatina i.35:³³

- 1 *Aemilianus van Karië en saam met hom Johannes,
Rufinus van Pharos (en) Agathias van Asië,
wat – o aartsengel – hul vierde jaar regstudies voltooi het,
het aan u, geluksalige, hul eie portret opgedra,*
- 5 *(en) vra voorspoed vir later. Mag u tog hul verwagtings vir die
toekomstige lewe ondersteun.*

Anthologia Palatina i.36³⁴

- 1 *Laat toe om 'n vorm te kry, o aartsengel: want u gelaat
is onsigbaar, maar so is geskenke van sterflinge.
Want van u het Theodoros die gordel van magistras ontvang
en (deur u toedoen) wen hy twee maal die ereplek van proconsul,*
- 5 *en die skildery is getuie van sy dankbaarheid: want
dit gee met kleure die beeltenis van u welwillendheid weer.*

It has been argued that the disguising of worldly power in religious terms – labelled *celestilisation* – “depicts a universe which is closed, eternal, and supernaturally ordained. In defining earthy realities in cosmic terms, it disguises political power in terms of sacredness”³⁵. In agreement with this viewpoint, the depiction of the angelic

³³ Hendrickx, B., “Agathias se epigramme”, p.68:

“Καρικῶς Ἀμυλιανῶς ὠννήης τε σῶν ἀτῶ,
οὐφῶνος Φαρῶης, γαθῶης σῶης,
τῶτρατον, γγελῶρχε, νῶμων λυκῶβαντα λαχῶντες,
νθεσαν εῶς σῶ, μῶκαρ, τῶν σφετῶρην γραφῶδα,
ἀτῶντες τῶν πειτα καλῶν χρῶνον. ἄλλῶ φανεῶης
ἄπῶδας ἄθῶνων ἄσομῶνου βιῶτου.”

³⁴ Hendrickx, B., “Agathias se epigramme”, p. 68:

“ἄλαθι μορφωθεῶς, ῶρχῶγγελε· σῶ γῶρ ῶπωπῶ
σκοπος, ἄλλῶ βροτῶν δῶρα πῶλουσι τῶδε.
κῶσῶο γῶρ Θεόδωρος ῶχει ζωστῶρα μαγῶστρου
καῶ δῶς εῶθλεῶει πῶς θῶνον ῶνθυπατῶν,
τῶς δῶ εῶγνωμοσῶνης μῶρτυς γραφῶς· μῶτερον γῶρ
χῶμασι μιμηλῶν ῶντετῶπωσε χῶριν.”

³⁵ For an analysis of the phenomenon, see Keesing, R. M., *Cultural Anthropology*, Canberra, 1981, p. 296.

groups in the Byzantine iconography could be interpreted as a reflection of the hierarchical way political power was organised in Byzantium.³⁶

Archangel Michael was not only venerated by soldiers but also by young students who looked at Michael for support during their exams. Line three and four, of *Anthologia Palatina* i.35, for example, refers to an *ex voto* portrait which was dedicated to the Archangel ‘in the hope of heavenly support’ for the students’ examination.³⁷ In 551 onwards Agathias was a student in Constantinople. Agathias and his friends dedicated an *ex voto* to Archangel Michael and is referred to ‘a practising Christian while a student’.³⁸

3. Paganism and Christianity and the attitude of the Church fathers

In early Byzantium, the process of transition from paganism to Christianity was a slow one. Christian beliefs and practices that resulted from cultural accommodation were the outcome of diverse dominant cultures in Byzantium which included many Jewish, Hellenistic and pagan cultural elements. It is therefore important to see how certain pagan elements have been absorbed into the religious traditions and beliefs of the Orthodox Byzantine society.³⁹

Alexiou points out that the change in the position of the Orthodox Church was perhaps one factor in the process of assimilation. Many pagan elements were absorbed into the Christian culture, for example, ancient cult sites were transformed into Christian shrines of similar association. Byzantium’s official policy towards paganism was cautious and tolerant resulting in many pagan elements and ancient superstitions being absorbed into the Christian faith.⁴⁰

John Chrysostom’s homilies are proof of the persistence of ritual lamentation⁴¹ in early Byzantine period. In his homilies, Chrysostom condemned violent practices of

³⁶ For an analysis of the political ideology in Byzantium from a historic anthropological point of view, see Ahrweiler, H., *Ιστορία της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας, 1280-1924, Το Βυζαντινό κράτος, Η πολιτική Ιδεολογία της Βυζαντινής Αυτοκρατορίας*. Translated by T. Drakopoulou, Athens, 1977.

³⁷ Cameron, A, *Agathias*, Oxford, 1970, p.1 – Hendrickx, “Agathias,” p. 68.

³⁸ Hendrickx, “Agathias,” p. 68.

³⁹ Hyperidis, “Αυτοκράτορες”, *Εγκυκλοπαιδικόν λεξικόν Ελευθερουδάκη*, vol. 8, Athens, 1930, p. 376-7. The phenomena of syncretism, synthesis and parallelism will be explored fully in another chapter.

⁴⁰ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 24.

⁴¹ On lamentation and Greek funeral rites see especially chapter five.

lamentation and described them as ‘blasphemies’. He is horrified at the pagan character of the scene since he believed it would be fatal to the Church as it was in its initial stages of establishment. Also, in the homily of Gregory of Nyssa, he attempts to persuade the lamenters to moderate their grief. Alexiou questions the Christian ideal, as the popular lament was condemned as pagan. In answering this, she refers to Gregory’s account on Makrina’s funeral:

“But Gregory ensured that order was maintained by separating the men from the women, whom he wisely placed next to the holy sisters: ‘I took care that the chants should be sung with due rhythm and harmony, by arranging the two groups of singers on opposite sides, as in the liturgy, so that the chanting was properly blended with the sound of all the people joining in.’”⁴²

The Church objected to the pagan associations and not the custom itself. Gregory of Nazianzen (329-89) described in his homilies a conflict between the official psalm singing of the Church and the spontaneous lamentation of the crowd at the funeral of Basil of Caesarea.⁴³

“There were crowds of people everywhere, in the marketplaces, arcades and buildings two and three storeys high, all attending his funeral and walking behind, in front and alongside, trampling on one another. Thousands of people of every race and age, not known before, psalms giving way to lamentations, and philosophy overcome by passion. It was a struggle between followers and the outsiders – Greeks, Jews and immigrants...and the body itself only just escaped their clutches.”⁴⁴

4. The Post–Byzantine Period

Post–Byzantine (or in Greek : *meta* – Byzantine) refers for the Greek Orthodox to the period after 1453, ending – in a certain sense – with the Greek revolution of 1821 and the birth of the new Greek state. In this sense, the Post–Byzantine period coincides with the so-called *Tourkokratia*, the epoch of Turkish Ottoman rule in Greece (and the previously

⁴² Alexiou, 1974, pp. 28 & 29.

⁴³ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 30.

⁴⁴ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 30.

Byzantine territory). In a wider sense, dictated by geo-political, military and cultural reality, the chronological range of the term can be extended into the 20th century.⁴⁵

The Greeks of *Tourkokratia*, were organised in the *millet* of the *Rum* (ethnic-religious group of the ‘Romans’), under their Patriarch and with their own institutions. In this *millet* Byzantine culture survived, but was influenced by cultural Turkish (Moslem) elements. Moreover, especially in the Western parts and the islands, of which some remained in Italian hands, Italian cultural (and artistic) influence was strong.⁴⁶

The Post-Byzantine Period is thus a continuation of the Byzantine Period for the Orthodox Christians who continued their traditions unabatedly within the framework of their Orthodox *millet*.

It can thus be said, in conclusion, that the Byzantine as well as the Post-Byzantine Periods were strongly conducive to the use of iconography and hagiography, and to the use of ‘supernatural’ figures, such as Michael, for the expression of their ideology as well as their world view and piety.

⁴⁵ Clogg, R., *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 7-46. For the period after 1821, see *Ibidem*, pp. 47-99. For the Orthodoxy during the *Tourkokratia*, see especially Zachariadou, E., “The Great Church in captivity, 1453 – 1586”, in Angold, M., (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Eastern Christianity*. Cambridge, 2006, pp. 169-186, and Kitromilides, P.M., “Orthodoxy and the west: Reformation to Enlightenment”, *Ibidem*, pp. 187-209.

⁴⁶ Kitsikis, D., *Ιστορία της Οθωμανικής αυτοκρατορίας*, 1988, pp. 42-44.

Chapter 3

Archangel Michael represented as an ‘icon’ in the pure Byzantine and Post–Byzantine Orthodox context of a ‘theological art picture’

This chapter will mainly focus on the iconographic representation of Archangel Michael in the Byzantine and Post–Byzantine periods and therefore we will examine Dionysius of Fourná’s works, referring to the artistic and symbolic representation of Michael in the Byzantine traditional iconography. Dionysius of Fourná (*εκ Φουρνά*) is considered to be the great theoretician of the Orthodox-ecclesiastic iconography.¹ He was a monk and iconographic painter at Mount Athos during the Post–Byzantine period (the so-called Tourkokratia). His famous work, a manual entitled *Ερμηνεία της βυζαντινής ζωγραφικής τέχνης* (Interpretation of the Byzantine Art of Painting) was regarded as having played a considerable role in safeguarding the Byzantine Orthodox tradition, which was – at the time – under pressure, because of the Ottoman occupation of Greece and the impoverishment of the church in both a material as well as a spiritual sense.²

1. Dionysius of Fourná

The man and his work

The first part of Dionysius’ manual is based on older (now lost) handbooks on Byzantine art, while the second part presents his original thoughts on Orthodox iconography.³ In this field, Dionysius was mainly influenced by the Macedonian (13th and 14th centuries) and Cretan traditional schools (15th -16th centuries) but he added to his work prescriptions about Old Testament scenes, which seem to be entirely personal.⁴ Chatziphoti⁵ has thereby warned the reader that Dionysius was not a Byzantine, but a Post–Byzantine (in its historical meaning, thus a Greek-Orthodox, living in the Ottoman Empire, but following Byzantine traditions). Consequently, Dionysius has incorporated in his work not only the Byzantine technique and iconographic theology, but also that of other Post–

¹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, A. (ed.), *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά: Ερμηνεία της ζωγραφικής τέχνης*, Thessaloniki, 2004, See also Chatziphoti, I.M., *Από το Βυζάντιο στον Νέο Ελληνισμό*, Vol. 2. Thessaloniki, 2001, pp. 93-111.

² Chatziphoti, *Από το Βυζάντιο*, pp. 93-95.

³ Papadopoulou- Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. Kz ff.

⁴ Xyggopoulos, A., *Σχέδιασμα ιστορίας της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής μετά την Αλωσιν*, Athens, 1957, p. 303.

⁵ Chatziphoti, *Από το Βυζάντιο*, p. 96.

Byzantines such as Damaskinos of Ioannina (fl.1728-33), and three other painters from Ioannina (in Epiros), Ioannikios, Kosmas and Seraphim (fl. Middle 18th century). Western influence is minimal in Dionysius' work, except perhaps in his vocabulary. In this respect too, Dionysius greatly influenced later Greek treaties on iconography; his work has been styled as “μάθημα μέγιστον ἠθνικῆς ἀποσυνειδησίας” (a very great lesson in ethnic self-consciousness).⁶

2. Representation of the Angels in the Early Christian Art

Early Christian art depicted an angel as a messenger clad in a simple tunic. Almost everything within the image has a symbolic aspect. The Christian angels of the first six centuries were illustrated without wings. The messengers of God of which the Bible tells us, were depicted as ordinary people. In old representations of the three young men in the furnace, the angel for example, cannot be distinguished from the other three.⁷ In later works, angels (and often John the Baptist - God's messenger) are represented with wings. Figures on icons have consistent facial appearances and hold attributes personal to them.⁸ Christ, the saints, and the angels all had halos:

“De eenvoudige staf die de engel als bode op vroegere voorstellingen droeg werd veranderd in een kruisstaf. Vaak droegen zij ook een nimbus.”⁹

The following example clearly illustrates to what extent Christian art was indebted to the classical art. In the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai is a mosaic scene from the Early Christian period depicting the ‘Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor’. On the triumphal arch above Christ, two angels offer sceptre and orb to Him. Identical gear to the Emperor's is found on a Roman triumphal arch. It is furthermore stated that: *“underneath the flying angels are the medallion busts of John the Baptist whose face has the configurations of a tragic mask, a style befitting this tragic prophet, and the virgin. The two represent the Old and the New Dispensation, being the intercessors who together*

⁶ Chatziphoti, p. 104.

⁷ Hendrix P., 143.

⁸ Hendrix, et al., - Theunissen, *Ikonen*, – compare also Anonymous, *Angels: all about angels, Archangels, Archangel Michael*

<http://angelstoday.net/index.php?lang=en&way=2Archangels/1michael> 2007/11/13.

⁹ Hendrix, et al., p. 143.

with Christ form what is called the Deesis, i.e. the Supplication. It is the earliest representation of this subject, which became very central in later Byzantine art.”¹⁰

3. Symbolic Representation of Icons

Colours are used with symbolic meanings in icons. Gold, for example, symbolises the glory of Heaven, green is the colour of creation, red the divine life and blue is the colour of human life itself. In the icon of Jesus and Mary, where Jesus wears a red undergarment and a blue outer garment, red stands for God being divine first and then human, which is symbolised by the blue outer garment; then, Mary clad in a blue undergarment with a red outer garment which symbolises the opposite: a human being first and then becoming like God.¹¹ The colour white represents the uncreated essence of God i.e. the resurrection and transfiguration of Christ.¹²

Most icons include some letters (epigrammata) which depict an event or name of a person and are often calligraphically written.¹³

If we accept that in iconographic art the aim is to create a close communication between religious figures and believers, both pragmatic and symbolic, then Dionysius’ interpretation of biblical scenes and religious concepts should lead us to a better understanding of the collective world view of the Byzantines in general. Mutatis mutandis, each of the following descriptions of the way Archangel Michael was conceptualised and portrayed in the Byzantine art should bring us closer to those reasons, conjunction of circumstances and dynamics which established his creation as an eternal supernatural model.

¹⁰ Galey, J., *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine*, Massada Publishing Ltd, Israel, 1980, p. 85.

¹¹ Holweck, F.G., *St. Michael the Archangel* <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm> 2007/11/16. It has been argued that this symbolic representation conveys the doctrine of deification by means of icons.

¹² Holweck, *St. Michael the Archangel*. On symbolism and colours, see Hendrix, et al, pp.16, 17, 27 & 112. - Lianouridis, V., “Bemerkinge oor Ikonografie” *Apollonia*, 1988, pp. 53-61.

¹³ “Symbolism in icons” from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon>".

4. Representation of Archangel Michael in the Arts in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods

Archangel Michael is generally illustrated with sword in one hand¹⁴ and a shield, spear, date tree branch, or white banner in the other. He is almost always dressed in red and portrayed as Israel's protector, trampling on the dragon (Satan).¹⁵ Occasionally he is represented with a pair of scales with which he weighs the souls of the departed.¹⁶ The representations of Michael are very similar to those of St. George but with one difference: Michael has wings.¹⁷

4.1 The illustrations of Archangel Michael in Byzantine churches according to Dionysius of Fourná

In instructing students the technique of drawing in churches¹⁸ and the position of the angels, Dionysius of Fourná explains their hierarchical order as follows: Inside the *bema* in the midst of the eastern arch, under the referred prophets, picture the Virgin sitting on a throne and holding Christ as Baby and over her write the following epigraph: “Μ□τηρ Θεο□ □ □ψηλοτ□ρα τ□ν Ο□ραν□ν”. At her sides (□ψηλοτ□ρα), picture two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel, as leaders and thereafter starting from her left, picture the twelve principal Holy days and the Passion of Christ as well as the events which follow the Resurrection; picture these all around in the temple, under the images of the prophets till the right side of the Virgin (□ψηλοτ□ρα), forming thus the first rank of the hierarchical order¹⁹.

At another instant²⁰ he instructs his students to picture Michael on the first *σταυροθ□λιον*, out of the *bema* above the *diaconica*, in the midst of clouds supported by four angels and holding a paper with the following words: “□γ□ □κ το□ Θεο□ □ξ□λθον κα□ □κω· ο□δ□ γ□ρ □π□ □μαντο□ □λ□λυθα, □λλ□ □κε□ν□ς με □π□στειλε”. Write also another epigraph as follows: “□ησο□ς Χριστ□ς □ Μεγ□λης

¹⁴ Grabar, *Byzantine Painting*, p.186, compare also Hendrix, et al., pp.16, 17, 27 & 112.

¹⁵ *Angels: all about angels, Archangels, Archangel Michael*

<http://angelstoday.net/index.php?lang=en&way=2Archangels/1michael> 2007/11/13.

¹⁶ Finney, D. *Archangels and Guardian Angels*, <http://www.greatdreams.com/archangels.htm> 2007/09/18.

¹⁷ Kiefer, J. *Michael and All Angels*, <http://satucket.com/lectionary/Michael.htm>, 2007/11/16.

¹⁸ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. 215 ff.

¹⁹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 216.

²⁰ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 217.

Βουλῆς ἄγγελος”. At the third σταυροθῆλιον picture the Archangel Michael holding in his right hand a sword and in his left hand a paper with the following words:

“Τοῦς μὲ καθαράς προστῆχουσι καρδαίαις
ἐν τῷ καθάρῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ θεῶν δῆμι
συμπαθῆς μου ἐν σπῆθην κτείνῳ”.

According to further instructions by Dionysius of Fourná, regarding the inner space of the temple, Michael should be represented at the right side of the main entrance door.²¹ In his hands, he should keep a sword and a paper with the following text:

“Θεοῦ στρατηγῆς ἐμὶ ἐν σπῆθην φῶρων
καὶ τοῦς ἐνταῖθα ἐσιῆντας ἐν φῶβῳ
φρουρῶ, προμαχῶ, ἑρμαχῶ και
τοῦς δὲ καρδαίῳ ὑπαρῶ ἐσιῆντας
πικρῆς κτῆμνω ἐν τῷ ρομφαῶ τῶδε

Referring to epigrams, Dionysius explains in detail the way each of them ought to be formulated regarding structure and content. With regard to Archangels,²² he instructs that in icons known as *Theotokion* (the so-called *Rodon*) where the two Archangels are represented at the sides of Mother of God holding Christ as a baby, Michael should hold a paper with the following words:

“Ἐρθρος φαεινῆς, χαρῆς ἐμῆ τῆν”.

