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NEW TESTAMENT ANGELS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ART : ORIGIN AND SOURCES*

(PLS. 176–185)

Let me begin with two simple comparisons. The first, of the sarcophagus of an anonymous woman in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (Fig. 1)¹ with the sarcophagus of the so-called Prince in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (Fig. 2);² the second, of the relief with the siege of Verona on the arch of Constantine in Rome (Fig. 3)³ with the mosaic of the Annunciation on the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore also in the Eternal City (Fig. 4).⁴ In the first case, we see respectively two confronted genii holding a clipeus with the portrait of the deceased and two angels holding a wreath with the monogram of Christ. In the second comparison, the relief features a flying Victory crowning Constantine with a wreath and the mosaic – the archangel Gabriel bringing the divine message to Mary. In all four cases we observe winged creatures acting on their ability to mediate between heaven and earth. They are clothed in flowing robes and, with the exception of the naked, evidently male, genii, they are “unisex”. When one puts these representations side by side it becomes evident that Christian angels derive directly from the pagan Victories or any other kind of pagan genii with wings.⁵ But this is true only for some Christian angels and mainly those after 400. Before that date Christian angels are wingless and recognisable solely by their iconographic context or by inscriptions. Thus their identification can not always be certain.

What I should like to present here is the iconography of the early wingless Christian messengers of God to men and of the later winged angels in the same situations; then also of angels as the attendants of Christ and Mary deriving from the winged beings that can be seen on Roman sarcophagi, carrying effigies of the deceased. I shall consider only a part of the Christian angelic iconography from the 4th–6th c., limiting myself to representations relating to the New Testament – which is a purely technical condition, because there is no place here to analyze all images of the Bible’s angels. It seems also more interesting to me, to proceed according to the themes of angels’ appearance, than to enumerate them in a chronological sequence of the images, what has been often done already.⁶ Therefore written sources should form here a departure.

In the canonical Gospels not many angels are mentioned. They are more frequent in the Apocrypha, even in the earliest ones. They are prominent at the beginning and at the end of the earthly life of Christ: the Annunciation,⁷ the Nativity⁸ and the Resurrection.⁹ Besides, we should remember that Christian art begins in the early 3rd c. and that from that century we have no images of angels at all. I take as invalid the old interpretation of the star as the symbol of an angel, painted above the women at the tomb of the risen Christ in the mid-3rd c. baptistery at Dura Europos.¹⁰ I shall

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¹ Cf. G. KOCH, H. SICHTERMANN, *Römische Sarkophage*, München 1982, 238–241, pl. 282–286.

² W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst, die Kunst der Spätantike in West- und Ostrom*, München 1958, pl. 75; A. GRABAR, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IV^e – X^e siècle)*, Paris 1963, 30, pl. VII; N. FIRATLI, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d’Istanbul*, Paris 1990, 46, No. 81, pl. 30.

³ H.P. L’ORANGE, A. VON GERKAN, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, Berlin 1939, 62, pl. 8a.

⁴ Main bibliography: A. SCHUCHERT, *Der Jugend-Jesu-Zyklus von Santa Maria Maggiore zu Rom aus dem 5. Jh. in seiner Beziehung zu den Apokryphen*, Mainz 1953, 59–85; H. KARPP, *Die früh-*

christlichen und mittelalterlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom, Baden-Baden 1966, pls. 6–9; B. BRENNK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom*, Wiesbaden 1975, 9–13.

⁵ Cf. recently J.A. OSTROWSKI, *Nike i Wiktoria – ikonograficzne pierwowzory aniołów*, (in:) H. Oleschko (ed.), *Księga o aniołach*, Kraków 2003, 473–493.

⁶ Cf. G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel in der altchristlichen Kunst*, Freiburg 1897; TH. KLAUSER, s. v. *Engel X (in der Kunst)*, (in:) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* V, 1962, 258–322; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura dell’Angelo nella Civiltà Paleocristiana*, Todi 2007.

⁷ Luke 1, 26–38; *Protoevangelium of James* XI, 1–2 (M.R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1960, 43).

⁸ Luke 2, 10–14; Matthew 1, 20–23; *Proteuangelium of James* XIX–XX (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 46–47).

⁹ Matthew 28, 1–8; Mark 16, 1–8; Luke 24, 1–8; John 20, 1–2.

¹⁰ C.H. KRAELING, *The Excavations at Dura Europos. Final Report 8, Part 2, the Christian Building*, New Haven 1967, 88.

also leave aside two representations respectively from the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th c. in the Roman Catacombs of Priscilla¹¹ and Pietro and Marcellino,¹² of a seated woman and a standing man. They seem to me, as they did to Paul-Albert Février fifty years ago, to be insufficiently specific to qualify as scenes of the Annunciation.¹³ All such scenes, from their first appearance in Early Christian art, derive from the Apocrypha, especially from the Protevangelium of James, written probably in the second half of the 2nd c.¹⁴ According to this Gospel, Mary was chosen by the council of priests in Jerusalem to spin a purple thread for the veil of the Temple. On one occasion, she took a pitcher and went out to fill it with water. Suddenly she heard a voice greeting her. She went back home and began to spin the purple thread. The angel then appeared to her and delivered the divine message.¹⁵ The absence of a spring of water, a pitcher and spinning instruments in the 3rd or 4th c. representation of the standing men conversing with the sitting woman, rules out, in my opinion, the Annunciation.

So, out of the surviving paintings and sarcophagus carvings in 4th c. Roman and Italian catacombs, only one example can be safely identified as Marian – the sarcophagus of Adelfia – now at Syracuse (Museo Archeologico

Regionale P. Orsi), but executed at Rome in 335–340.¹⁶ The scenes from the maidenhood of Mary cover the left half of the lid. In the left corner there is a rock with a waterfall and a male bearded head of a divinity of the spring emerging from the rock at the top. To the right of the spring a kneeling woman is filling a pitcher with water. Behind her stands a man pointing to the spring with his right hand. He is young with a short haircut, wears a simple tunic with short sleeves and has no wings; it is clear that the scene can be no other than Gabriel's salutation to Mary at the spring (Fig. 5). This is a conversation between two human beings, comparable in its simplicity to pagan Roman representations of such meetings of men and women with gods or their messengers.¹⁷

The scene of the Annunciation becomes more frequent from the 5th c. onwards. On one of the two panels of the ivory Werden casket, from the beginning of that century, executed in Rome (now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London), we can see a scene of the Annunciation very similar to the one on the sarcophagus of Adelfia.¹⁸ However the angel has wings and the water falls from a greater height (and there is no presiding divinity). He speaks to Mary who is kneeling at the spring, filling her pitcher with water and turning her head towards the angel.

¹¹ J. WILPERT, *Ein Zyklus christologischer Gemälde aus der Katakombe der Hl. Petrus und Marcellinus*, Freiburg 1891, 3, 19–20, pl. 1, 2, 4; G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 60–63; B. MAZZEL, *Il cubibolo dell'Annunciazione nelle catacombe di Priscilla. Nuove osservazioni alla luce dei recenti restauri*, "Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana" 75, 1999, 233–280; F. PIRANI, *Quando agli angeli sputarono le ali*, (in:) S. Ensoli, E. La Rocca (eds.), *Roma Aurea, dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*, Roma 2000, 389; D.E. ESTIVILL, *La imagen del angel en la Roma del siglo IV: estudio de iconología*, Roma 1994, 147–151, fig. 27; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 42–44. It is interesting to note that already Antonio Bosio in 1632 saw this scene as nothing more than a conversation between a sitting woman and a standing man, cf. A. BOSIO, *Roma Sotterranea opera postuma di Antonio Bosio Romano...*, Roma 1632, 541.

¹² G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 62–63; J. DECKERS, H.R. SEELIGER, G. MIETKE, *Die Katakombe „Santi Marcellino e Pietro“*. *Repertorium der Malereien*. *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*, vol. VI, Città del Vaticano 1987, 224, No. 17; cf. E. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Das antike Erbe in der Ikonographie der Kindheitsevangelien Christi*, "Boreas" 16, 1993, 117–118; D.E. ESTIVILL, *La imagen...*, 152–156, fig. 28:a.

¹³ P.-A. FÉVRIER, *Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille, deux scènes relatives à la vie intellectuelle*, "Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Antiquité" 71, 1959, 309–316 – correctly as: *la scène intellectuelle*; cf. recently also A. AHLQUIST, *Maria, madri di Cristo, e altri madri presenti nelle arte funeraria paleocristiana*, "Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia" XXI, n. s. 7, 2008, 10, 28–29.