As for Archangel Gabriel, his text should read as follows:

“Στῆχυν ἑβαστῆσασα τῆν θεῶν”.

On a paper held by both of them, according to Dionysius, the following greeting should appear:

“Ἐδὸν τῶ μῶραντον, χαρῆς ἐμῆ βλαστῆσασα”

In the case where Michael is painted on the portal of the temple,²³ the epigram accompanying him should read as follows:

“Βροτῶ βλῆποντες τῶ ζῆφος τεταμῆνον,
ἔσοι βῆβηλοι καὶ ἔθυμοι τῆν τρῆπον,
ἔσυσταλεῖτε πρῆς μετῆνοιαν τῆχει,
ἐδῆ μῶ προσψαῆητε τῶ θεῶν πῆλῶ·
ἔγῶ γῶρ πρῆν τῶς παλαιῆς προστῆτης
ἔτῶχθην ταῆτης τῶς νῆας ἔδῆ μῶ φῶλαξ.

²¹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 219: On the left side should appear Gabriel holding also a paper with this message:

“Ἐζυγῶ φον κῆλαμον τῶ χειρῶ φῶρων
τῆν ἐσιῆντων συνταγῆς ἔποργῶφω·
φρουρῶ, στῆργοντας· ἐδῆ μῶ, φθεῶρω τῶχει.

²² Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 229 § 22.

²³ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 231.

If Michael is represented on horseback the following lines should appear on the epigram:

□φ□ □ππον □ρ□τ□ με ο□ προσι□ντες
δ□στομον κατ□χοντα χειρ□ □ομδα□αν·
στ□φη βαρβ□ρων □κδι□κω κα□ πλ□ττω·
□μο□ δ□ ναο□ □π□ρχει Θε□ς μ□γας·
τ□ δειν□ν α□τ□ □στις βουληθ□ πρ□ξαι,
πατ□ζω τ□ □ομφα□□ □ν τ□χει.

Finally, in icons which represent the Judgement Day,²⁴ Michael should appear on horse riding through the Universe and above the Sea holding the message: “□γε□ρεσθε ο□ καθε□δοντες”, “□ποδιδο□σα □ γ□ κα□ □ θ□λασσα το□ς □ αυτ□ν νεκρο□ς.”

4.2 Byzantine illustrations of miracles narrated in the Old Testament

In the following section we shall present a detailed description of the way miracles referring to Archangel Michael have been visually illustrated in the Byzantine iconography following their interpretation of Old Testament (Septuagint)²⁵ testimonials as related by Dionysus of Fournā.

4.3 The nine orders²⁶

Based on the interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite's hierarchic structure of the angelic orders, Dionysius of Fournā explains that the nine orders of angels are classified in three classes and placed accordingly in the Byzantine iconography:

- a) *As seen through the eyes of the prophet Isaiah (Septuagint 6: 1-3), in this class belongs Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. The Thrones are illustrated as flaming wheels, which are circled by wings bearing eyes and interwoven as to form a royal throne. The Cherubim appear with one head and two wings whilst the Seraphim have six wings two of which cover their faces, two other their feet and the other two open to support their flight while they hold in their hands the following inscription:*

“□γιος □γιος □γιος”.

As for the ‘tetramorphes’ these are painted as described by the prophet Ezekiel (Septuagint 1: 5-13): angel-faced figures, with six wings and a crown on their

²⁴ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 288.

²⁵ The Septuagint's numbering and names do not correspond to the English Bible and are not uniformly identical.

²⁶ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. 45-46, § 1.

head holding the Gospel against their chest with their two hands, while an eagle is placed over their head between their two open wings; furthermore, two painted animals, namely a lion on the right wing and a calf on the left wing are facing upwards holding Gospels in their feet.

- b) In the second class, called 'decorative' (διακόσμησις), belong 'Κυριότητες', 'Δυνάμεις', 'Εξουσίες'. They are represented dressed in long fine clothes (στιχάρια) with golden-green belts (ωρόρια), holding golden sticks in their right hand and in their left a stamp shaped x.
- c) The third class consists of 'Leaders', 'Archangels' and 'Angels': dressed in army clothes with golden belts they hold sticks topped with axes and spears.

4.4 The fall of Lucifer (Εωσφόρος)²⁷

As we read in the description of this icon by Dionysius, *amidst sky Christ is sitting as a king on a throne, holding the Gospel and saying* (as narrated in Luke 10: 18):

'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'; and around him the orders of angels standing with fear; and Michael standing in the middle and pointing at Christ for the other orders to see, he says on a paper:

“Στ□μεν καλ□ς, στ□μεν μετ□ φόβου. Δε□τε προσκυνήσωμεν □ βασιλε□ □μ□ν Θε□”,
and beneath them mountains and amidst them a great opening (χάσμα) and over it is written “Ο Τάρταρος” whilst the order of Lucifer (Εωσφόρος) appears falling from the sky. The higher standing angels are splendid and the lower are darker and those beneath still darker and the others lower are black and the others placed a degree lower are very black, and those who stand very low are half angels, and other creatures again black and dark are demons and beneath all these, in the Tartarus, Lucifer as the darkest and holiest of all, lying on his stomach and staring upwards (Isaiah 14:12).

4.5 Balaam departing and prevented by the angels to bring a curse upon the Hebrews²⁸

In this icon there are two vineyards and in the midst of these Balaam is mounting a mule and beating it with a small stick, while the mule, on its knees, with its head turned is

²⁷ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. 46, § 2.

²⁸ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 58, § 59.

facing Balaam; and Archangel Michael stands in front of him with his bare sword, and further the Archangels of the king mounted on horses between two mountains (Numbers 22: 23-35).

4.6 Jesus of Nauri looking at the Lord's general in chief²⁹

In this icon, Archangel Michael dressed in military outfit is holding a bare sword and Jesus of Nauri with greyish hair is kneeling in front of him looking at him while he is untying the angel's shoes (Jesus of Nauri 5:13-15).

4.7 Gideon is harvesting and the Angel of the Lord who looks at him empowers him against Madiam³⁰

In a field people are harvesting wheat, an altar is on fire and Archangel Michael holding in his hand a staff touches with it the altar; kneeling in front of him, Gideon expends his hands towards him with a sickle placed near him (Judges 6: 20-22).

4.8 The three children thrown in the furnace for not having venerated the icon are being cooled by the Angel³¹

The icon illustrates a furnace and the three children inside it with their clothes on, having their hands and eyes turned towards the sky and Archangel Michael amidst them; outside the furnace there are corpses of soldiers burned to death by the fire with the golden icon of the king nearby (Daniel 3: 10-23).

4.9 Daniel in the pit of lions accepts food from Abbakoum³²

In a dark pit Daniel, surrounded by seven lions, is lifting his face and hands upwards, while above him Archangel Michael is holding by his hair the prophet Abbakoum who carries a basket of bread and meal and giving them to Daniel (Daniel 12: 31-39). The movement holding the prophet by his hair indicates power and authority attributed to Archangel Michael both by his believers and artists.

²⁹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 59, § 63.

³⁰ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 59, § 64.

³¹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 69, § 113.

³² Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. 70-71, §119.

4.10 How the miracles of the Archangel Michael are recorded in the Byzantine iconography³³

i) *Michael is showing the water to Agar*

This icon illustrates:

Abraham at the door of a house and in front of him Agar holding by his hand Ishmael, as a little child, and carrying a water container made of skin and a basket with bread on her shoulders; a little further on the mountain, Ishmael is lying under a tree; and a little further again Agar and the archangel pointing with his finger at water on the earth for her to see.

The archangel's *pointing finger* stresses the authority administered to Michael by his believers

ii) *Michael prevents Abraham from slaughtering Isaac*³⁴

Here the believers are looking at:

Abraham on a mountain having placed Isaac - as a little child - on wood, is holding a knife ready to slaughter him; above him there is an angel who is showing him a ram whose horns are tied to a plant and saying in writing on a paper:

“Αβραάμ, Αβραάμ, μὴ πῖθῃς τὸν χεῖρά σου πρὸς τὸ παιδίον”.

At the feet of the mountain there stand two youngsters holding a saddled donkey (Genesis 22: 9-13).

iii) *Michael prevents Balaam on the road*³⁵: Icon description as above: 8.5.3.

iv) *Michael warns Satan not to enter the body of sleeping Moses*³⁶

In this icon Moses is lying fast asleep on a mountain, with Satan bent on his feet and the archangel Michael standing near (Moses's) head; with his hands extended towards Satan the Archangel is warning him with his sword (Deuteronomy 34:5).

v) *Michael appears in front of Nani and orders him to untie his shoe*³⁷:

Description as above in 8.5.4.

³³ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 174, § 42.

³⁴ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 52, § 33.

³⁵ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 58, § 59.

³⁶ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 59, § 61.

³⁷ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 59, § 63.

- vi) *Michael appearing to Gideon empowers him against Madiam*³⁸:

Description as above in 8.5.5

- vii) *Michael announces the birth of Samson*³⁹

Here Manoe, as an old bald man, with his wife next to him are pictured on their knees with their hands turned upwards and their eyes looking up; in front of them there is an altar with a lamb in flames and above it the Archangel raising together with the flames to heaven (Judges 13:2-25).

- viii) *Michael appears in front of David, and the killing of the people stops by means of sacrifice*⁴⁰

In this icon the Archangel is represented in the middle of a threshing floor with his arm extended and holding his sword; he is surrounded by fields where human corpses are scattered. In one corner of the threshing floor there is an altar where plough parts, wheat and two oxen are in flames; in front of the altar on his knees is David with his face turned towards the angel; at the other side of the altar there are two soldiers; standing between David and the angel is the prophet Gad who, with his face turned towards David, is inviting David to look at the angel that he is pointing at; close by is the castle of Jerusalem (II Kings 24: 15-24).

- ix) *Semchirim fighting in Jerusalem while the descended from heaven Lord's angel beats 185 000 soldiers*⁴¹

A castle stands on a mountain and beneath it one sees a group of soldiers, some of them are killed, others are falling from their horses and others, looking back with fear in their eyes, are fleeing. From above, amidst the clouds, Archangel Michael is holding in his right hand a fiery sword drawn in great splendour (*Septuaginta*, Kings IV, 19:35).

- x) *Michael saves the three children thrown in the furnace for not having venerated the icon*⁴² : Description as above in 8.5.6.

³⁸ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 59, § 64.

³⁹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 60, § 66.

⁴⁰ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 63, § 82.

⁴¹ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 67, § 104.

xi) *Michael brings food to Daniel by Abbakoum*⁴³: Description as above in 8.5.7.

xii) *Michael freeing Constantinople from the Persian occupation*⁴⁴:

Here stands a great and beautiful castle and beneath it there are tents and a group of soldiers on foot and on horses slaughtering each other; others are holding ladders against the walls of the castle whilst over their heads, with immense splendour, Michael stands amidst clouds holding a fiery sword.

xiii) *Michael rescuing his temple in Chonae from flooding*⁴⁵:

In the middle of Chonae-temple there stands Saint Archippos, as an old man, with pointed beard, praying while in front of him Michael is standing beating at the foundation of the temple with a spear, tearing a stone. From the mountains above, two rivers are descending, unite in front of the church and enter the opening of the stone; on the mountains people are cleaning the route of the rivers with spades and spuds.

xiv) *Archangels Michael and Gabriel rescue the child from drowning in the sea*⁴⁶:

In the middle of the sea is a sailing boat and in it three monks. One of them is holding the wheel while the others two, having tied a big stone around the neck of a child, are throwing it head first into the sea; on both sides of the child two archangels in flying position are receiving it; out of the sea there is a monastery with a church inside and in the midst of it the same child is asleep, having the stone at his neck and the father superior of the monastery standing beside it touching it with a stick; behind the father superior a gathering of monks are standing in wonder and admiration.

⁴² Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 69, § 113.

⁴³ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, pp. 70-71, §119.

⁴⁴ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 174.

⁴⁵ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 175.

⁴⁶ Papadopoulou-Kérameus, *Διονυσίου του εκ Φουρνά*, p. 175.

5. Archangel Michael represented on Byzantine coinage and stamps and used as propaganda in Byzantine politics

Today – as well as in the Greek past – one can define propaganda as an ideology that tries to promote a belief system or dogma which can be religious, political or economical. It is also believed that propaganda uses mass communication to establish an ideology: “*Postage stamps, coins, paper currency, music, art, and drama have all been used for propaganda.*”⁴⁷ Also, Koetzle comments in his book ‘Photo Icons’ that “*photographs, pictures from films, television, video and digital media all fight to catch our attention*” and “*they try to seduce us, to manipulate, eroticise and even at times to inform us.*”⁴⁸ Finally, Larson concludes that propaganda also aims at uniformity in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of its receivers.⁴⁹

Hendrickx writes that in antiquity, during the first century, propaganda was used in politics and the ‘prosperity-idea’ found on coins is an example of this. He adds: “*In ‘n tydperk, waar media soos ons ken, totaal ontbreek het, het die munte se boodskap ‘n primêre rol gespeel. Hulle, en nie skrifte en boeke nie, is algemeen versprei en gebruik, en was dus ‘n allereerste kommunikasie-middel van boodskappe en idees.*”⁵⁰

In this modern day and age, coins are still used for propaganda as stated: “*...the secondary side (the reverse)*⁵¹ *is seldom wasted; various pieces of information directly relating to its role as medium of exchange can occur there (if not provided for on the obverse), and additional space is likely to be used propagandistically, evoking some treasured aspect of the state’s territory, its philosophy of governing, or its people’s culture...*”⁵²

⁴⁷ Larson, C. U., *Persuasion, Reception and Responsibility*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, California, 1989, p. 360.

⁴⁸ Koetzle, H., *Photo icons, The story behind the picture 1827-1991*, Singapore, 2005, p. 6.

⁴⁹ For further reading on the definition of propaganda see Larson, *Persuasion*, p. 360.

⁵⁰ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van die Romeins-Hellenistiese Beskawing (ca 330-30 v.C.)*, Johannesburg, 1993, pp. 407-409.

⁵¹ “The term **obverse**, and its opposite, **reverse**, describe the two sides of units of currency and many other kinds of two-sided objects, most often in reference to coins...”

["http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse).

⁵² ["http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_V"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_V).

With regard to the above, it is very likely that Byzantine Emperor, Michael V,⁵³ in his sudden seize of sole power, would have issued coins in his own name both to advertise his new position and to gain support.⁵⁴ In fig. 1 Michael V is represented with Archangel Michael next to him on a gold coin (*histamenon nomisma*), but the emperor's identity is disputed.⁵⁵

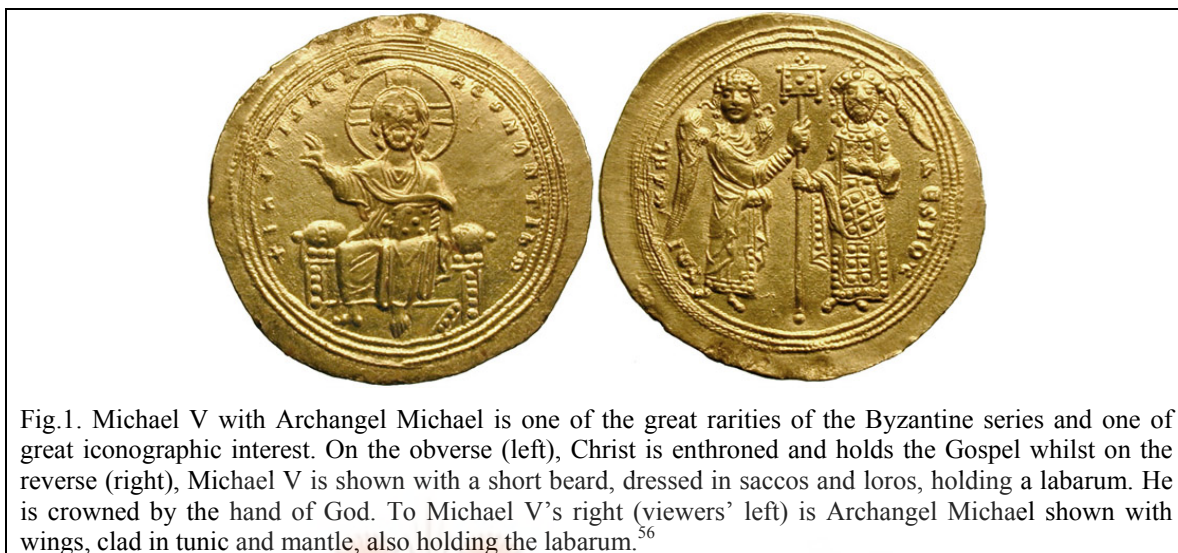


Fig.1. Michael V with Archangel Michael is one of the great rarities of the Byzantine series and one of great iconographic interest. On the obverse (left), Christ is enthroned and holds the Gospel whilst on the reverse (right), Michael V is shown with a short beard, dressed in saccos and loros, holding a labarum. He is crowned by the hand of God. To Michael V's right (viewers' left) is Archangel Michael shown with wings, clad in tunic and mantle, also holding the labarum.⁵⁶

Grierson associates it with Michael V the Caulker or Kalphates,⁵⁷ whilst Fagerlie and Hendy argue that it is Michael IV because in Ancient Greece, for example, the head of a god or goddess, often called the obverse, was the larger image whilst the smaller image of a king was on the reverse. In the Hellenistic period, the head of the ruler was on the one side, which is almost always regarded as the obverse. The change happened in the coinage of Alexander the Great, which continued to be minted long after his death. After his occupation of Egypt he portrayed his face on the obverse as a god-king. This was

⁵³ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse". Michael V (1015-1042) was Byzantine Emperor for four months in 1041-1042, successor and nephew of Michael IV. Shortly before his death, Michael IV granted his nephew and adopted son of his wife Zoe, Michael V, the title of Kaiser. Michael V succeeded to the throne on 10 Dec 1041 with the help of his other uncle, John the Eunuch. After a disagreement he banished his uncle John the Eunuch to a monastery; later banished his adopted mother Zoe and became sole Emperor. A mob surrounded the palace and demanded Zoe's restoration as co-ruler with her sister Theodora, who in turn declared the emperor deposed. Michael V fled to a monastery, where he was arrested, blinded and castrated. He died as a monk on 24 August 1042.

⁵⁴ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg": This argument is disputed as it is believed that timeframe is a problem - Zoe was exiled on 18 April and Michael's downfall was on 21 April 1041.

⁵⁵ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg".

⁵⁶ CNG coins <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sb/sb1826.html>.