¹⁴ O. CULLMANN, (in:) E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, *Neutes-*

tamentliche Apokryphen, Tübingen 1989, 337; E. DE STRYCKER, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protoévangile de Jacques*, Bruxelles 1961, 419–423 (in Egypt); H.R. SMID, *Protoevangelium Jacobi. A commentary*, Assen 1965, 174–176 (in Syria); E. COTHENET, *Le Protévangile de Jacques: origine, genre et signification d'un premier midrash chrétien sur la Nativité de Marie*, (in:) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. II/25.6, Berlin, New York 1988, 4267; D.R. CARLIDGE, J.K. ELLIOTT, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, London 2001, 10.

¹⁵ *Protevangelium of James*, XI, 1–2 (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 43).

¹⁶ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 64; J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi cristiani antichi*, Roma 1929, pl. 92:2; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Geburt*, (in:) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* IX, 1976, 198, No. 3:a; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, vol. II: *Italien mit einem Nachtrag Rom und Ostia, Dalmatien*, *Museen der Welt*, Mainz 1998, 8–10, No. 20; D. MILINOVIC, *L'origine de la scène de la Nativité dans l'art paléochrétien (d'après les sarcophages d'occident)*, "Antiquité Tardive" 7, 1999, 309–312, No. 12.

¹⁷ There are many examples, cf. H. SICHTERMANN, G. KOCH, *Griechische Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen*, Tübingen 1975.

¹⁸ W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, Mainz 1976, 83–84, No. 118, pl. 62; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Geburt...*, 203. The dating of the Werden casket to the 9th c., still maintained at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has now been abandoned.

We find a similar scene of the Annunciation also on the ivory cover of the Milan gospel-book, likewise executed in Rome in the 80s of the 5th c.¹⁹ Mary, wearing a rich dress with a pearl-necklace, kneels in right profile by a spring with a high cascade of water and fills her pitcher. She turns her head towards the winged angel who stands on the left and speaks to her, raising his right hand. Finally, another similar composition is found on a 6th c. Monza dry-clay token from Palestine (Fig. 6).²⁰ The angel, flying horizontally towards Mary, is much smaller here and holds a long staff in his right hand. They both have nimbi. To the left of Mary, below the angel, is the following inscription: XEPE KEXAPITOMHNI. These words identify without any doubt this rather schematic representation and confirm the interpretation of all such scenes as the Annunciation with Mary and the angel at the spring. However, the Annunciation at the spring does not occur very often in Early Christian iconography. Apart from the instances already mentioned only one other is known, on a very special object, i.e. a textile fragment from an unknown tomb in Egypt, now in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung (Riggisberg, near Bern, Switzerland).²¹ The Annunciation comes third in each band of scenes. The angel to the left has no wings, but the words of his Salutation: XEPE MAPIA, placed on the right, identify him as Gabriel. Mary kneels in right profile and turns her head towards the angel. She holds a pitcher in her right hand, but there is no source. Unfortunately, the textile fragment is impossible to date, though some iconographic features, as, for example, the wingless angel, could indicate an early date (the 4th c.).²²

The Annunciation with Mary sitting and spinning a purple thread became standard in both Western and Eastern Christian art, from the 5th to the 8th c. One of the earliest examples occurs on the left side of a large marble sarcophagus (Fig. 7) in the Quadrarco di Braccioforte in Ravenna, dated to the beginning of the 5th c. and reused in the 16th c. for the Pignatta family.²³ The archangel Gabriel stands to the right side, he has large birds' wings and wears a long tunic and a mantle (*pallium*). The already mentioned mosaic on the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore, is not much later (432–440).²⁴ In the top left register, we see Mary enthroned with her feet on a *suppedaneum*, attended by four angels with white nimbi, dressed in white tunics and mantles. Mary spins a purple thread emerging from a tall basket on her right. Her rich golden tunic and her hair dressed with pearls resemble those of a Roman *femina clarissima*, more particularly a princess at the imperial court.²⁵ Above her head a dove represents the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Another angel to the right of the dove flies towards Mary, with the right arm outstretched (Fig. 4). He resembles – as has already been said – the Roman flying Victory on imperial triumphal arches. This is Gabriel, dressed in white tunic and *pallium*, with a gold nimbus. The other angels standing next to Mary emphasize the solemnity of the scene acting as a kind of guard of honour to the mother of the true ruler of the world.²⁷ Subsequently the Annunciation becomes more frequent, though not in quite such a solemn version, in monumental paintings and mosaics in church interiors, for example the mid-6th c. mosaics of the Basilica Eufasiana in Poreč.²⁸ The Annunciation to Mary while she spins is also a common