⁵⁷ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg": Michael V's father was a caulker, hence his nickname Michael V Kalaphates.

done to secure the allegiance of the Egyptians, who had regarded the Pharaohs as divine.⁵⁸

The opposite situation occurred in Byzantine coinage, where the head of Christ became the obverse and the head of the Emperor the reverse. This religious image or symbol on the obverse, usually an image of Christ for larger denominations, with the head of the Emperor on the reverse, reinforced the bond of the state and the divine order. Justinian II used this style in the gold coins from 695 which initiated the Islamic Caliph Abd al-Malik who had previously copied Byzantine designs, to replace Christian symbols with Islamic equivalents. At the end of the Iconoclasm, the Justinian II type was revived - with variations which remained the norm until the end of the Empire.⁵⁹

Fagerlie and Hendy argue that it is Michael IV and not Michael V who stands next to Archangel Michael, (as Grierson initially stated)⁶⁰ since it was minted in Thessaloniki, the headquarters of Michael IV, during his Bulgarian campaign of AD 1040-1041.⁶¹ They furthermore affirm that it is a reverse type as the emperor is placed on the reverse instead of the obverse, a type which inspired the iconography of later coins of Thessaloniki under Alexius I.⁶²

As Archangel Michael was the protector of the Angeloi House, he as such, also appeared on the coins of the Emperors Isaac II and Alexios III and on coins of the despots of Epirus. The old coins which were cut for the Komnenoi and Angelos Emperors were taken as model by the Emperors of Thessaloniki.⁶³

On a bronze coin Emperor Manuel of Thessaloniki (1230-1237) is represented together with Saint Constantine. Between them is a cross and behind them the half figure of Archangel Michael with open wings holding a sword. Then, on another rather unusual

⁵⁸ Cormack, R., *Writing in Gold, Byzantine Society and its Icons*, 1985, George Philip, London, ISBN 054001085-5 "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse".

⁵⁹ "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon>" and "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obverse_and_reverse".

⁶⁰ "Grierson was persuaded by Hendy's argument, but others have been reluctant to declare the matter settled": retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg" 2007/09/20.

⁶¹ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg" 2007/09/20.

⁶² "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Histamenon_nomisma-Micael_V-sb1776.jpg" 2007/09/20.

⁶³ Nicol, D., *Το Δεσποτάτον της Ηπείρου, transl. P. Leutia*, Ioannina, 1974, pp. 173 - 176.

type of coin, Emperor Manuel is represented together with Saint Demetrius sitting on thrones holding between them a building with three towers on which an epigram reads as follows:

ΠΟΛΙΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗ(Σ) Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ. On the other side of the coin, Archangel Michael stands with open wings. It has been argued that Emperors of the Angelos house were not really flattered to be associated with Angels.⁶⁴

Then there are two stamps⁶⁵ made of lead and silver plated representing Archangel Michael on the one side and the figure of the Emperor on the other. On the one side of this stamp (found in Corfu) Michael is holding in both hands the Earth and the sceptre. On the other stamp Archangel Michael is holding the sword and the sceptre.⁶⁶



⁶⁴ Nicol, *Το Δεσποτάτον*, p. 176.

⁶⁵ Nicol, *Το Δεσποτάτον*, p. 174: Michael I (1204-15) and Michael II (1231-71), both Emperors of Epiros.

⁶⁶ Nicol, *Το Δεσποτάτον*, p. 176.

Chapter 4

The characteristics and functions of Michael in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Periods

The vast popularity of Michael, especially among the youth in the Byzantine period, but also in general throughout the whole spectrum of society, invites us to examine the characteristics and functions of Michael in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Periods. Michael's functions continued into the Post-Byzantine period and beyond into the modern era in Greece, but more specifically in the role of angel of death i.e. the angel who brings the souls of the dying into the supernatural world. As a result, characteristics of the Biblical, Apocryphal and Apocryphal Archangel were intermingled with ancient mythological figures (e.g. Charon and Hades)¹, Roman military traditions and contemporary Byzantine fashion.² (These elements of syncretism, synthesis and parallelism will be discussed in chapter six.)

1. Characteristics of the Archangel Michael:

The origin and nature of an angel is that of a pure spirit, created by God: "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"³ This means that the angelic nature is entirely spiritual⁴ and thus to abridge Archangel Michael's characteristics would purely be associated with human characteristics.

Archangel Michael is widely known and characterised as the 'Warrior Archangel'; as one of the chief princes of all the other Angels. He furthermore stands for justice and truth and lives from his integrity.⁵ He is portrayed as the leader of the celestial armies of the Lord who fight against Satan's wicked forces:

¹ Hendrickx, "Die dood van Digenis – mistifikasie van 'n Bisantynse held," *Literator* 14, 1 (1993), pp. 99-106 – Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*.

² Galey, *Sinai and the Monastery*, p. 85 – Hendrickx, "Die dood van Digenis" pp. 99-106.

³ Heb 1:14.

⁴ "<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/ncd00538.htm>" 2007/11/16.

⁵ Dn.10:13,21 – King, M. *Chief Rainbow Warrior: Archangel Michael* 2006 King, M., "Chief Rainbow Warrior: Archangel Michael", <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=5580> 2007/11/16.

*“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.”*⁶

According to Jewish writings, Michael was considered to be the ‘Viceroy of Heaven’. This was a title applied to the great rival Lucifer before his fall.⁷

2. Functions of the Archangel Michael

Archangel Michael was given four major offices/ titles according to Christian tradition.⁸

- i. To fight Satan (Michael is the supreme enemy of Satan and the fallen angels).
- ii. To rescue the souls of the faithful from the power of the enemy, especially at the hour of death. It is believed that Michael gives each soul the chance to redeem itself at the hour of death – disconcerting the devil and his demons.
- iii. To protect and be the advocate or champion of God’s people. (Michael is the patron of the chosen people in the Old Testament and guardian of the church as revered by the military orders of knights during the middle ages).
- iv. To call away from earth and bring souls to judgement⁹ (Michael is the Christian angel of the dead as he carries the souls of the dead to heaven).

According to Rabbinic Jewish tradition and the Midrash,¹⁰

- i. Michael also acted as the advocate of Israel at the time of the Exodus, when Satan accused the Israelites of idolatry. He also declared that the Israelites were deserving of death by drowning in the Red Sea. It is said that the angel of Egypt, Uzza, called upon Michael to plead before God but Michael remained silent, and it was God Himself who defended Israel.¹¹
- ii. Michael had to fight the princes of other nations as well as the angel Samael, whose enmity dated from the time Samael was thrown out of heaven. It is said

⁶ Rv. 12:7.

⁷ Anonymous, “Michael”, "<http://www.answers.com/topic/michael>" 2007/09/19.

⁸ *St. Michael the Archangel* <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm> 2007/11/16;
[http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel))

⁹ Compare also Graham, *Angels: God’s Secret Agents*, London, 1976, p.55.

¹⁰ Midrash: the term “midrash” is a Hebrew word which refers to a method of exegesis of a Biblical text. This term can also refer to a collection of Midrashic teachings, in the form of legal, exegetical or homiletical commentaries on the Tanakh - Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

¹¹ Anonymous, “Michael (archangel)”, [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

that Samael grabbed the wings of Michael, to bring him down with him as he fell; but Michael was saved by God.¹²

As seen, Archangel Michael is characterised as a warrior Archangel due to his most primary function, which also distinguishes him from the other entire heavenly host. This primary function is to battle Satan and his demons.¹³ Not only is he portrayed as a warrior Angel, but also as Israel's protector, according to Jewish tradition and the Bible. This is the reason for the belief that Michael gave victory in war to his clients. He was thus also regarded as patron of the Church and orders of knights during the Middle Ages.¹⁴ Within an African Christian Orthodox context, the Armenian Chronographer Abu Salih (end 12th century AD) wrote that "*all the kings of Abyssinia are crowded with the royal crown in the Church of the Angel Michael or the Church of the Angel Michael or the Church of Saint George, beneath their pictures,*" thus underlining their equal prestige and value in Orthodoxy.¹⁵

It must be noted, however, that although St. Michael is regarded as a patron in war, *early* Christians regarded St. George, St. Theodore, St. Demetrius, and St. Serguis as their military patrons, whilst they gave St. Michael the care of the sick.¹⁶

Apart from these functions, Archangel Michael answers Daniel's prayer by helping angel Gabriel in his contest with the angel of Persia, Dobiel.¹⁷ In Jewish tradition and in The Bible, the prophet Daniel experiences a vision after having undergone a period of fasting. In his article 'Opstanding, en Daniël 12:1-4', Nel¹⁸ states that the *genre* of this part is that of an apocalypse which can be categorised into two subgenres, those with otherworldly experiences and those which offer an historical overview. He furthermore states that the periscope of this part – of the Book of Daniel – offers for an apocalypse: "*a genre of*

¹² Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

¹³ King, M., "Chief Rainbow Warrior: Archangel Michael", <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=5580> 2007/11/16.

¹⁴ Finney, D., "Archangels" <http://www.greatdreams.com/Archangels.htm> 2007/09/18.

¹⁵ Vantini, G. (ed.), *Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia*, Heidelberg and Warsaw, 1975, pp. 339-340.

¹⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10275b.htm> 2007/11/16 & Finney, D., "Archangels" <http://www.greatdreams.com/Archangels.htm> 2007/09/18. Greek tradition has it that Michael's apparition took place in the first century. Today, a feast in commemoration of it on 6 September is celebrated.

¹⁷ Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)), 2007/11/16.

¹⁸ Nel, M., "Opstanding, en Daniël 12:1-4", *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 88 (2006) (N.S. 17), pp. 15-29.

*revealed literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.*¹⁹

In Daniel's vision, an angel names Michael as the protector of Israel.²⁰ Michael arrives to answer Daniels' prayers after being withstood by the Prince of Persia for 21 days:

*"But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.'... 'but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)"*²¹

Daniel is informed that Michael also appears as Israel's representative and guardian angel to gain the victory on behalf of Israel. Archangel Michael will stand for Israel during the Tribulation to come: *"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise."*²² It is believed²³ that Michael's role as leader may be seen as both military and judicial as it is described in Zephaniah 3:1. Here, he represents Israel in the celestial court and executes God's judgement when the decision is made in favour of Israel. According to Nel, this description serves as parallel to the scene of judgement in Daniel 7:9-10: he proposes that Michael's role should be seen as both military and judicial – since he represents Israel in the heavenly court and carries out God's judgement in favour of Israel.²⁴ Nel describes Melchisdek as the one who executes the divine judgement whilst the angels execute it according to Henoah 2:11-13. Therefore, Daniel's visions 9-12 can be classified as epiphany visions, whilst Daniel 7 and 8 are symbolic visions. Nel

¹⁹ Nel, "Opstanding, en Daniël", pp. 15-29.

²⁰ Dn 10:13, 21.

²¹ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael– Compare also Dn 10:13 & 21.

²² Dn 12:1, see also Nel, "Opstanding, en Daniël", p. 18.

²³ Nel, "Opstanding, en Daniël", pp. 15-29.

²⁴ Nel, "Opstanding, en Daniël", pp. 17, 24-25, Nel says that the author of Daniel 12 projects the final battle wherein Antiochus IV will be brought to a fall from heaven to show that God is involved in everything. He furthermore states that Michael appears as Israel's representative and guardian angel to gain the victory on behalf of Israel. Then, Michael shall stand up on behalf of Israel – he is the one who stands against Antiochus IV, i.e. the one that guards the Jews. This image takes the reader behind the scenes, to see what happens in heaven, which is the determining factor in the outcome of the battle which is happening on earth, leading thus to a state of suffering which is worst than what the Jews have ever experienced.

says that the structure of Daniel 9 -12 shows various resemblances. According to Daniel 10:1-19, a heavenly being appears on the scene in order to prepare the listener for the visions. Thereafter, the revelation is described in Daniel 10:20-12:3. This is regarded as the climax of the book of Daniel – Daniel twice receives revelations which are difficult to understand.²⁵

According to Rabbinic Jewish²⁶ tradition, other functions of Michael include the prevention of the sacrifice of Abraham's son Isaac and the rescue of Abraham from the furnace into which he had been thrown by Nimrod. Then there is the episode where Michael saved Jacob, while still in his mother's womb, from being killed by Samael. He is said to be the patron of Adam as he was there when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and taught Adam how to farm. Also, it is said that when Adam died, Michael helped convince God to clean Adam's soul from sin and allow it to be brought to heaven.²⁷

Also, Michael is said to have been the teacher of Moses; the reason why the Israelites are indebted to their advocate for the supreme good of the Torah. It is furthermore said that Michael declined to bring Moses' soul to God because he had been Moses' teacher.²⁸ Michael confronts Satan over Moses' right of proper burial by disputing over the dead body of Moses.²⁹ It is believed that the angel who intermediated between God and Moses on Mount Sinai was Michael.

3. Functions of the Archangel Michael in Islam

In Islamic tradition (Arabic literature and the Qur'an³⁰), Michael is called Mikha'il, Meeka'eel or Mikhal. He is portrayed as the angel who carries out Allah's Commands concerning the rains etc., and the provisions for mankind. Meeka'eel is in charge of the

²⁵ Nel, "Opstanding, en Daniël", pp. 15-29.

²⁶ "Michael (archangel)", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/12; compare also Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

²⁷ "Michael (archangel)", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/12; compare also Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

²⁸ Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)). 2007/11/16.

²⁹ Jude 9.

³⁰ In the Qur'an Michael is mentioned only once, in Sura 2: 98.

food and the rain whilst other angels who are in charge of the clouds, seas, rivers and the winds work under him. Michael gets the order from Allah and then orders the others under his command.³¹ Furthermore, in the Islamic faith, Michael appears as second to Gabriel. During the creation of Adam, God first send Gabriel and then Michael to fetch clay to form man. When Adam and Eve were banned from paradise, it is said that Gabriel was sent to Adam whilst Michael to Eve to pass on comfort.³²



³¹ Najaar, A, *I am a Muslim*, no ISBN or date of publication, p. 158 - Also compare Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

³² Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

Chapter 5

Funeral laments and death rites in the Orthodox Greek society and the role of Archangel Michael

In this chapter we shall examine survivals of death rites and laments in Christian Orthodox Greece with special attention to the *rites of passage* (i.e. passage from the state of life to the state of death, where the Archangel Michael is involved). In doing so, we shall focus on the transition through the process of acculturation from paganism in late antiquity to early Christianity and answer the following questions:

- a) To which degree were the ancient *rites of passage* integrated with the Christian ones?
- b) Is there an analogy between Charon and Archangel Michael?

1. Greek cultural survival

In order to explain the phenomenon of Greek cultural survival and its uninterrupted evolution through centuries in terms of language, traditions and collective historical memory, Greek historians applied the theory of *cultural exchange* and integration (*acculturation*) in a diachronic way. This methodological approach has led to the conclusion that the Byzantine civilisation forms one of three main stages of its evolution – namely *Ancient Greece-Rome-Byzantium*, and that these three stages created a ‘Post-Byzantine’ culture on which Modern Greek culture has been built.¹

Regarding religious survivals of beliefs and concepts during the so called Roman-Byzantine period, due to the cautious and tolerant official policy towards paganism, many pagan elements and ancient superstitions were absorbed into the Christian faith.²

¹ For an historical analysis of the cultural evolution and its various stages in Greece, see Sansaridou-Hendrickx, T., “The awakening of Greek national consciousness during the 13th C”, *Anno Domini* II (2005), 137-181, pp. 153-164.

² For more on the transition from paganism to Christian beliefs, see Boak, A.E.R., & Sinnigen, W. G., *A History of Rome to A.D. 565*, London 1957, pp. 431-436, 501-502: Constantine the Great (280-337 A.D.) was the founder of the new Eastern Roman capital, Constantinople. Constantine favoured Christianity although he was by tradition pagan. As a result, the infrastructure of Constantinople consisted both of Christian churches as well as pagan temples, institutions, a Senate and a palace. It was during his reign that Sunday was celebrated both as the ‘Day of the Lord’ and as the ‘day of the Sun-god’. This seems to have united Christians and pagans.

To these integrated cultural practices belong the Greek funeral laments, which are death songs with features traceable from antiquity to the present day. Performed and passed on by word of mouth from ancient and medieval times to this day, these funeral laments remain part of a living folk tradition that incorporates the vernacular language, the shared symbols³ and a collective cultural code for the verbal expression of personal grief. To explain the challenge between life and death, these funeral laments, together with death rituals, have been mostly⁴ performed by women mourners (*μοιρολογήτριες*) during public performances.⁵ Laments and literary material from ancient tragedies offer valuable insight into the practice of lamentation in antiquity while formal laments in the Byzantine period are mostly found in learned poetry and prose and reflect influences of old and new forms.⁶

2. Death rituals

Traditional Greek rituals and beliefs related to lamentation are much fuller at the present time than at any other time in Greek history. Indeed, they give vital insight into the cultural and social characteristics which form part of this evolution and continuity. In light of this, the relationship between ritual customs and lamentation in Ancient, Byzantine and Modern Greek traditions needs to be seen from a historical perspective which could also reflect the social and political life respectively.⁷

As for Modern Greece, Danforth's analysis of death rituals and lamentations, as practiced in the village of Potamia in the late 70's, contributes greatly to the understanding of ritual, cultural and religious life in rural Greece. Despite certain differences, these rites were quite similar to those performed in other parts of rural Greece.

³ Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p. 21: Jung writes that "a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning." Also: "Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. This is one reason why all religions employ symbolic language or images."- Jung, 1979, pp.20-21. He furthermore states that man not only consciously produces symbols but does so - on an unconscious level, resulting in the form of dreams.

⁴ On laments performed by men, see Sansaridou-Hendrickx, T., "The Lament of Carlo Tocco for his brother's death (1418 A.D.)", *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 18 (2007), pp. 128-144.

⁵ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, pp. xi, 3 - Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 71-72.

⁶ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. xii.

⁷ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. xii.

3. Rites of passage

Danforth defines *rites of passage* as the crossing from life to death by means of a slow social process and not by an immediate physical event. Furthermore, as he explains, all rites of passage (including birth, marriage and death) share a general tripartite structure as follows:

1. Rites of separation (when a person changes from a previously occupied state to another).
2. Rites of transition (when a person is neither in one occupied state nor in the other (e.g. between world of the living and world of the dead).
3. Rites of incorporation (when a person changes into a new state).⁸

The goal of the funeral rites of passage is for:

- a. *the dead to be properly disposed of;*
- b. *the soul to reach its final destination;*
- c. *the mourners to resume their normal social life.*⁹

Danforth¹⁰ uses Van Gennep's¹¹ structure of different periods in order to explain the universal structural logic of rites of passage within a specific cultural group, especially when symbolic communication, through religion¹², myth and ritual¹³ is used. Although funerals as rites of passage would generally be expected to fall under the initial state, (rite of separation) Danforth points out that Van Gennep believed that rite of transition dominated the other rites. Even though the period of transition does not fit into any category in the social structure, the funeral ceremony is the most important element of the journey as it is the part when the person is neither in one nor in the other state. Consequently, things which are associated with this state are often regarded as impure and dangerous. Danforth symbolically associated the Greek mourners, corpses and souls

⁸ Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 35-36, 75.

⁹ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 37.

¹¹ Van Gennep, A., *The Rites of Passage*: Chicago, 1960, p. 146.

¹² According to Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, p. 90: "religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions with such an aura of factuality that moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic".

¹³ On myth and ritual, see Keesing, R. M., *Cultural Anthropology, A Contemporary Perspective*, Canberra, 1981, pp. 329-345.

respectively with three periods of the *rite of passage*: i) *Separation*; ii) *Transition*, and iii) *Incorporation*.

1. *Separation period*:

In this initial stage the soul is separated from the body.

A smooth and painless departure of the soul is symbolically interpreted as a life well lived, whilst a delayed death is linked to a troubled soul due to sins not confessed during that person's lifetime.¹⁴ This may be compared to Margaret Alexiou's comment that: "In Plato's view it was the sinful soul which was reluctant to depart from life."¹⁵ Then, weeping and lamenting is forbidden in the presence of the dying person as it is believed that it may hinder the soul from reaching its final destination.¹⁶

Also, in antiquity, it was regarded a bad omen to weep for someone who was still alive, as dying involved the struggle of the soul to break free. This was known as *ψυχορραγε* v. The soul could not depart easily if any family obligations were not met.¹⁷ There is an important parallel to be drawn between the dying and the living, as well as the body and soul.¹⁸

As for the Modern Greek concept of *separation*, many traditional and popular beliefs held by Greek villagers relating to the afterlife are in fact a phenomenon of syncretism of Orthodox Christian teachings and ancient Greek concepts.¹⁹ For instance, when a person lies at home seriously ill and signs of death appear, the priest is urgently summoned to the house to carry out prayers known as the *Anointing of the Sick*. These prayers heal the body and purify the soul through the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁴ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 39 – Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 341: "The Bible does not clearly specify what happens to the soul when the body dies, but a predominant Protestant belief is that the soul of the believer passes immediately to heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8). The Roman Catholic understanding is that most souls destined for heaven go first to Purgatory."

¹⁵ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 39 – Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 5.

¹⁸ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Danforth *The death rituals*, p. 45: On Tradition and change in antiquity to modern survivals see Alexiou *The ritual lament*, p. 4 – 51.

It is believed that at the moment of death, when the last breath leaves the body, the soul is departing from the body.²⁰

*“That is why you can hear the common people tell of fearful sights and dreadful visions at this moment...because the soul is forcing herself down, reluctant to be torn away from the body and unable to bear the sight of the approaching angels.”*²¹

After death, the corpse is washed, dressed in new clothes and laid down on a bed in the reception room. The feet, jaw and the hands are tied; the hands crossed over the chest holding a large white candle. The eyes are closed; the body covered up to the waist and an icon placed at the legs. These preparations for the funeral are always carried out by females. People, who come to pay their last respects, light a candle, place some coins on the deceased's chest, kiss the forehead and kiss the icon.²² In ancient Greece, on the other hand, just after death occurred, the body was prepared for the *próthesis*, or wake. The body was washed and dressed, usually in white, by the women of the house.²³ The eyes and mouth were closed by the next of kin. “First came the closing of the eyes and mouth, still known by the ancient term *καλύπτειν*. Sometimes, a coin was placed on the mouth.”²⁴ One cannot but compare this formal ancient ritual to the one performed in the village of Potamia. Alexiou points out that this detail is similar to many scenes found on ancient vases and not found in the Byzantine sources.²⁵

The priest arrives, performs the *Trisayion* whereupon the body is taken out of the house and placed in a wooden coffin. The funeral procession to the church is led by a group of women and some boys who carry a cross and staffs crowned with metal images of Cherubim. At the church, the coffin is placed in the centre of the church with the feet toward the altar. The Orthodox funeral service is then performed which

²⁰ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 38 - Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 37.

²¹ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 25.

²² Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 39.

²³ The *próthesis*, is where the formal lamentation of the dead began: Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, pp. 5-6.

²⁴ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 27, see also p. 39: “The coin which is still placed on the forehead or on the mouth is believed to serve as a charm against evil spirits, although one folk song has it that it is the fee for Charos to ferry the soul across the river of death.”

²⁵ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 39.

allows for the departure of the soul from the body as well as the dead from the living. During this transitional period, it is believed, the soul leaves the body at the moment of death when it is ‘set out on the road to God’. It is also believed that the soul is taken away by Charon who is associated with the Angel of the Lord (Άγγελος Κυρίου), the Archangel Michael, or a helper of the Archangel and a messenger of God.²⁶ Hendrickx points out that the description of Charon in this instance refers to the Archangel Michael as represented in icons:

“Τῶρα εἶδα ἄναν ζυπλοτο καὶ λαμπροφορεμένο,
 πῶχει τοῦ ἰσοῦ²⁷ τῶ πλουμι, τῶς ἰστραπῶς τῶ μάτια.”²⁸
 “Ο θάνατος του Διγενή” (ll. 19-20).

Finally and equally important is to understand the symbolic relationship between the mourner, corpse and soul, the corpse must be purified from its decaying flesh, the soul from its sins and finally the mourners from their impure contact with the dead. In ancient Greece, for example, a series of purification rites were performed after a burial. This involved the thorough cleansing of the household with sea-water hyssop as well as the washing of the women who were involved with the dead.²⁹

2. Transition period

In Greece, during the slow period of transition, the corpse falls into a process of decomposition which is linked to the journey of the soul en route to its final destination into the other world.

According to popular belief, the soul remains in the house for three days, then wanders on earth until the fortieth day after death as in the life of Christ.³⁰ Others

²⁶ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p.45-46 – Jn 5:22, Ac 10:42 and 2 Ti 4:1.

²⁷ The term *risos* is important. There are two possible translations: *eagle* or *lynx*. *Eagle* refers to the wings of Charon/ Michael. According to Politis, the image of the mighty lynx fits in with Michael as on some icons, Michael is represented wearing a cape, decorated with the head of a wild cat/lion/lynx. Politis, N.G., *Εκλογαί από τα τραγούδια του Ελληνικού λαού*, Athens, 1932, pp.104-105: text and commentary of poem).

²⁸ Hendrickx, “Die dood van Digenis”, pp. 99-105. (Vertaling Hendrickx, p.101: “Nou het ek iemand gesien, kaalvoet en met glasend gewaad, wat die vere van die arend het, die oë van die weerlig.”).

²⁹ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 10 – Danforth, pp. 38, 42 & 43.

³⁰ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 45: “According to Greek tradition, during the forty days after his resurrection Christ appeared to his disciples many times until on the fortieth day he ascended into heaven.” See also Holy Bible, NIV, Lk 24: 9-49, Jn 20: 1-29 and Ac 1:9-11. In Kabbani’s book, *Angels Unveiled*, it is interesting to note, during a conversation between Abraham and the Archangel Azrail, (the

believe that for the first forty days, the soul wanders close to earth visiting people it regularly saw during its life, and on the fortieth day Charon represents the soul to the Angel of the Lord, who finally takes it to heaven for judgement. It is also said that it is the Angel of the Lord or Christ who gives judgement.³¹ Archangel Michael is God's messenger of law and judgement as he appears in this capacity in The New Testament. In the following prayer, from the text of the funeral service, one sees how the Greek funeral service acknowledges the theme of separation:

*“Alas! What an agony the soul endures when from the body it is parting....
Brethren, come, and let us a farewell kiss give to him whom death has taken,
and offer thanks to God. For he has departed from the bosom of his kin...”*³²

At this point in the church service, all pass the open coffin and place some coins on the body, kiss again the forehead of the deceased and the icon. Thereafter, the coffin is taken to the graveyard, where the hands, jaw and feet are untied³³ (it is believed that the corpse will not decompose if tied up).³⁴ The priest recites the last section of the service whereupon the family returns home. Before entering, everyone purifies themselves from the impurities associated with death.³⁵ These funeral rites mark the beginning of the long transition period which normally concludes five years later. These rites indicate the agony of the absorption of the soul into paradise, its final destination, the body into the earth and the re-entry of the mourners into the world of the living.³⁶

Traditional beliefs held by Greek villagers concerning the soul and afterlife are also similar to those of ancient Greece. It is believed that the soul continues to exist in human form, i.e. the soul of the dead either ends up in heaven (which may be paradise or hell as both places are vaguely located somewhere there) or in the lower world, the

angel of death in Islam) that a forty day period, is linked to a person's life: *“This event happens forty days before the actual death of that person. We are informed forty days in advance of his impending death. That ... and from the fortieth day before his death he begins to consume his leaf from the Tree of Life without knowing it. Only forty days then remain of his life in this world, and after that there is no provision for him in it.”* Kabbani, S. H., *Angels Unveiled, A Sufi Perspective*, Cape Town, 2000, p. 163.

³¹ Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 45-46 – Jn 5:22, Ac 10:42 and 2 Ti 4:1.

³² Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 41.

³³ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 42.

³⁴ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 52 refers to Synkollitis 1934: 401-402: “Τα λύνουν γιατί αν είναι δεμένος ο νεκρός, δεν μπορεί να λιώσει”.

³⁵ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 10 – Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 42- 45.

³⁶ Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 45- 46.

world of Hades.³⁷ The latter is where the souls lead a pitiful life and is deprived of daily necessities for survival and depends on the living for that.³⁸ The following is a widow's remarks during an exhumation':

*“At death the soul emerges in its entirety, like a man. It has the shape of a man, only it's invisible. It has a mouth and hands and eats real food just like we do. When you see someone in your dreams, it's the soul you see. People in your dreams eat, don't they? The souls of the dead eat too.”*³⁹

There is a common awareness that the souls of the dead are able to see and hear the living. For this very reason memorial services are held during the transition period as it benefits the souls which are unable to care for themselves in the other world. The souls of the deceased are believed to have the same needs as human beings. Amongst these needs are water, food, light and clothing, but they are unable to satisfy these without help. Alexiou points out that the association of the thirsty ones (*οι διψασμένοι*) is synonymous with the dead (*οι πεθαμένοι*) as they depend on the living to provide for them. Constantly candles and lamps are lit in churches and graveyards throughout Greece in the belief that it helps the dead as they are lit for the souls to have light. In addition to these needs, some believe that memorial services⁴⁰ are performed to also assist the souls in obtaining forgiveness and to reach paradise. Others believe that there is no repentance for the soul after death.⁴¹

³⁷ According to Taylor, in the New Testament, the Greek word Hades refers to the place of the dead. He furthermore states that in the King James Version, three different words of hell in biblical reference is given: the Hebrew word *Sheol* and the Greek word *Hades* both refer to a place where the dead have a shadowy existence. Also, these words are often translated as 'death' or 'destruction' in modern translations whilst the Greek word *Gehenna* is associated with 'hell' as it refers to the fires of hell. Taylor, *The Complete Book*, pp. 323 & 324.

³⁸ Compare Taylor's definition of the term *Purgatory*: Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 337 - Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, pp. 45-46.

³⁹ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 46.

⁴⁰ During memorial services, food distribution takes place 'so that the dead may eat'. As it is passed and eaten by the living, so it is believed that it will reach the dead. This is parallel to the relationship between human beings and the earth. In death, the body is destroyed or eaten by the earth in order for it to pass into the other world and for the soul to enter paradise. The body of Christ is also symbolised by the bread of communion, which is eaten by Christians in His memory: Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 105- 106. Compare: Mt 26:2-29 and Taylor, *The Complete Book*, p. 337 on 'purgatory'.

⁴¹ Danforth, *The death rituals* s, p. 47.

*“Therefore I beg you all, and implore you to offer prayer unceasingly for me to Christ our God, that I be not assigned for my sins to the place of torment, but that He assign (sic!) me to the place where there is light of life”.*⁴²

Traditions that were followed in antiquity are similar to those practised in rural Greece. On a vase-painting is a detailed picture of a female mourner at a tomb with her oil-flasks (*λίκυθοι*) containing oil, wine, perfumes and baskets and clothes bundles with food. Not only were the offerings part of a feast for the dead but also part of offerings to repay the earth for the gift of life, so fertility could be promoted.⁴³

Regarding the colour black at times of mourning, Alexiou explains that throughout the transition period the dress code of the close relatives is restricted to black because it symbolises the underground colour of the earth where the corpse lies buried. The period of mourning is determined by the relationship the woman had to the deceased. As opposed to men there is quite an amount of pressure exerted by society on women who are related to the deceased.⁴⁴ According to Danforth’s interpretation about women in mourning, they are literally separated from the world of the living. This separation takes place because of their contact with the world of the dead and also as a reflection of the solitude of the body lying buried in the ground. Thus they remain socially dead until the rite of exhumation takes place which also marks the end of the transition period.⁴⁵ This passage is a move from a negative position to a positive one as it unites the survivors with society again. The last rite is the final resting place which varies in different regions and is marked as the final point of separation between the dead and the living. The exhumation is seen as the return of the deceased from the earth where they have been completely incorporated into the other world. As we can see in the following lament the deceased (Eleni) is questioned about her

⁴² Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 48.

⁴³ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 16. In chapter 1: “Traditions and change in antiquity”, she points out, that: “From the third century B.C. there is a law from Gambreion in Asia Minor which is sufficiently different to be considered independent of the earlier legislation: it contains none of the restrictions on expense and numbers, and the time limit for mourning is more generous, three months for men and four for women. It specifies that the dress worn by woman at funerals should be dark, not the usual white, and that it should not be torn.”

⁴⁵ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 54.

experience in the underworld and also her desire to return home. In the second lament the deceased needs the help of her relative to return, in her struggle with Charon:⁴⁶

α) *“My partridge, my little partridge
with whom were you arguing yesterday?”
I was arguing with my mother.
I was struggling with Haros.
Let me go, Haros! Let me go!
So that I can go to my mother,
so that I can see her again.”*

β) *A partridge stands and sings.
Eleni stands and sings.
She cries out to her brothers:
“Where are you, brothers? Come here!
Fire your rifles, all of you!
Fire your rifles, all of you!
Rescue me from Haros!”
“Don’t be afraid, Eleni!
We are near you.
We are all weeping for you.”⁴⁷*

As seen above, during the transition period, the soul gradually leaves the world of the living to enter the world of the dead. This process takes place in a parallel way to the changes the body of the deceased undergoes; as the soul starts its journey to paradise, so the body starts its decomposition to return to dust. Decomposition of the deceased must take its natural course and for this reason the Orthodox Church has disapproved of cremation.⁴⁸ As Danforth states:

⁴⁶ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 60.

⁴⁷ Funeral lament songs: Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 62 – 63:

*Πέρδικα, περδικούλα μου,
με ποιόν εμάλωνες εμές;
-Με τη μανούλα μάλωνα,
και με το Χάρο δέρνομαν,
Ν’ άφ’σες με, Χάρε μ’, ν’ άφ’σες με,
να πάω στη μανούλα μου,
να τη δω.*

*-Πέρδικα στέκει και λαλεί,
Ελένη μ’ στέκει και λαλεί,
και τ’ αδελφούλια της φωνάζει:
-Πού ‘στε αδερφούλια; ‘Λάτε ‘δω.
Ν-όλοι τουφέκια ρίζετε.
Απ’ το Χάρο να μ’ αρπάζετε.
-Μη φοβάσαι, Ελένη.
Ν’όλοι τριγύρω είμαστε.
Ν-όλοι για σένα κλαίγομε.*

⁴⁸ Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 48-49.

*“Let the body indeed be dissolved into the elements [out of which it has been compounded], and let the soul be appointed a place in the Choir of the Just.”*⁴⁹

3. *Incorporation period*

The transitional period is terminated by rites of a “secondary burial”, where the bones of the deceased are recovered and permanently re-located. Throughout this process, i.e. the removal and inspection of the condition of the corpse, the ceremony is linked to the condition of the soul. Not only the association with it, but also linkage to the process of the mourners who are separated from the rest of society at the moment of death and re-enter society after they have passed through the transitional period.

The exhumation can be seen as a ritual process to symbolically overcome death but never to bring the dead back to life. The possibility of overcoming death is an official teaching of the Orthodox Church. It is believed that the bodily resurrection of Christ and of the faithful Christians will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. The souls of the dead will be reunited with their bodies whereupon the dead as well as the living will be judged at the Last Judgement. This resurrected body and soul is not a physical body but a spiritual one that will enjoy eternal life in the Kingdom of God.⁵⁰

On substantiation, the following verses from the Bible refer:

*“it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”*⁵¹ And also *“who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*⁵²

The condition of the bones provides visible evidence, in a public milieu, of the final destiny of the soul. During the rite of exhumation, the pure white bones offer visible evidence that the soul of the deceased has entered paradise, its final destination. The whiteness of the bones metaphorically refers to the purity of the soul. Throughout this rite, the priest pours wine in the shape of the cross over the bones reciting *“you shall*

⁴⁹ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 49.

⁵⁰ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 68.

⁵¹ 1 Co 15:43-53. See also 1 Jn 3:2, Col 3:4.

⁵² Ph 3:21.

wash me and I shall be whiter than snow”⁵³ which finally coalesces the two elements (body and soul) into one structure of the belief. It is also at this final stage that the dead cease to exist as individuals as their dry, white bones are transferred to the communal village ossuary.⁵⁴

There are other occasions where the body doesn't decompose fully and is symbolised with “*the soul that did not find its way to paradise.*”⁵⁵ In such a case additional services are performed where the body is reburied and the transition period is extended in the hope that the body will decompose completely so that the soul may find its way to paradise. In the past, a partly decomposed body was a sign that the soul had not yet completely separated from the body and the world of the living. In a case like this it was also believed that the body might be kept alive either by the soul or by the devil.⁵⁶

Summers explains that the Greek Orthodox believed that a person, who was excommunicated or whose sins were unpardoned (i.e. who had not received absolution for his sins by a priest), would retain – when buried – an incorrupt, not decomposed body, and live on as a *vrykolakas*, a kind of vampire.⁵⁷ This also explains the tradition of exhumation, a custom which existed in Ancient Greece and was connected with washing the bones in wine. On the other hand, the belief in *vrykolakes* was also strongly influenced by Slavic traditions.⁵⁸ To put an end to the state of *vrykolakas*, a priest had to perform a special rite, after which the body could decompose and the soul could find rest. One may thus infer that where a person became a *vrykolakas*, Archangel Michael or Charon had not ‘helped’ the soul to reach its destiny. Although almost all testimonies come from Post-Byzantine Greece, one can be certain that the belief in *vrykolakes* and the performance of a rite to undo this curse existed in Byzantium itself. The best proof for this argument is the fact that the Byzantine monk Scholarios/Gennadios, who immediately after the fall of

⁵³ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Danforth, *The death rituals*, pp. 48- 49.