¹⁹ Now in the Treasury of the Cathedral: R. DELBRUECK, *Das fünfteilige Diptychon in Mailand*, "Bonner Jahrbücher" 151, 1951, 96–107; F. STEENBOCK, *Der kirchliche Prachtband im frühen Mittelalter von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Gotik*, Berlin 1965, 69–71, No. 5; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Zur Ikonographie des bethlehemitischen Kindermordes in der frühchristlichen Kunst*, "Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum" 11/12, 1968/69, 106–107, pl. 18:c; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 84, No. 119, pl. 63; D. GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Elfenbeinkunst im Mittelalter*, Berlin 1978, 181–182, No. 18; H.L. KESSLER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 453, fig. 64.

²⁰ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 65–66; H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. I/2, 2260, fig. 765; *ibidem*, vol. XI/2, 2780, fig. 8449; A. GRABAR, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza – Bobbio)*, Paris 1958, 31, pl. 31.

²¹ M. FLURY-LAMBERG, *Textil-Konservierung im Dienste der Forschung*, Berlin 1988, 367–369, fig. 789, 790; L. KÖTZSCHE, *Die Marienseide in der Abegg-Stiftung. Bemerkungen zur Ikonographie der Szenenfolge*, (in:) *Begegnung von Heidentum und Christentum im spätantiken Ägypten*, "Riggisberger Berichte" 1, 1993, 188–189, fig. 1.

²² Cf. *ibidem*, 183–184.

²³ J. KOLLWITZ, H. HERDERJÜRGEN, *Die ravennatische Sarkophage*,

ASR VIII/II, Rom 1979, 54–55, No. B:1, pls. 25, 27; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium...*, 119, No. 376, pl. 108:3; J.-P. CAILLET, *La vie d'éternité. La sculpture funéraire dans l'Antiquité chrétienne*, Paris 1990, 77, fig. 60.

²⁴ See above note 4.

²⁵ Cf. G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos. Eine ikonographische Abhandlung über das Gottesmutterbild in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Utrecht 1961, 100; B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 10.

²⁶ This is unique in scenes of the Annunciation of the period. It derives from imperial iconography: Jupiter's eagle above the emperor's head; cf. J. DECKERS, *Constantin und Christus. Das Bildprogramm in Kaiserkulträumen und Kirchen*, (in:) D. Stutzinger (ed.), *Spätantike und frühes Christentum. Ausstellung im Liebighaus Museum Alter Plastik*, Frankfurt 1983, 273, figs. 102–103, 108–109.

²⁷ Cf. A. GRABAR, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1936, 226.

²⁸ G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 42, fig. 6:c; A. TERRY, T. MUHLSTEIN, *New documentary evidence for the restoration of the 7th c. Wall Mosaics at the Eufasiana in Poreč: a preliminary report*, (in:) N. Cambi, E. Marin (eds.), *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae, Split-Poreč 1994*, vol. II, Città del Vaticano, 1998, 1047, fig. 13, with the newest bibliography.

theme of decoration of small, mostly 6th c. artistic objects: ivory reliefs (gospel-book covers and *pyxides*),²⁹ and reliefs on Palestinian pilgrim lead and clay *ampullae*,³⁰ dry clay *eulogiae*,³¹ bronze censers,³² golden necklaces³³ and rings,³⁴ silver armbands,³⁵ gems³⁶ and textiles.³⁷ In all cases the purple thread being spun by Mary is clearly visible and Gabriel has clearly recognizable wings and a nimbus. These features, which are constant from the 5th c. onwards, serve to emphasize the spiritual aspect of the angel, as a divine messenger and not any more as a human interlocutor of Mary, as in the earlier representations deriving from pagan models.

Some of these models go back a thousand years: representations on Greek red-figure vases of seated women spinning and conversing with their maids standing in front of them.³⁸ Such scenes portray the Greek ideal of the virtuous woman.³⁹ There are also later – and much more numerous – non-Christian parallels. In the 3rd c. AD the image of a spinning woman (or only of her spinning instruments) symbolized the virtues of the Roman matron – *exemplum matronae*. On Greco-Roman tomb *stelae* from the province of Asia we can see seated spinning women, or a basket of wool, a comb,