⁵⁵ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 53.

⁵⁶ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Summers, M., *The Vampire in Europe*, London, 1996, pp. 218 ff & 228 – 229.

⁵⁸ Summers, *The Vampire*, p. 217.

Constantinople in 1453 to the Turks became Patriarch, himself, performed such a *rite of passage*.⁵⁹

In the New Testament, the Archangel Michael, fights and wins the battle with Lucifer over the body of Moses:

*“But even the Archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”*⁶⁰

One is tempted to compare the disputing which took place between the devil, Michael and Moses to the following fight Heracles had with Thanatos⁶¹: “... *Herakles challenged Thanatos to a fight and rescued Alkestis’ soul just as it was being snatched away.*”⁶²

In view of all the previous parallelisms, the question can be asked whether the ‘Heracles–Thanatos’ theme has had any impact on the Greek image of Michael.⁶³ We will come back to it at a later stage. Alexiou points out⁶⁴ that in Greek funeral laments, the time of the ‘struggle of the soul’ is a time of danger⁶⁵ as the appointed *daimon*⁶⁶ who looks after each person in his lifetime attempts to lead away his soul.

⁵⁹ Summers, *The Vampire*, pp. 227-228 – Original Greek source: Emanuel Malaxos, *Historia Patriarcharum Constantinopolitanorum*, whose lost testimony was preserved in later works (e.g. Crusius, *Turco-Grecia* (Basle, 1584) and C. Angelus, *De statu hodiernorum Graecorum*, (Lipsiae, 1676) – see Summers, p.277, note 35).

⁶⁰ New Testament, Jude 9.

⁶¹ Thanatos: “*the Greek word for death (Thanatos) conveys the idea of separation*”: Rhodes, R., *Find It Quick*, p. 23.

⁶² Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 5:

⁶³ Also, Alexiou *The ritual lament*, p. 26, points out that many popular dialogues between Charon and Man were written and that similar ideas have survived regardless of the changes of deity, Hades, Charon and God.

⁶⁴ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor 15:26: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” Also, Graham, 1976, p. 138: “*Death is a battle, a profound crisis event and he refers to Paul who calls it ‘the last enemy...’*” In Rev 6:8 one reads the following: “*I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him.*”

⁶⁶ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, p. 26. Apart from the reason that angels and demons argue about the possession of the soul, there is also another reason for fearing death, being the belief that the dying man’s soul was weighed on the scale of justice. Hendrickx also comments that: “*Die beeld van die marmer dorsvloer in die slot (r.21,23) bevestig die simboliek: op die dorsvloer word die kaf van die koring geskei (en dis Michael wat die siele weeg).*”: Hendrickx, “Die dood van Digenis” p. 104. Compare also Hebrews 2:14-15: “...so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

comments that the angel appointed to guard a person at his baptism “ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ πρὸ τοῦ βαπτισματος δοθεὶς ἀτρεῖς παραφυλακῶν”, is exactly parallel to Plato’s daimon to whom each man is allotted during his lifetime: “ὁ κλάστος δαμῶν σπερ ζῶντα ἐλάχει”. This divine guarding created by the ritual of baptism, reassures the reconciliation of every man’s duality through repentance at his deathbed, leading thus his soul to its liberation from the hold of the evils. In the same way, the ritual of clay vessel breaking, which follows the wake, had as its aim the chasing away of evil spirits floating around to seize the souls.⁶⁷

The Second Coming will thus bring to a close the transition period as it reunites the body with the soul into the spiritual world. It is believed that Archangel Michael will accompany Christ at His Second Coming and will speak the word of life to all who are dead in Christ.⁶⁸ This view is based on the following verse in the New Testament:

*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”*⁶⁹

Further, in the book of Daniel, God speaks of Michael as the great prince that protects and defends His people:

*“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*⁷⁰

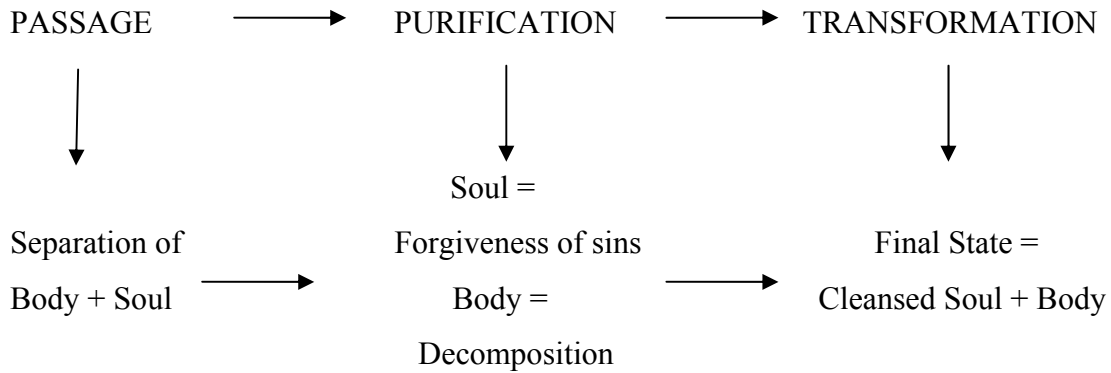
⁶⁷ Alexiou, *The ritual lament*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁸ Graham, *Angels: God’s*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ 1 Th 4:16.

⁷⁰ Dn 12: 1-4.

The following diagram schematically represents the mystical belief of passage, purification and transformation:



* * * * *

In conclusion, the dogma of the Orthodox Church denies the ultimate power of death as it promises a complete transformation of the body from the material world into the spiritual world. Also, what takes place at the rite of exhumation is an imperfect resurrection – in other words, a partial victory over material death. Total victory over death will only be achieved at the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming.⁷¹

⁷¹ Danforth, *The death rituals*, p. 69.

Chapter 6

The Aspects of Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in Archangel Michael's icon status in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Society

In chapter two of this study we saw that the Byzantine society did not consist of a single people but of several ethnic groups who shared a more or less similar culture.¹ Chapter four and five briefly touched on the elements of mythological figures (i.e. Charon, Hades and Thanatos), that blended in with the Biblical and apocalyptic depiction of Archangel Michael. It is therefore important to include all material from the different cultures and religions (i.e. Ancient Greek, Roman Civilization, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) related to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Periods as certain aspects of these have been absorbed into the religious traditions and beliefs of the Orthodox Byzantine society by means of syncretism and synthesis and thus contributed to the popularity of Michael.

The main focus will be on two different aspects of syncretism. Firstly, on the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox context and, secondly, on the role it played in the blending of pagan elements with the Biblical and Christian traditions and its influence on Michael's 'icon' status. To be able to understand syncretism, synthesis and parallelism with reference to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Society we must first look at the definitions of these words.

1. Syncretism, synthesis and parallelism

Syncretism derived from the Greek *Συγκρητισμός* meaning “*the developmental process of historical growth within a religion by accretion and coalescence of different and often orig. conflicting forms of belief and practise through the interaction with or supersession of other religions*”.²

Syncretism attempts to merge different or sometimes contradictory beliefs or practices. Syncretism often occurs in music, literature, art, politics, religion and other cultural

¹ Yanagi, et al., *Byzantium*, p. 7.

² *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Vol III. S-Z. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Chicago a.o., 1981, p. 2319.

expressions and attempts to reconcile paradoxical beliefs but is also sometimes seen as a distortion of original beliefs, principles, practices or religions.³ Syncretism is thus the blending of different beliefs or practises in religion or the combination of different philosophical ideas/ stories/ symbols etc. with others. This also agrees with the anthropological definition of syncretism by Seymour-Smith: “*a term usually applied to religious phenomena or movements, though it may be applied to cultural change in general.*”⁴

On synthesis and parallelism, Hendrickx explains that ‘synthesis’ refers to the “*vorming van ‘n saamvattende geheel uit dele of onderdele, op verbinding dus en saamvoeging*”,⁵ while he points to an evolution of equal value, development or succession of elements or happenings in two different situations.⁶

To fully appreciate syncretism in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine context, a close look at religious syncretism as much as cultural syncretism is required. Also, many scholars prefer to restrict ‘syncretism’ to religious interactions.⁷ It is stated that religious syncretism occurs (consciously or not) when a less powerful group of people encounters the religion of a more powerful group. The result is “*adaption and self-preservation among the weaker group*”.⁸ Religious syncretism joins two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or it is the absorption of beliefs from diverse traditions into a religious tradition.⁹ Seymour-Smith explains that the term is mainly used to refer to situations of cultural contact. This contact produces religious systems which consist of a mixture of Christian and native beliefs¹⁰ and fits the definition which Keesing offers to describes religious syncretism: “*The synthesis of old and borrowed elements – syncretism – has been most striking in the realm of religion, where Christianity has been spread to*

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism> - www.yourdictionary.com/syncretism 2007/11/15 - Van Rheenen, G., “Worldview and Syncretism”, <http://missiology.org/mongolianlectures/worldviewandsyncretism.htm>.

⁴ Seymour-Smith, *Macmillan Dictionary*, p. 274.

⁵ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van die Romeins*, p. 269.

⁶ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van die Romeins*, p. 269.

⁷ Lindenfield, D. *Syncretism* www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/4.1/lindenfeld.html 2007/11/15.

⁸ Lindenfield, *Syncretism*, www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/4.1/lindenfeld.html.

⁹ Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism> 2007/11/15.

¹⁰ Seymour-Smith, *Macmillan Dictionary*, p. 274.

every continent.” On synthesis Keesing adds that *“in religion, new belief and traditional ones are blended or coexist...”*¹¹

Supporters of belief systems that demonstrate an exclusivist approach in religious systems, sometimes see syncretism as a betrayal of their pure truth as it corrupts the original religion. Also, critics of a specific syncretistic trend may use the term ‘syncretism’ as a ‘disapproving label’ – implying that those who wish to integrate a new view, belief, or practice into a religious system actually bend the original faith. On the other hand, non-exclusivist supporters may incorporate other traditions into their own or sometimes create new religions to reduce inter-religious tension and antagonism. The resultant effect is often the offending of the original religions in question. These religions, on the other hand, preserve some appeal to a less exclusivist spectator.¹²

Finally, Van Rheezen describes that *“religious syncretism occurs when churches are not equipped to become the nurturing communities”*.¹³

She argues that a transplanted church will almost at all times be a replica of the church in the sending culture in contrast to a contextualised church. A transplanted church will transfer the original culture/religion to the new culture/religion where it will reproduce exactly as it did. In contrast, a contextualised church *“is like planting ‘God’s seed’ in new soil and allowing the seed to grow naturally adapting to the language, thought processes, and rituals of the new culture without losing its eternal meanings.”*¹⁴

Hence, the conclusion is that in Byzantium, the church in Constantinople became a contextualised church and not a transplanted church (Rome was first the nurturing capital to the capital of Byzantium but was later replaced by Constantinople). In this connexion it is worthwhile mentioning that *“by being largely freed from the incubus of the Roman state and of the closely associated cultural heritage of Greece and Rome, the kind of*

¹¹ Keesing, Cultural Anthropology, pp. 394 & 395.

¹² Lindenfield, D. “Syncretism” www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/4.1/lindenfeld.html.

¹³ Van Rheezen, G. “Worldview and Syncretism”

<http://missiology.org/mongolianlectures/worldviewandsyncretism.htm>, 2007/11/15.

¹⁴ Van Rheezen, “Worldview and Syncretism”.

*power which was of the essence of the Gospel was given freer course than it had been accorded under the professedly Christian Emperors.*¹⁵

2. Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in the Hellenistic, Roman and Judaic World

To be able to appreciate the above terms in their Orthodox and Byzantine and Post-Byzantine context, we should consider them first in their Hellenistic – Roman- and Judaic contexts. Syncretism and synthesis functioned as an essential feature of Ancient Greek religion, especially during Alexander the Great's reign. Elements within the Hellenistic rule blended in with Persian, Anatolian, Egyptian and Etruscan-Roman elements.¹⁶

Hendrickx says that syncretism in the Hellenistic context refers often to the religious coalescence and to the identification of gods and religious content by association to the ancient world. On synthesis, he adds "*in die Hellenistiese konteks gebruik ons die term met hierdie selfde betekenis: 'n saamvoeging of saamvattende verbinding van verskillende dele op kulturele, wetenskaplike, godsdienstige, en artistieke gebied.*"¹⁷

On the influences that Judaism and Hellenism had on Christianity, Latourette¹⁸ explains that "*the course of events made it clear that Christianity was not to lose its distinctive message by absorption into the parent Judaism when the faith was confronted with an even greater menace.*" He cautions that the danger here was that as the Gospel moved out into the non-Jewish world it was at risk of losing its pure original faith. He furthermore writes that "*The threat was especially acute from Hellenism and the atmosphere of the Hellenistic world, for, as we have seen, it was in the portions of the population of the Empire where Hellenistic influences were especially strong that Christianity had its first major spread.*" Latourette also explains that the confidence in Greek philosophy was a threat and describes it as "*the incorporation of some of the attitudes of the Hellenistic mind*". He then adds that Platonism and Neo-Platonism moulded the thinking and approach of Christian converts from a Hellenistic milieu which often came with and continued in their thought, performance and worship.

¹⁵ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 257.

¹⁶ Anonymous, "Syncretism", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

¹⁷ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van die Romeins*, p. 269.

¹⁸ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 122.

Hendrickx describes parallelism in the Hellenistic period as follows:

*“Inderdaad het hierdie Hellenistiese periode op verskillende plekke gelykwaardige problem voortgebring, en die mense, bewoë deur ‘n uniforme of algemeen ooreenkomstige tydsgees, het dikwels “ewewydige” oplossings uitgewerk vir “gelykwaardige” probleme, of “ewewydige” simptome geopenbaar in “gelykwaardige” situasies: militêr, polities, ekonomies, religious, ens.”*¹⁹

Without copying the cult practises, the Romans incorporated the Olympian deities with similar images in the Etruscan-Roman tradition. Greek gods which were introduced to the Roman Civilization were Zeus (Jupiter), Artemis (Diane) and Dionysus (Bacchus), just to name a few. Examples of syncretic gods of the Hellenistic epoch and of the East Mediterranean are Serapis, Isis, Mithras and Cybele.²⁰

The Roman civilization had an open-minded attitude towards all religions. The historian Gibbon says that the *“various modi of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people equally useful.”*²¹ Indeed, Emperor Alexander Severus added a statue of Jesus to his private collection of numerous pagan gods.²²

To understand the beginnings of Christianity and the nature and characteristics of its faith, one needs to also examine the features of Judaism. Judaism, which is one of the sources of Christian Orthodoxy, fought on the one hand against syncretistic inclinations²³ (e.g. the Ten Commandments, the golden calf, the railing of prophets against temple prostitution, witchcraft and local fertility cults); whilst on the other hand, other scholars believed that Judaism developed its concept of monotheism and took on characteristics such as eschatology, angelology and demonology through contacts with Zoroastrianism.²⁴

¹⁹ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van die Romeins*, p. 269.

²⁰ Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

²¹ Cassels, L. 1965 “What’s the Difference? A Comparison of the Faiths Men Live By” <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1623&C=1572>.

²² Cassels, L. 1965 1965 “What’s the Difference? A Comparison of the Faiths Men Live By” <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1623&C=1572>.

²³ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 11.

²⁴ Zoroastrianism is a religion based on the philosophy credited to the prophet Zoroaster, which was long official in Persia. See Latourette, 1975, pp. 4, 7 and Boyce, M., “Zoroastrianism: A Shadowy but Powerful Presence in the Judeo – Christian World”, London, 1987, "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>".

They regarded their god, Yahweh, as the God of the universe, the maker and ruler of the universe. In spite of the Jewish veto on polytheism and idolatry, quite a few blends of Judaism with other religions have taken place.²⁵

It is said that much of the late Midrash detail about Archangel Michael was conveyed to Christian mythology through the book of Enoch and was hence further elaborated. In spite of the rabbinical prohibition against appealing to angels to act as intermediaries between God and His people, Michael occupied a certain place in Jewish liturgy.²⁶ In Rabbinic Jewish tradition for example, Michael is the advocate of Israel, fighting with the princes of other nations and with the angel Samael, Israel's accuser. There were two prayers written pleading with Michael to intervene in favour of Israel as he was the prince of mercy.²⁷

Also, many modern commentators believe that all the specific names for the angels were brought back by the Jews from Babylon and that Michael is one of the principal angels in Abrahamic tradition.²⁸ Reference is made to Rabbi Simeon Ben Lakish (AD 230-270) who states that all the names for the angels were brought back from Babylon.²⁹ Then there is a legend, which seems to be of Jewish origin and adopted by the Copts, which has it that Michael was first sent by God to bring Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, and later freed his nation from Babylonian captivity. It is also believed that the legend of Michael's fight with angel Samael, gave rise to the legend of Michael fighting the dragon³⁰ (Satan) as described in the book of Revelations.³¹ This legend is not found in Jewish sources but reference is made in the Kabbalah of Samael being called "*the primitive serpent*".³²

²⁵ Anonymous, "Syncretism", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

²⁶ Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)).

²⁷ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

²⁸ <http://angelstoday.net/index.php?lang=en&way=2archagels/1michael> 2007/11/13.

²⁹ Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)).

³⁰ Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel))

³¹ Rv. 12:7.

³² Anonymous, "Michael (archangel)", [http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)).

3. Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in Orthodox Byzantium

As understood, religious syncretism usually occurs in areas where various religious traditions exist in closeness and function actively in the culture. Therefore, syncretism of Christian beliefs and practices through cultural accommodation was the outcome of diverse dominant cultures in Byzantium. As a result, emerging Christianity appeared to have incorporated many Jewish, Hellenistic and pagan cultural elements.³³

Alexiou points out that the change in the position of the Orthodox Church was perhaps one factor in the process of assimilation. She also states that the transition from paganism in late antiquity to Christianity in early Byzantium was a slow process. Byzantium's official policy towards paganism was cautious and tolerant resulting in many pagan elements and ancient superstitions being absorbed into the Christian faith.³⁴

On pagan mystery cults Campbell writes: *“and not only the mythic motifs but even the festival dates of the contemporary pagan mystery cults were openly adopted by the Christian Fathers.”*³⁵

He furthermore states that *“we learn from the fourth-century saint and churchman Epiphanius (ca.315-402), for example, of an annual festival observed in Alexandria on January 6, the date assigned to the Epiphany and (originally) the Nativity of Christ, and to this Baptism as well. The pagan occasion was in celebration of the birth of the year-god Aion to the virgin goddess Kore, a Hellenized transformation of Isis.”*³⁶

4. Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in Islam (Post-Byzantium)

As a result of the Arab Invasion, in the seventh century, a part of the Byzantine world came under Islamic rule. I therefore, found it necessary to also include information on Archangel Michael that relate to Islam and the Byzantine Society.³⁷

³³ Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

³⁴ Margaret Alexiou, *The ritual lament in Greek tradition*, Cambridge, 1974, p. 24.

³⁵ Campbell, J., *The Mythic Image*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1974, p. 34.

³⁶ Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p. 34.

³⁷ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 284.

The Empire had hoped, in vain, to set up a common Christian front against the invasion. An attempt was thus made to bring Orthodox and Monophysites together, but this brought another wave of controversy.³⁸ Hussey comments that “*Islam borrowed freely from the way of life found in conquered Byzantine provinces, or from the resources of Greek scholarship which lay at its doors. And the Byzantines did likewise. One particularly noticeable instance of this cross-fertilization is found in Byzantine monasticism and in its Vitae sanctorum. Non-Hellenic elements were frequently introduced into Byzantine hagiology and hagiography, and there was constant interchange of ideas owing to factors such as polyglot monastic centres, oriental colonies within the Christian world...*”³⁹

Islam, on the other hand, claimed to be the rejuvenation of original teaching of monotheism.⁴⁰ On syncretism, Muslims do not regard the incorporation of many beliefs from other religions such as Judaism and Christianity as syncretic, but rather as disclosure of divine revelations through the Prophet Muhammad that Allah began with other prophets and all those from the descendants of Abraham. However, it is said that these revelations in time became corrupted due to the lack of written manuscripts or ongoing translations from one language to another.⁴¹

5. Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in Orthodox Greek Rituals

Concerning the death-related practices in ancient Greece, Danforth states that “*the traditional beliefs held by Greek villagers concerning the soul and the afterlife are an interesting syncretism of Orthodox Christian teachings and various popular beliefs that are remarkable similar to those known to have existed in ancient Greece*”.⁴² Hendrickx also confirms that many other traditional and popular beliefs of the Orthodox Christian teachings, relating to the afterlife, had parallelisms with Greece.⁴³

According to Alexiou, many customs and beliefs changed little since antiquity. Also in the countryside of Greece, reference is made to pagan ritual which is found in various

³⁸ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 284.

³⁹ Hussey, *The Byzantine World*, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Quran 3:3-3:4 see also Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

⁴¹ Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>.

⁴² Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, p. 45.

⁴³ Hendrickx, “*Die dood van Digenis*”, pp. 99-106.

sources from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. From the homilies of the Christian fathers, works of Emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos and handbook of Symeon, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, it is understood that the correct observation of funeral ritual was a matter of concern throughout the Byzantine period. Alexiou cautions us that as the evidence for survival of the ritual lament mainly comes from homilies, chronicles and commentaries and are mentioned only with disapproval, it cannot be taken as a true reflection of popular tradition.⁴⁴ She also states that there is a discrepancy between the official attitudes of the early fathers of the Church and of those practised by the village priests today who display certain pagan elements in these practises.⁴⁵

Alexiou argues that paganism is no longer a threat nor regarded as a powerful force to the Church as the two practises are coalesced and the Church consents to what it once condemned. Pagan customs function in unison with Orthodox Christianity.⁴⁶ Moreover, she points out that there is continuity in the general pattern of the ritual in detail, practices and terminology of Greek tradition. Relating to the ancient and Byzantine material, also, Alexiou explains that some practises in Modern Greek tradition can be regarded as parallel to the ancient ritual, though not recorded in Byzantine tradition.⁴⁷

Hendrickx, on the other hand, writes that the archives of the Ancient as well as the Hellenistic and Byzantine East were lost or misplaced. Ancient epigraphic documents may be found anywhere in Europe but not at the place of their origin. The preserved documents constitute a small minority only, and are restricted in their use by virtue of their analytical, direct, fragmentary and often propagandistic character.⁴⁸ This finding makes it difficult to trace back the factual origin of certain cultural survivals regarding death rituals.

⁴⁴ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Hendrickx, *Geskiedenis van Romeinse*, p. 48. Hendrickx furthermore says that the Ancient and Byzantine archives and/or documents are haphazardly published in any possible (or impossible) magazine or publication and often remain inaccessible or unknown. In the past the classicist – and Byzantinist – were more literate, philological than socio-historically orientated and therefore over attention was given to the authors and thus epigraphical and papirological documents received less attention. The study of the mentioned became a speciality on its own and is not necessarily part of the scientific equipment of the classicist – historian.

6. The role of Syncretism, Synthesis and Parallelism in the blending of pagan elements

There was a common interest in the relationship humans had with the supernatural in ancient Greek religion, Judaism, Islam and Christianity. This common interest is still prevalent today. This relationship is thought to engage divine messengers (angels) sent to man to inform, instruct or command him. In Greek mythology for example, Hermes, the son of Zeus, was the herald of the Olympian gods. He conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld.⁴⁹ It was believed that the souls of the deceased were led to the gates of Hades⁵⁰ by Hermes. Hermes had a winged hat and sandals, bore a caduceus, entwined with snakes, overpowered by wings. He was known as the ‘psycho-pomp’ (soul –guide) and his staff acquired wings (above the serpents), becoming the caduceus or winged staff of Mercury, and the god himself became the ‘flying man’ with his winged hat and sandals.⁵¹ Once at the gates of Hades, Charon, the ferryman of the dead, took the souls with his boat across the River Acheron from the living world to the Underworld. In Greek, Charon means ‘causer of joy’.⁵²

In Greek folklore, it is believed that Michael assumed Hermes’ role as the psycho-pomp who leads the souls to Hades.⁵³ It is also believed that Michael performs the role of weighing of the souls on Judgement day. However, Alexiou points out that during the twelfth century, Eustathios of Thessaloniki referred to the phrase εἰς τὴν Αἰδου κέσθαι ζυγῶν (to lie on Hades’ scales) and again, three centuries later, in one of the popular dialogues between man and Charon: *In my hand I hold the scales of Mercy,*

*To weigh out what you’ve done...*⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Servi, K., *Greek Mythology*, Athens, 2001, pp. 44 & 45.

⁵⁰ On the gates of Hades see Lindsay, G., *Life after Death or Where are the dead?* Texas, 1956: Hades is the Greek word for the Hebrew word ‘Sheol’, both mean ‘the abode of the dead.’

⁵¹ Examples of combined symbols are the winged horse and the winged dragon which unite the transcendent symbol of the snake and the bird. The horned serpent appears in 16th century Latin alchemy as the quadricornutus serpents (four-horned serpent), a symbol of Hermes: see Henderson, J., ‘Ancient myths and modern man’ pp. 154 & 155 – Harris & Platzner, *Classical Mythology*, pp. 119 & 122.

⁵² Servi, Katerina, *Greek Mythology*, 2001, Ekthotike Athenon, pp. 44 & 45.

⁵³ Anonymous, ‘Michael’, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁵⁴ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 26:

“Ζῆγι κρατῶ στο χῆρι μου ελεημοσῶνης
γιῶ να ζῶσω τα ’καμες

Alexiou adds that the idea of the weighing of the dying man's soul has survived in spite of the changes of deity, Hades, Charon and God. It is incorporated into the funeral service of the Orthodox Church: "*Have mercy on me, all-holy angels... for I have no good deed to balance the burden of my evil ones.*"⁵⁵

Orthodox mortals honoured Michael as the guardian of Paradise and collector of souls as he took the role of the angel of death, i.e. the angel who brought the souls of dying people into the supernatural world.⁵⁶ In the Epistle of Jude,⁵⁷ Michael argues with Satan over the dead body of Moses: "*But even the Archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses...*"⁵⁸ As such Michael was represented as a hero warrior who fought for the possession of the soul, or as a rather good personage who supported and comforted the dying.⁵⁹

Alexiou points out that great importance is attached to the way the soul leaves the body. An agonised death, for example, is seen as struggle with Charon (also known as *χαροπάλεμα*) or a premature lament which was risky as it was believed that it scared away the angels and spirits which had to escort the soul, leaving it to the mercies of Charon. This is called *ἄγγελόκομμα* (angel-cutting) "*a belief not unlike those described by the Church fathers, except that it is Charon and not the devil that seizes the soul.*"⁶⁰

She furthermore says that the fight with death is described as being literal: a dying man may call out that he can see Charon approaching him, armed with a sword, dressed in black, sometimes winged, like the image of ancient Hades.⁶¹ In the following ballad a young man faces Thanatos; the fight between them is described as a heroic act as it reflects the expressions for the last struggle of survival of the soul:

*– Young man, God has sent me to take your soul.
– Without force or sickness, I will not give up my soul.
Come, and let us wrestle on the marble threshing floor.*

⁵⁵ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 26.

⁵⁶ Hendrickx, "Agathias se epigramme oor 'ikone'," – Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ Jude 9.

⁵⁸ Jude 9.

⁵⁹ Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, pp. 45 & 46.

⁶⁰ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 38.

⁶¹ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, pp. 37 & 38.

*And if you win, Charondas, you can take my soul,
and if it is I who win, you must go and leave me.”*⁶²

And also “*my soul is fighting, struggling, I tremble and go out, I wrestle with Charon, I tremble at, fight with, the angel.*”⁶³ Hendrickx states that Digenis was not slain by an earthly enemy but confronted by the supernatural Charon. This offered two advantages:

- i) it gives the narrator/poet the opportunity to allow Digenis to die in a tragic dual with an unconquerable hero, and
- ii) Digenis completes his quest on a metaphysical level.⁶⁴

But not all believe that Michael assumed Charon’s role as the psycho-pomp who leads the souls to Hades. There is some controversy about the role Michael took concerning the souls. Danforth states that various traditional beliefs concerning death held by Greek villagers are a form of syncretism of Orthodox Christian teachings and beliefs which are similar to those in ancient Greece. They believe that it is Charon who takes the soul of the dying person:

*“when the soul leaves the body at death it is said to have ‘set out on the road to God’ (kinise ya to dhromo tou theou). It has been taken away by Haros, a personification of death, who is either identified with the Angel of the Lord (Angelos Kiriou), the Archangel Michael, or is believed to be a subordinate of the Archangel and a messenger of God.”*⁶⁵

According to Alexiou, the ancient figure of Hades has disappeared and his successor is not God or Archangel Michael but Charon. Charon is responsible for escorting the dead to the Underworld. This place is known as Hades and is more similar to its ancient concept than its Christian idea of hell.⁶⁶

⁶² Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 38. Also, in another funeral lament from Tsakonia, a dying girl sees Charon approach and begs her mother to hide her in a cage, in a chest, among the basil and balsam plants; but her mother replies sternly that she will give her over to Charon: p. 122.

⁶³ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 38.

⁶⁴ Hendrickx, “*Die dood van Digenis*”, pp. 99 – 106.

⁶⁵ Danforth, *The Death Rituals*, p. 45.

⁶⁶ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 49.

However, many Christians accept that it is Michael who takes up the role of Charon. It is believed that this idea is common among Christians and is not found in Jewish sources although his role of being in charge of the souls appears in many Jewish writings. This is evident in the type of offerings which Michael brings to the altar. These offerings are sometimes believed to be the souls of the just and have become widespread in Jewish mystical writings which also explain the important position which Michael occupies in Jewish eschatology.⁶⁷

In the book of Revelation,⁶⁸ parallelisms of the end of Hades and Death (Thanatos) are found: *“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*⁶⁹

In the following verse, reference is made to Christ who conquers Hades and Death (Thanatos): *“... Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*⁷⁰

We accept Alexiou’s findings that Charon occasionally finds his way to Paradise, assuming the role of Saint Peter as keeper of the gate. It is also clear that some aspects of pagan ritual received official recognition; Charon has survived because he is the servant of God. Mourners address their prayers to him to release the dead from their graves on the Christian festivals as recorded in the following folk song:⁷¹

*“I will go down to Hades and to Paradise,
To find Charos and say a few words to him.”*⁷²

In the earlier ballad of the young man’s fight with death, Charon states that he was sent by God: *“Young man, God has sent me to take your soul...”*⁷³

⁶⁷ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁶⁸ Rv 20: 13-15.

⁶⁹ Rv 20: 13-15.

⁷⁰ Rv 1: 17-18. Also compare Lindsay, G., *Life After Death*, Texas, 1956, pp. 48-51.

⁷¹ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, pp. 49 & 50.

⁷² Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 50.

Also, Hendrickx states that the ‘Death of Digenis’ is a *psychomachia*, as it is a fight for Digenis’s soul and the possible identification of Charon to Archangel Michael is therefore important. Charon portrays a tragic, negative and horrible figure who brings the souls to the underworld and who shares death and sorrow. Michael is the commander of God’s army and although he calls upon the souls – these conquered souls are brought to an immortal, celestial army of God. “*Die oorwinning van Charon-Michael op Digenis bring dus weliswaar die fisiese dood van Digenis mee, maar hy word opgeneem onder die onsterflike hemelse wagters.*”⁷⁴

* * * * *

Thus, we may conclude that the Christian ‘promise of paradise’ altered the negative images of mythological figures such as Thanatos, Hades and Charon into (a) positive figure(s) which is either Charon, Archangel Michael or Christ Himself, capable of bridging earthly life with the eternal one.



⁷³ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, p. 38.

⁷⁴ Hendrickx, “Die dood van Digenis”, pp. 99 – 106.

Chapter 7

Michael's Byzantine and Post-Byzantine iconographic identity as understood and/or revealed in the interpretation of 'icon' in its contemporary meaning

Firstly, one needs to examine to what extent the correlation between the meanings of 'icon' in the Byzantine, Post-Byzantine and today's context may be compared. In order to do this comparative approach, a few famous contemporary 'icons' will be selected and the characteristics found in these 'iconic' figures will be analysed; then similar patterns found in each case will be highlighted and compared to those found in Michael's Byzantine and Post-Byzantine icon. Lastly, the way Michael is represented in a modern-day society will be looked at.

1. What elevates an ordinary person to the status of an 'icon'?

At first, the term icon was only used for an image of a spiritual being or a sacred person. As indicated in chapter one, an icon has a modern-day meaning of "*someone greatly admired*", often seen as a perfect example, an "*idealised role model*".¹

Another description of a modern-day 'icon' is "*...a larger-than-life image, inherent glamour and eventual flamboyance, strength through adversity...*"² Then there are also 'Patron Saints' who "*are chosen as special protectors or guardians over areas of life*" and "*are often chosen today because an interest, talent, or event in their lives overlaps with the special area.*"³

Indeed, when a person is greatly admired in society(s), that person is adored and even elevated to a messianic role or religious icon to which many look up to with high regard and respect. In the following three cases, it is clear that only a particular section of the society in which they functioned, elevated these ordinary people to the status of 'icon' in modern society.

¹ Collins, *Today's English Dictionary*, p. 388; see also Eco, U., *On Beauty*, pp. 418 – 430.

² "Modern examples: in sports", "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay icon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_icon)", 2007/12/13.

³ Anonymous, "Patron Saints", "<http://www.catholic.org/saints/patron.php>" 2007/11/16.

2. The example of David Beckham as a ‘modern icon’

David Beckham is seen as an icon in the field of international soccer. Brick is of the opinion that David Beckham was a “*post-modern ersatz religious icon*” who has been elevated to a messianic role by the public. He further states that the public seeks meaning “*in an apparently meaningless world disillusioned with traditional social markers once provided by politics, royalty and religion*”; Beckham was thus a “*modern Christ*” figure. “*What happens is that society seeks to elevate particular figures, like Beckham, whom we can then read values into and say, look, this is how we should behave. It’s an ersatz spirituality. We want to believe that what we invest in David Beckham will see us through things in our lives.*”⁴

Jardine gave his personal view of Beckham as the “*21st century equivalent of King Arthur*” and adds: “*For many people around the world Beckham today represents the contemporary equivalent of what Arthur and his knights have traditionally stood for as the dominant male heroic ideal, the virile male body pushed to extremes, bringing fame and adulation, held up as the prime example of the best a man can do.*”⁵

Another source describes David Beckham as a ‘*gay icon*’: “*in Beckham’s case, it is his combination of athletic prowess, good looks and flamboyant private life*”.⁶

3. The example of Coretta Scott King as a ‘modern icon’

Others achieved iconic status for devoting their lives to the eradication of social injustice and the restoration of human dignity. Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was such a person. At an early age she was exposed to the injustices of life in a racially segregated society. These occurrences led her to strive for equality and pursue the cause of justice for all. She attained iconic status for the role she played in the fight for the civil liberties of black Americans, equality for all, freedom from racism, exploitation, oppression and discrimination not only in the United States but throughout the world. She was referred to as “*an icon for justice*” and “*an icon to whom many looked up with deep*

⁴ *Sunday Times* “Christ-like meaning found in Beckham”, p. 5, September 18, 2005.

⁵ *Sunday Times* “Christ-like meaning”, p. 5.

⁶ “Modern examples: in sports”, ["http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay icon"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_icon).

reverence and respect.”⁷ Also, a “warrior figure pushing aside male-dominated leadership to perpetuate Dr King’s legacy...” as well as “Coretta behaved with the dignity of royalty, a quality also misunderstood.” She was seen as “a woman of substance, a partner in ‘the dream,’ a freedom fighter in her own right who helped institutionalise the memory of Dr King for all people for generations to come.”⁸

4. The example of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara as a ‘modern icon’

Argentine born, Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, known as the “poster boy of Marxist revolution,”⁹ is regarded today as a global icon. Che became a symbol of revolutionary zeal. After travelling throughout Latin America, he concluded that armed revolution was the only solution to the continent’s cruel social inequities.¹⁰ He was a celebrated guerrilla fighter who helped Fidel Castro seize power in Cuba.¹¹ Che Guevara is described as “a symbol of a time when people died heroically for what they believed in” and whose “iconic status was assured because he failed”.¹²

Campbell says that the cult of Che is thriving today, as he was recently voted as ‘Argentina’s greatest historical figure’.¹³ Che was later described by Campbell and other authors as “the most complete man of his epoch”. He has become ever more fashionable and his bearded visage is an icon which is seen on many facets of media such as T-shirts, clocks, wall art, tattoos and even bikinis. He is furthermore described as a ‘Romantic hero’¹⁴ to legions of fans throughout the world¹⁵ – “to endure as a romantic icon, one must not just die young, but die hopelessly.”¹⁶

⁷ *The Star*, 31 January, 2006.