²⁹ For example the cover of St. Lupicin in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: F. STEENBOCK, *Die kirchliche Prachtband...*, 76–77, No. 10; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 97, No. 145, pl. 77; D. GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Elfenbeinkunst...*, 184, No. 28, fig. 30; and two *pyxides* in Cleveland: W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 114, No. 184, pl. 92; D. GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Elfenbeinkunst...*, 183–184, No. 27; A. ST. CLAIR, *Early Christian Pyxides Carved with New Testaments Scenes*, Princeton 1977, 55–83; idem, (in:) *Age* 1979, 579f, No. 519 and in Berlin: W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 110, No. 174, pl. 88; A. ST. CLAIR, *Early Christian Pyxides...*, 55–83, 208; idem, (in:) *Age* 1979, 497, No. 447; A. EFFENBERGER, H.-G. SEVERIN, *Das Museum für spätantike und byzantinische Kunst*, Berlin 1992, 136–137, No. 50.

³⁰ For example: the lead *ampulla* No. 2 in Monza: A. GRABAR, *Ampoules...*, 18–20, pl. V; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Geburt...*, 204–205, fig. 6; J. ENGEMANN, *Palestinensische Pilgerampullen im F.-J. Dölger Institut in Bonn*, "Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum" 16, 1973, 17, pl. 5:c, d; M.F. FRAZER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 566, fig. 79; two clay *ampullae* in Damascus and Jerusalem: L.Y. RAHMANI, *Two Early Christian Ampullae*, "Israel Exploration Journal" 16, 1966, 71–73, pl. 8:A, fig. 1; CH. STRUBE, (in:) K. Kohlmeyer (ed.), *Land des Baal, Syrien – Forum der Völker und Kulturen*, Berlin 1982, 244–245, No. 225.

³¹ For example three tokens from Palestine (6th c.) at the British Museum in London: R. CAMBER, *A Hoard of Terracotta Amulets from the Holy Land*, (in:) P. Zepos (ed.), *Actes du XV Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines Athènes 1976*, Athènes 1981, 101, fig. 2; G. VIKAN, *Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 38, 1984, 81, No. 109.

³² I. RICHTER-SIEBELS, *Die palästinensischen Weihrauchgefäße mit Reliefszenen aus dem Leben Christi*, Berlin 1990, 49–55; cf. E. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Bild und Wort: das Marienleben und die Kindheit Jesu in der christlichen Kunst vom 4. bis 8. Jh. und ihre apokryphen Quellen*, Warszawa 1992, 65, 260–281.

³³ For example two golden *enkolpia* from Palestina and Egypt (now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Antiken Sammlung in Berlin): J.H. ILFFE, *A Byzantine Gold Enkolpion from Palestine (about 7th c.)*, "The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine" 14, 1950, 97–99, pls. 32:4, 33; A. GREIFENHAGEN, *Schmuckarbeiten in Edelmetall, Staatliche Museen, Antikenabteilung*, Berlin 1970, 66–68, pl. 46:2, 47; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, 93, pl. 255; K. REYNOLDS BROWN, (in:) *Age* 1979, 319–321, No. 296.

³⁴ For example a ring in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington: E.H. KANTOROWICZ, *The Golden Marriage Belt and the Marriage Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*,

"Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 14, 1960, 1–16; M. ROSS, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. II: *Jewelry, Enamels. Art in the Migration Period*, Washington 1965, 58–59, No. 69; J. ENGEMANN, *Palestinensische Pilgerampullen...*, 20, pl. 11:c; G. VIKAN, (in:) *Age* 1979, 496, No. 446; idem, *Art, Medicine...*, 83; idem, *Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 44, 1990, 157f, fig. 26.

³⁵ For example an armband from Cairo, now at the Museum of Art and Archaeology in Columbia (University of Missouri, Columbia): J. MASPERO, *Bracelets-amulets d'époque byzantine*, "Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte" 9, 1908, 246–258, fig. 1; J. ENGEMANN, *Palestinensische Pilgerampullen...*, 18, fig. 3; G. VIKAN, *Art, Medicine...*, 74–75, fig. 8; idem, *Two Byzantine Amuletic Arm-bands and the Group to Which They Belong*, "The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery" 49/50, 1991, 41.

³⁶ For example sardonix gems: three in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: E. BABELON, *Catalogue des camées antiques et modernes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1897, 180–182, Nos. 336–338, pl. 39; H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. V/1, 843f, No. 196, fig. 5073; J. ENGEMANN, *Glyptik*, (in:) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XI, 1981, 306, fig. 16; and two in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg: A. BANK, *Monuments des arts mineurs de Byzance (IV^e–VII^e.) au Musée de l'Ermitage*, "Corsi di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina" 9, 1962, 122, fig. 98; eadem, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad 1985, 289, pls. 107, 108.