⁸ *The Star*, 8 February, 2006.

⁹ “Icons”, *Sunday Times: Lifestyle*, 23 September, 2007, p. 9.

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che>.

¹¹ “Icons”, *Sunday Times, Lifestyle*, 23 September, 2007, p. 9.

¹² O’ Hagan, S. *Just a Pretty Face? The Observer*, 11 July, 2004 – <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/2007/11/19>.

¹³ “Icons”, *Sunday Times, Lifestyle*, 23 September, 2007, p. 9.

¹⁴ “Icons”, *Sunday Times, Lifestyle*, 23 September, 2007, p. 9. <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story> – see also Henderson, “Ancient myths”, p. 73: “The hero figure is an archetype, which has existed since time immemorial” & p. 123: “The myth of the typical hero – his capacity to save or protect beautiful women from terrible danger. (The damsel in distress was a favorite myth of medieval Europe.)”.

¹⁵ “Icons”, *Sunday Times, Lifestyle*, 23 September, 2007, p. 9. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che> 13/12/2007.

¹⁶ <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story>.

According to Machover,¹⁷ the attribution around Che which made him a global icon, was a French creation which became international with time. He says that French intellectuals fell under the charm of the only ‘comandante’ who could speak their language.¹⁸ There is another possibility of how he became an international icon. Osborne believes that Che’s attribution possibly gave him iconic status because of the picture taken by Alberto Korda.



This picture is said to be the most reproduced image of all time; it was taken up as a symbol of leftist rebellion - a symbol of protesting students in 1968 and later adopted by subsequent generations.²⁰ Che was later executed, his face was washed, hair and beard tidied, and then his corpse was photographed. To his enemies’ dismay, the image that was circulated throughout the world recalled countless Renaissance paintings of the dead Christ taken down from the cross- and so Che attained iconic status for the second time. The ‘Christ-like’ image prevailed. In death, he was frozen forever; had he lived, the myth of Che would have long since died.²¹

¹⁷ Machover was a Cuban exiled in France since 1963 as well as the author of *The Hidden Face of Che*: Sunday Times Lifestyle, 23 Sept, 2007, “Icons”, p. 9.

¹⁸ “Intellectuals such as Debray who became an acolyte of Guevara and professor of philosophy at Havana’s university in the 60’s”: “Icons”, Sunday Times, Lifestyle, 23 September, 2007, p. 9.

¹⁹ "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara_in_popular_culture".

²⁰ Osborne, D. “Who was Che Guevara, and does he deserve his iconic status?” *The Independent*, 6 June, 2006 http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_20060606/ai_n16453878.

²¹ O’ Hagan, S. “Just a Pretty Face?” ["http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story"](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story), 2007/11/19.

5. Characteristics and/or functions of today's icons

In all three mentioned cases it is understood that only a part of society, and not all, elevated these figures to 'iconic' status and for that reason society has an icon for nearly everything – an icon for acting such as Charlize Theron,²² an icon for soccer such as David Beckham,²³ an icon for reggae such as Lucky Dube.²⁴

6. Comparison of characteristics and functions of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox Michael to modern-day icons

In our examples, David Beckham, though a global brand, is seen as an icon by the soccer fraternity; Coretta Scott King, though admired globally, was elevated to iconic status by Black Americans; and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, though regarded as a most enduring global icon, achieved cult status as an 'icon of revolution' and emerged as a 'sacred' figure. He was a political figure but was extensively used in pop art and that kept his legacy even after his death.

In considering the question, 'what elevates an ordinary person to an iconic status in modern society?' one has to start by conceding that a definite transformation took place. These icons differ 'enormously' in detail, but the more closely one examines them the more one sees similar patterns, even though they were developed by groups without any direct cultural contact. In mythology, romantic heroes often fight dragons or monsters, to rescue 'maidens in danger'. Examples are found in Greek mythology – when Pursues fought the dragon to rescue Andromeda and Theses who slew the Minotaur and rescued Adriane. Then there is also the case of St. George who is portrayed in a similar role of the typical romantic hero; St. George is represented in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine icons fighting the dragon and rescuing the beautiful maiden from terrible danger.²⁵

In late medieval Christianity, Saint Michael, as well as Saint George, became the patron of chivalry, and the patron of the first chivalric order of France which is known as the

²² *The Star*, "News", September 22, 2005, p. 10.

²³ *Sunday Times* "Christ-like", p. 5.

²⁴ Ntuli, D., "Rastas never die...", "News and Opinion", *Sunday Times*, 21 October, 2007 - "News and Opinion", *Sunday Times*, 10 October, 2007.

²⁵ Servi, *Greek Mythology*, – Harris & Platzner, *Classical Mythology* – Campbell, *The Mythic Image* – Henderson, "Ancient myths", pp. 104 - 157.

Order of Saint Michael of 1469. Many Christians associate Michael with the patron saint of the warrior, police officers, soldiers and paratroopers.²⁶ Saint Michael's association with Saint George as patrons proves to be significant as these two 'romantic' heroes had something in common: They both had to slay the dragon (Satan) to liberate a maiden. The heroic rescue remains the same; St. George killed the dragon to free a maiden in a physical sense and St. Michael killed the dragon to free a maiden in a symbolic sense. This symbolic form of the maiden refers to God's chosen people known also as "*the bride of Christ*"²⁷ as well as "*the wife of the Lamb*"²⁸ or "*a pure virgin*"²⁹ or "*a chosen people*".³⁰ Latourette confirms that Paul spoke of the body of Christ as being the Church of Christ, "*The Epistle to the Ephesians states that Christ is the head of the Church and dreams of the Church as ultimately being without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. The Christian fellowship, so the New Testament held, was to be a new Israel, a chosen people, but it was to be drawn from all mankind. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles were to be members of 'the household of God,' growing into 'an holy temple.' Not only was the Church to embrace both Jews and Gentiles, but in it there was also to be no distinction on the basis of race, nation, cultural status, servitude, freedom, or sex.*"³¹

Guevara was, as seen in the case study, a romantic role model, insofar as he behaved and acted within the framework of the 'revolutionary spirit' that he represented. Guevara also fought a dragon (symbolically, the dragon of capitalism) to liberate the 'maiden' (symbolically the oppressed) and died for his beliefs. (During his travel, Guevara, came across the poverty and suffering of the lower classes of society while the rich lived ignorantly in their high life-styles away from problems.)³²

Regarding the 'hero-image' Henderson believes that the pattern of the hero has a psychological meaning not only for the individual, who endeavours to discover and assert his personality, but also for the whole society which has an equal need to establish its

²⁶ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

²⁷ Eph 5:25-32.

²⁸ Rv 21:9-10.

²⁹ 2 Co 11:2.

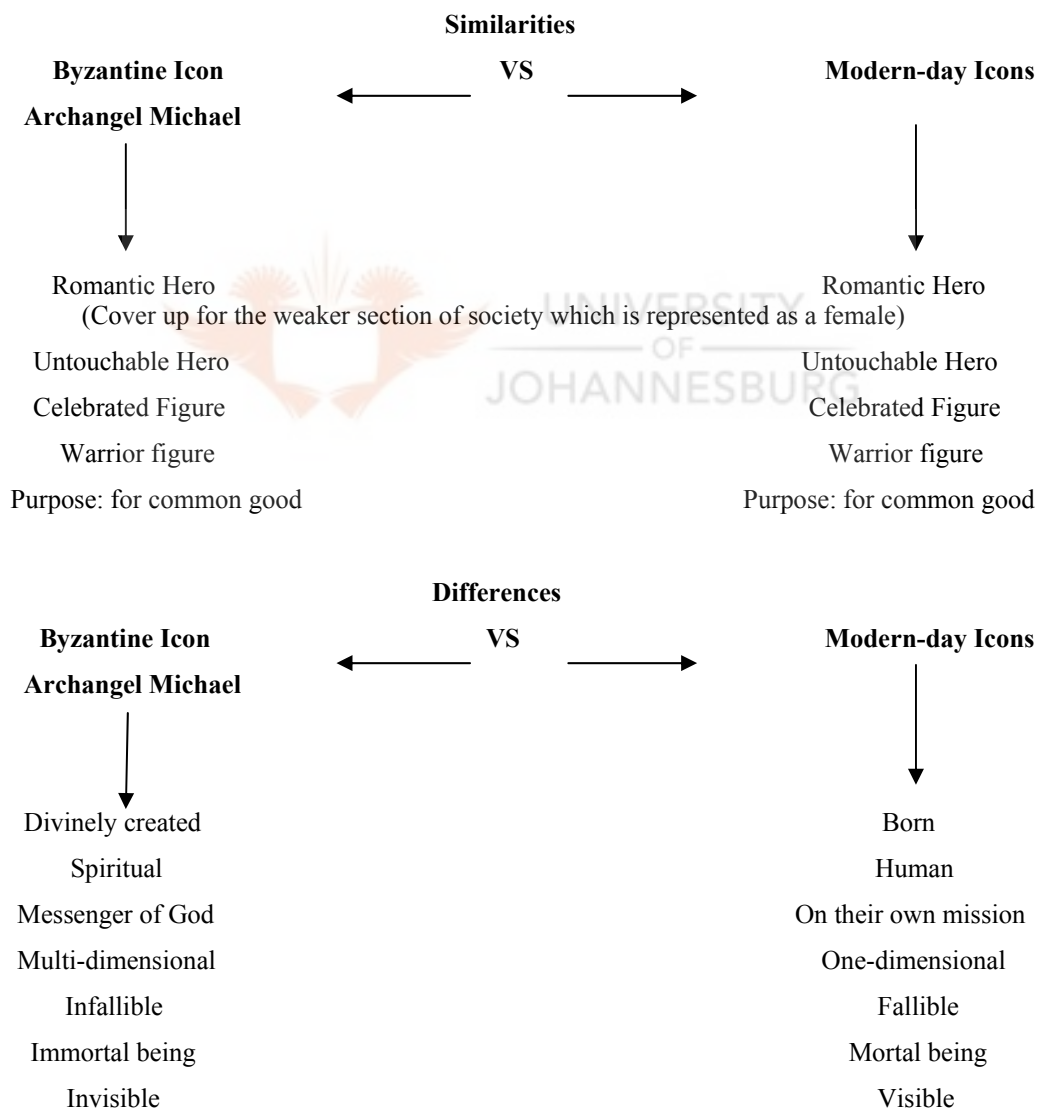
³⁰ 1 Pt 2:9.

³¹ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p.114 – Mt 18:17 and 2 Co 1:1.

³² D:\The Motorcycle Diaries (film) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm.

collective identity.³³ He adds that “*the battle between the hero and the dragon is the more active form of this myth, and it shows more clearly the archetypal theme of the ego’s triumph over regressive trends. For most people the dark or negative side of the personality remains unconscious. The hero, on the contrary, must realize that the shadow exists and that he can draw strength from it. He must come to terms with its destructive powers if he is to become sufficiently terrible to overcome the dragon – i.e. before the ego can triumph, it must master and assimilate the shadow.*”³⁴

The following diagram shows Archangel Michael’s weighed against the modern-day icons as represented by society in which they have functioned:



³³ Henderson, “Ancient myths”, p. 110.

³⁴ Henderson, “Ancient myths”, pp. 120-121.

Regarding the elements found in the Orthodox Byzantine icon, which are also found in present-day icons, there is, however, a fundamental difference concerning Byzantine and Post-Byzantine icon Archangel Michael. We may state that there is a three dimensional representation of modern-day figures namely *Mind, Body* and *Soul* becoming:

a) Intellectual = mind

b) Physical = body

c) Spiritual = soul

On Greek philosophy and Christianity, Latourette states that: “...it has been suggested that Christian thinkers solved the problems of order and change, reason and emotion, the physical and the intellectual with which classical philosophy had wrestled, and did so without denying the validity of the changing, the emotional, or the physical. They thereby provided a basis for individual salvation in a world of dislocated individuals and a principle on which a stable but not a rigid society might be based.”³⁵

a) The ‘Intellectual Icon’

The ‘icons’ that fall into this category are those that fit certain criteria which symbolise the human rationale or intellect. This quality is found in those ‘who devoted their lives to the eradication of social injustices and the restoration of human dignity’. This element is found in Coretta Scott King and is thus elevated to an iconic status too. She was also referred to “*an icon for justice*” and an “*icon to whom many looked up with deep reverence and respect.*”³⁶ Other modern-day icons who fit into this category are Chris Barnard, Nelson Mandela and many others.³⁷

b) The ‘Physical Icon’

The ‘icons’ that fall into this category are those who have ‘skills, abilities and talents’. This category epitomises the human physical excellence found for example in David Beckham’s “*post-modern ersatz religious*” iconic status. He has been elevated to a messianic role known as a “*modern Christ figure*” by the public³⁸ perhaps because of his combination of athletic prowess, good looks and

³⁵ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 261.

³⁶ The Star, 31 January, 2006.

³⁷ Cape Times, *News, Business Report*, 24 October, 2007, p. 28.

³⁸ *Sunday Times* “Christ-like”, p. 5.

flamboyant private life.³⁹ Similar ‘icons’ that fit into this category are of Shahar Peer, “*an iconic figure in Israel*”⁴⁰, who was awarded “*outstanding athlete status*”,⁴¹ Sebastien Chabal, known as “*the caveman*”, who is described as “*the most naturally powerful athlete in world rugby*” and “*an iconic figure of the World Cup*”⁴² and also Charlize Theron who has been honoured as the “*film icon of Benoni*”.⁴³ Then, lastly:

b) The ‘Spiritual Icon’

The ‘icons’ that fall into this category are those who ‘paid with their lives for their beliefs’. The ‘Spiritual Icon’ epitomises the human spiritual sacrifice. An example of a ‘Spiritual Icon’ is ‘Che’ Guevara. According to Castañeda,

*“the Christ-like image prevailed” and “it’s as if the dead Guevara looks on his killers and forgives them, and upon the world, proclaiming that he who dies for an idea is beyond suffering.”*⁴⁴

Other ‘icon’ that fit this profile is Mahatma Gandhi who Salgado feels conjure up “*perceptions of saintliness*”.⁴⁵ He adds that “*Ghandhi and Guevara were assassinated long before the commercialisation of their brands began in earnest.*”⁴⁶

What makes these icons unique is the fact that they all died in a certain way and that phenomenon enhanced their iconic status. This also coincides with the example of the Byzantine hero, Digenis Akritas and his fatal dual with death.⁴⁷ Hendrickx explains that Digenis’s heroic isolation in contrast to the crowd was not enough to make him a ‘folk hero’. The true Digenis – epic is illustrated as a hero who dies as an old man in his bed! Such an ordinary death does not suit the hero as it is not idealised. Hendrickx furthermore elucidates that: “*Digenis, wat nie deur ‘n aardse vyand neergevel word nie, word met die bonatuurlike Charon self gekonfronteer. Dit bied twee voordele: (i) dit skenk aan die*

³⁹ “Modern examples: in sports”, “[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay icon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_icon)”.

⁴⁰ *The Star*, 21 September, 2007.

⁴¹ *The Star*, 21 September, 2007.

⁴² *The Times, Rugby*, 12 October, 2007, p. 31.

⁴³ *The Star, News*, 22 September, 2005, p. 10.

⁴⁴ O’ Hagan, S. “*Just a Pretty Face?*”

⁴⁵ *Cape Times, News, Business Report*, October 24, 2007, p. 28.

⁴⁶ *Cape Times, News, Business Report*, October 24, 2007, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Hendrickx, “*Die dood van Digenis*”, p. 103.

volksdigter die geleentheid om Digenis tóg te laat sterf in 'n tragiese tweegeveg met 'n oorwinlike held, en (ii) op metafisiese vlak kan Digenies sy taak voltooi."⁴⁸

As such, 'Che' Guevara was executed, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated and Lucky Dube was senselessly gunned down in a botched hijacking.⁴⁹ Lucky Dube fits the profile of the 'Spiritual Icon' because ironically, he paid with his life through the same violence he sang about. In the lyrics of '*Crime and Corruption*' he laments the scourge of crime:⁵⁰

*"Do you ever worry about your house being broken into
Do you ever worry about your car being taken away from you
in broad daylight down Highway 54
Do you ever worry about your wife becoming the women in black
Do you ever worry about leaving home
and coming back in a coffin with a bullet through your head
So join us and fight this crime and corruption"*

Dube wanted a "new world that was a 'kingdom of the children'", writes Ntuli, and "where there was genuine spiritual liberation, not a substitution of commercial exploitation for political oppression"⁵¹.

All three dimensions found in these 'iconic' figures fit into the profile of a single Orthodox Byzantine icon. The 'physical' excellence found in Archangel Michael for example, was represented in his beautiful, physical appearance. Grabar comments that "the central authority at Byzantium... also controlled the aesthetic of the figural arts; above all, after it was enacted that religious images were to be venerated as sacred objects..." and further adds that "it also indicated the manner in which the artist was to handle religious themes – and these were in the vast majority."⁵² Also, in the Renaissance period, Michael is illustrated as young, strong, and handsome.⁵³

⁴⁸ Hendrickx, "Die dood van Digenis", p. 103.

⁴⁹ The Times, *News*, October 22, 2007, p. 4 - Sunday Times, *News and Opinion*, October 10, 2007, pp. 20, 28.

⁵⁰ The Times, *News*, p. 4 - Sunday Times, *News and Opinion*.

⁵¹ The Times, *News*, p. 4 - Sunday Times, *News and Opinion*.

⁵² Grabar, *Byzantine Painting*, p. 31.

⁵³ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

In the ‘intellectual’ dimension found in Coretta Scott King’s as ‘icon for justice’, doesn’t Michael also stand for ‘justice and truth’?⁵⁴ It is believed that Michael acted as ‘advocate of Israel’⁵⁵ and his function is ‘to open gates also of justice to the just’.⁵⁶ Last, but not least, the ‘spiritual’ dimension i.e. ‘paid with their lives for their beliefs’ is also parallel to Michael’s iconic status. Archangel Michael, field commander of the Army of God fights with his life against Satan for his belief in God’s purpose for humanity.

7. Archangel Michael represented in the arts in modern-day society

Archangel Michael is represented as an angelic warrior clad with shield, helmet and sword. He often stands over the dragon, which he sometimes pierces with a lance. Another attribute of Michael is a pair of scales in which he weighs the souls of the departed or holds the Book of Life to show his role in the judgment.⁵⁷

In Greek folklore it is said that some folk icons depicted Michael without a face; reason being that Michael’s face can only be seen by the dead and those about to die. It is also believed that he has assumed the role of the mythological figure Hermes as the psychopomp in his role of weigher of souls on Judgment Day.⁵⁸

Milton’s epic poem ‘Paradise Lost’ describes Michael as the commander of God’s army of angels against the rebel forces of Satan. He is armoured with a sword and in a personal battle, strikes Satan, wounding his side.⁵⁹

Father Raymond Bishop’s diary was used by William Blatty to write his book, *The Exorcist*, and later used by Thomas B. Allen, for his book, *Possessed: the True Story of an Exorcism* where a 13-year old boy saw a vision of Satan and ten of his helpers fighting against Archangel Michael.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)) 2007/09/18.

⁵⁵ “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)).

⁵⁶ King, M. “Chief Rainbow Warrior: Archangel Michael”, 7 February, 2006.

<http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=5580> 2007/11/16.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁶⁰ “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)).

John Travolta performed as the Archangel Michael who lived as an ‘unconventional angel’ on Earth in the 1996 film called *Michael*. Then, in the 2007 movie, *Ghost Rider*, Johnny’s study of heaven and hell leads him to St. Michael and the fallen angels of Air, Water and Earth. Ghost Rider is Fire, the element attributed to Michael. He combats with the other three elements to save the world from an oncoming apocalypse, led by Blackheart, the Prince of Hell.⁶¹

8. Michael in angelology and the occult in modern-day society

Today, modern occultists associate Michael with the Fire element (in contrast to the Kabbalistic work, the Bahir, which states that his element is Water), the direction South and the colour Red. Michael rules over the Tree of Life Sepirah (Tephirah), the ‘Alchemical Metal Gold, Harmony and Beauty’. It is believed that Michael has been given divine qualities such as Protection, Faith, Will of God, Power, Omnipotence of God and Perfection. In angelology today, Archangel Michael protects our consciousness, being and world and is said to be associated with motivation, activation, ambition, achievement, patience and life tasks.⁶² In other forms of occultism, Archangel Michael is believed to be the spirit of the planet Mercury or the Sun, being also the ruler of Sunday and Thursday.⁶³ Also, according to another source, each of the seven Archangels are associated with Saturn and Uriel, the Ptolemaic system being the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.⁶⁴

In Voodoo,⁶⁵ for example, prayers (called ‘oraisons’) are written on sheets of paper and sewn into clothes, bedding, or pillows in order to increase fortune and help fulfil desires. The prayers are sold in Haiti (at Port-au-Prince) at the market. One of the prayers,

⁶¹ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁶² Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael also compare “Michael (archangel)”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_\(Archangel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_(Archangel)).

⁶³ Virtue, *Archangels and Ascended Masters*, pp. 38 & 45– Also compare notes on Michael in angelology Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael – Finney, D., *Archangels and Guardian Angels* www.greatdreams.com/Archangels.htm 2007/09/18.

⁶⁴ Kiefer, J., “Michael and All Angels”, satucket.com/lectionary/Michael.htm 2007/11/16.

⁶⁵ For example, syncretism in the Caribbean consists of the interaction of shared histories of the European Imperialism and African slaves: Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael. The result was the production of the establishment of a society that exists today in the Caribbean. One of the syncretised religions of the Caribbean is voodoo which consists of elements of Western African, native Caribbean and Christian (Roman Catholic) beliefs. Other syncretised religions that include the New World religions are Candomblé, Vodoun and Santería: Anonymous, “Syncretism”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism> 2007/11/15.

considered to have particular potency, is devoted to Michael, patron saint of sea sickness sufferers.⁶⁶ In the Voodoo religion, (Latin American Santeria) as practised in Cuba, the Voodoo God Aganyú–Solá has been identified with Archangel Michael as a result of syncretism,⁶⁷ while in other countries, with St. Christopher. Aganyú, represented as a huge man, wild and untamed, is a symbol of all earth forces, particularly the centre of earth and volcano.

9. The survival of Michael in modern religions

In Latter-day Saint theology, Archangel Michael is believed to have lived his mortal life as Adam; thus, the belief that Michael and Adam are the same being. Adam is his mortal name and Michael his pre-mortal/post mortal name, thus all Adam's descendents are the earthly descendents of Michael. Adam's angelic name, Michael ('who is like God?'), describes man's appearance; how he was created in the image of God.⁶⁸

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus and Archangel Michael is the same individual. It is furthermore believed that Jehovah first created Jesus as the Archangel Michael, through whom he made the universe, the angels and mankind: "In this pre-human existence he was known as the word of God. He later took the human form as Jesus and led a life without sin. *Michael gave up his existence as a spirit creature (angel) when his*

⁶⁶ Gordon, L., *The Book of Voodoo*, London, 2000, p.105.

⁶⁷ Wippler, M.G., *Powers of the Orishas, Santeria and the Worship of Saints*, New York, 1992, pp. 61-64: "Initiation into Aganyú's mysteries is connected with places such as a cemetery, an old house, a hill, a dead tree, a river, a stone wall." Read also: Charlotte Seymour-Smith, *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986 – and Lindenfield, "Syncretism", www.histrycooperative.org/journals/whc/4.1/lindenfeld.html: One of the perils of syncretism (see chapter six) is 'confusion' – what might seem to be a syncretic combination to an observer, might have a complete different meaning to the person actually practicing it. An example of this is when the West African Aladura churches arose; many different traumatic events took place between the period of the First and Second World Wars. During those years, numeral Christian charismatic leaders came forward promising healing through prayer resulting in crowds of people breaking away from the mainstream Christian churches. Healing through prayer involved a rejection of Western medicine, which might appear as a return to traditional ways. The Aladuras rejected the healing rituals of the *orishas* and insisted that their followers destroy any signs of idolatry. Also, when certain aspects of worship such as dream interpretation and visions appeared to be more African than Christian, they would endorse such practices by referring to several verses in the Old Testament. This shows a general feature of cross-cultural relationships, i.e. how one society will adopt or absorb elements from other traditions in varying degrees, and thus leave a misleading label known as 'syncretism'.

⁶⁸ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

life force was transferred into Mary's womb by Jehovah."⁶⁹ After his death on a torture stake, Jesus was resurrected in his previous spiritual form (Michael).⁷⁰

The Seventh-day Adventist considers the term 'Archangel' to indicate Michael's and Jesus' position as chief of the angels and not the angel himself. The Seventh-day Adventist views Michael as a 'type' of Christ. Both are uncreated and viewed as a person of the Godhead – maintaining a Trinitarian Christology.⁷¹

It is said that in Germany, the Christian tradition replaced the pre-Christian god Wotan, to whom many mountains were sacred, therefore the many mountain shrines and chapels of St. Michael over Germany.⁷² Some scholars claimed that the building of Saint Michael's sanctuaries on hilltops was to replace the pagan cult shrines of the god Wotan but actually this practise came from the Eastern Oriental Church.⁷³ He is also known as the patron saint of Germany. Today, many Christians believe that St. Michael is the patron saint of the warrior, police officers, soldiers and paratroopers.⁷⁴

10. The modern-day veneration of Michael

Michael's feasts are still celebrated all over the world. These feasts originated as follows:

- Michael is honoured for his appearance on Monte Gargano, Italy, on 8 May. A special feast in honour of the Archangel, known as 'Apparitio S. Michaelis' does not actually commemorate the Archangel's apparition but rather the victory of the Lombards of Sipontum over the Greek Neapolitans. Here, Michael's original status as 'patron in war' was restored to him.⁷⁵
- June 9, is celebrated in commemoration of the appearance of Michael, sword in hand, to the Emperor Constantine at the church in Sosthenion. It is said that he intervened in battles in apparent answer to the prayers of Pope St. Gregory I the

⁶⁹ Rhodes, *Find It Quick*, p. 101.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷¹ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷² Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷³ <http://web2.airmail.net/Carlsch/MaterDei/Saints/michael.htm>.

⁷⁴ Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷⁵ Holweck, "St. Michael the Archangel" – Anonymous, "Michael", www.answers.com/topic/michael.

Great. He was regarded as the great heavenly physician. The sick slept in the church at night, waiting upon the manifestation of Michael.⁷⁶

- 12 June - Christians of Egypt adopted the Greek feast kept on 12 November. Here, they placed the Nile under the protection of Michael. On the 12th day of each month, they celebrated a special commemoration of Archangel Michael. On June 12, when the water starts to rise, a special holiday is kept for Michael, known as the 'rising of the Nile'.⁷⁷
- 18 June – Feast of Michael at the Church of St. Julian at the Forum, Constantinople
- 6 September - today, a feast in commemoration of Michael is celebrated. In the earliest ages already, it was believed that Michael caused a medical spring to spout at Chairotopa, where all the sick who bathed there, were cured. Also, the spring at Colossae (Chonae) is believed to have holy waters. It is said that pagans directed a stream against the sanctuary of Michael to destroy it, but the Archangel split the rock by lightning which resulted in a new stream.⁷⁸
- On 29 September, the feast of Michaelmas is celebrated in honour of Michael together with the other Archangels. It is the anniversary of the dedication of a Roman basilica to him.⁷⁹ *“Waldorf schools celebrate the Michaelmas Festival (the festival of strong will) during the Autumnal Equinox.”*⁸⁰

Latourette shares that *“there were also feasts in honour of the apostles and others who were revered as saints, one for the Maccabees, and, at least as early as the sixth century, one for the Angel Michael”*.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel” compare also Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷⁷ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel” compare also Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁷⁸ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel” – Greek tradition has it that Michael’s apparition took place in the first century. Today, a feast in commemoration of it on 6 September is celebrated.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁸⁰ [www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

⁸¹ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 206.

- 18 October – a universal feast known as ‘*S. Michaelis in perculo maris*’; Michael is regarded as the patron of mariners at Mont-Saint-Michel, in the Diocese of Coutances, Normandy. On 16 October 710, the first church was dedicated to him.⁸²
- 27 October – feast of Michael in the ‘Promotu’ church, Constantinople.⁸³
- 8 November, a feast which, spread over the Greek, Syrian, Armenian and Coptic churches, became the principal feast of Michael in the Eastern Orthodoxy. Greek churches keep the feast on 8 November and celebrate a second festival on 8 September⁸⁴. At the famous baths of the Emperor Arcadius, the synaxis of the Archangel was celebrated.⁸⁵
- 12 November, see feast on June 12.
- 10 December, Feast of Michael at Athaea.⁸⁶
- In 1818, a chivalric order according to the British honour system was founded and named after Saint George and Saint Michael.⁸⁷

The above analysis brings us to the conclusion that a modern-day icon can be a historical figure, a celebrity or a public figure who is embraced by many in society. In particular, they are figures who perceive to be strong or brave and have struggled with political, social and/ or economical issues. These figures all have something in common i.e. they physically or psychologically fight a demon and suffer publicly or sometimes meet an early tragic end.

Finally, modern-day icons are created by society – in the hope of bringing substance where there is none. In doing so, the public seeks meaning ‘in an apparently meaningless world’, and thus they can then read values into these iconic figures. In light of this, one

⁸² Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel” – Anonymous, “Michael”, www.answers.com/topic/michael.

⁸³ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel”.

⁸⁴ <http://web2.airmail.net/Carlsch/MaterDei/Saints/michael.htm>.

⁸⁵ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel”.

⁸⁶ Holweck, “St. Michael the Archangel”.

⁸⁷ [www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_\(archangel\)](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Michael_(archangel)) 2007/11/16.

needs to look at the circumstances that necessitate the transformation. Modern-day society, ravaged by diminished spirituality, moral decay and the absence of role models and leaders of eminence in all spheres of life, desperately needed this transformation. These ‘iconic’ figures are in fact symbolic representations of the whole psyche. Their ‘iconic’ status suggests the essential function of the individual’s ego-consciousness – his awareness of his own strengths and weaknesses.⁸⁸ They are one dimensional, and because of that, as the needs of society change, so their relevance will diminish accordingly. It is inevitable that they will be replaced (death is inevitable) by others who will be expected to play the same role.



⁸⁸ Compare also Henderson, “Ancient myths”, p. 112.

Conclusion

The combination of socio-historical, anthropological and literary approaches applied in this study on the figure of Archangel Michael as an 'icon' in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods, has led to the following conclusions:

In early Byzantium, Christianity incorporated many Jewish, Hellenistic and pagan cultural elements. This resulted in syncretism through the transition from paganism to Christianity. Consequently, mythological figures such as Hades and Charon, were replaced, absorbed or incorporated into the Orthodox Byzantine traditions by means of gradual transformation. The tragic and negative figure of Charon, who in ancient times brought the souls to the underworld, was now replaced by the positive figure of Archangel Michael, even Christ Himself. At the same time, many different 'roles' attributed to Michael were, in fact, those defining the ancient Charon. As a result of this positive image, Michael (although he still calls upon the souls) brings them now to a celestial, eternal world. This fits in with the dogma of the Orthodox Church that denies the ultimate power of death as it promises a complete transformation of the body from the material world into the spiritual world. Through this expected metaphysical transformation, Christian believers have a concept of a partial victory over material death and prepare for a total victory over death at the resurrection of the dead in the Second Coming.

Depending on his activities, the nature of the functions of Archangel Michael has been defined as defensive, protective, judicial and submissive, while the impact of his actions and decisions as an army leader should be understood in military terms.

Moreover, sentiments of subordination, faith and fear of the authority of the Byzantine Emperor were manipulated by rulers and leaders by means of propaganda. Based on racial, religious, and linguistic factors, this propaganda of authority made use of the figure of Archangel Michael. Indeed, some Byzantine emperors, in order to promote their powerful 'iconic status' as *'Archistrategoi'* on earth, placed their images next to that of Archangel Michael on *nomismata*.

Based on this fact, this study drew a parallel between the means of communication of the Byzantine period and today's circumstances. For instance, means of communication in Byzantium, in terms of space, would be considered the church, the market and the hippodrome. As it is understood, *mutatis mutandis*, instead of advertisements which are used by the mass media in present times mainly for commercial or political propaganda, icons, murals and coins were used for propaganda of political power and authority at that time.

By means of parallelism, which helped in the distant past to create 'icons' or to elevate real or mythical figures to the level of Saints, today mass-media helps society create and elevate certain people to iconic status. Yet, these modern 'icons', despite their differences in terms of detail to the Orthodox Byzantine icons, contain essential similarities in terms of cultural function and aims. Though they were developed by groups without any direct cultural contact, the media undoubtedly played an important role in elevating these historical/social/public figures to their iconic status. In the same way, Byzantine iconographers and clergy promoted iconic figures at the time. Concerning the way Archangel Michael was represented in Byzantium and Post-Byzantium, we saw in chapter seven how similar patterns found in the creation of Michael's 'eternal supernatural model' are found in a modern-day 'icon'.

Thus, we may conclude that in cultural terms today, as in Byzantium, the aim is to create a close communication, both pragmatic and symbolic – between 'religious / iconic figures and believers / followers.

ABSTRACT

Byzantine culture and art were essentially religious in character and the primary aim of Byzantine art was to capture that which was holy and mysterious in a concrete form such as icons. Due to Archangel Michael's popularity among the Judeo-Christian angels in Greek society, we specifically examined the functions and status of Michael as 'icon' in a Greek Orthodox context.

The subject of this study, therefore, focused on the perception of Archangel Michael as an 'icon' in the pure Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox context of a 'theological art picture; a religious, sacred image', subject to the theological and artistic Byzantine prescriptions. Moreover, the object, nature and problems of the research (such as its meaning, aim, and method) have been presented and examined.

In our Introduction, general information about the nature of the study, methodology, aims and justification on Archangel Michael with reference to why and how Archangel Michael became the main 'icon' in Greek society was given.

In the first chapter, the terms 'εἰκὼν' (image, a likeness, portrait' or 'similitude) and 'ἄγγελος' (messenger) have been analysed with special attention on the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine religious association especially in their historical and socio-cultural context. In the process of this analysis, emphasis was placed on the hierarchical order of angels as to establish Michael's position in it.

Chapter two gave a historical overview of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox society and the importance of iconography and hagiography within this framework. Religious, social, cultural and political influences with special attention to influences and transformation of pagan themes on early Christian art were examined.

Under the title "Archangel Michael represented as an 'icon' in the pure Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Orthodox context of a 'theological art picture'", the third chapter presents the main theories and writings (*Ερμηνεία της βυζαντινής ζωγραφικής τέχνης*) of Dionysius of Fourni, referring to the artistic and symbolic representation of Michael in the

Byzantine traditional iconography. It mainly examined the artistic and symbolic iconographic representation of Archangel Michael in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods.

In chapter four we analysed the conceptualisation, characteristics and functions of Archangel Michael in the Post-Byzantine Period but more specifically in the role of angel of death i.e. the angel who brings the souls of the dying into the supernatural world. Because the Byzantine society did not consist of a single people but of several ethnic groups who shared a more or less similar culture, as a result, characteristics of the Biblical, Apocalyptic and Apocryphal Archangel were intermingled with ancient mythological figures (e.g. Charon and Hades), Roman military traditions and contemporary Byzantine fashion. This led us therefore to examine, in chapter six, the results of syncretism, synthesis and parallelism. This chapter will include various elements found on Archangel Michael in Ancient Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian and Islamic civilisations.

In the final chapter we compared the parallelisms found in the Post-Byzantine 'icon' with those in the modern-day society. As the public admired and adored certain figures in society, this resulted in the elevation of these figures to a messianic role or religious icon to which many looked up to with high regard and respect. It was found that society invested and read certain values into these 'iconic' figures. Three examples of 'modern icons' were selected and analysed. This analysis focused on the characteristics and attitudes found in these 'iconic' figures. Thereafter similar patterns found in each case were highlighted and compared to the icons of Michael found during the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods. It has been shown that all these modern-day icons were created by society – in the hope of bringing substance where there is none. The bonds between people and icons, with which they are identified, play a significant role in the development of a collective stereotype identity. The public seeks meaning 'in an apparently meaningless world' through 'iconic' figures that in fact symbolically represent the whole psyche.

Finally, it is hoped, that this study will contribute greatly to the understanding of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine value system, mentality and worldview.

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