³⁷ From Egypt: a fragment in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London: V. ILLGEN, *Zweifarbige reservetechnisch eingefarbte Leinwandstoffe mit großfigurigen biblischen Darstellungen aus Ägypten*, Mainz 1968, 23–26, No. 3; L. KÖTZSCHE, (in:) *Age* 1979, 345, No. 392; M.-H. RUTSCHOVSCAYA, *Coptic Fabrics*, Paris 1990, 128–129, 132; from Syria: a fragment in the Museo Sacro Vaticano: PH. LAUER, *Le trésor du Sancta Sanctorum*, "Monuments et Mémoires, Fondation E. Piot" 15, 1906, 109–111, pl. 15; W.F. VOLBACH, *I tessuti del Museo Sacro Vaticano*, Città del Vaticano 1942, 39f, No. T. 104, pl. 29; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, 94, pl. 257; L. VON MATT, G. DALTRUP, *Die Kunstsammlungen der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Rom 1969, 174–175, pl. 94.

³⁸ A. WĄSOWICZ, *Miroir ou quenouille? La représentation des femmes dans la céramique attique*, (in:) M.-M. Mactoux, E. Geny (eds.), *Mélanges P. Lévêque*, vol. 2, Paris 1989, 413–438; eadem, *Traditions antiques dans les scènes de l'Annonciation*, "Dialogues d'histoire ancienne" 16/2, 1990, 163–177.

³⁹ Ibidem, 166, figs. 2, 3; M. MALEC, *Motyw wrzeczona w ikonografii starożytnej i wczesnochrześcijańskiej*, "Roczniki Humanistyczne" 51, 2003, 53–78.

a spindle and a whorl among other everyday objects used by women.⁴⁰

On the Werden casket in London and on the cover of the Milan gospel-book, both mentioned above, there is another scene from Mary's life – the Presentation in the Temple of Jerusalem – featuring an angel with wings pointing the way to the Temple. The scene has no support in the Protevangelium of James or the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.⁴¹ Mary is not a small girl here, as described in these sources, but an adult woman. She stands at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Temple, which has the form of a typical small Greco-Roman sanctuary. It is the presence of the angel that identifies it as the Temple of Jerusalem.

Between the Annunciation and other Marian scenes on the casket we see a very rare scene: the first dream of Joseph with an angel addressing him with a gesture of his right hand, similar to the one in the Annunciation that follows.⁴² Two dreams of Joseph are known from the Gospel of Matthew and the Apocrypha: the first is about Mary's pregnancy, the second about the Flight to Egypt. In both Joseph is told by an angel what to do.⁴³ I shall leave aside two other scenes on Roman sarcophagi thought to represent Joseph dreaming, because the identification is uncertain.⁴⁴ Another instance appears on a fragment of one the so-called city-gate sarcophagi, from Puy-en-Velay in France (Musée

Crozatier), executed probably in Rome at the end of the 4th c. (Fig. 8).⁴⁵ The first scene from the left of the figural frieze shows two men, one larger standing, obviously the angel, addressing the much smaller figure of Joseph, sitting in front of him, resting his head on his left hand. The next scene is a typical representation of a Roman wedding, *dextrarum iunctio*,⁴⁶ with the bride on the left, wrapped in a *palla*, a man in a *pallium* in the middle, and a man in a tunic (*exomis*) on the right.⁴⁷ This man and the woman are holding each other's right hand in the ritual gesture of marriage, and can therefore be interpreted as Mary and Joseph, protected by the wingless angel (the figure in the centre), who doubles here as the Roman wedding divinity of Concordia. The marriage of Mary and Joseph celebrated by Zacharias, the high priest of the Temple of Jerusalem is mentioned in the Protevangelium of James.⁴⁸ The Roman form of the ceremony is no doubt an adaptation of the different Jewish rite to the Roman ambience.

The earliest representations of the Nativity date from the 4th c. They are very summary: a crib with the newborn child plus one or two persons and two animals (ox and donkey), as described in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.⁴⁹ There is no angel. An exception is the sarcophagus (reused as an altar) in San Celso in Milan – executed there in the last third of the 4th c.⁵⁰ The manger with the Jesus Child

⁴⁰ E. PFUHL, H. MÖBIUS, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, vol. I, Mainz 1977, No. 931; vol. II, Mainz 1979, No. 1138, 1712, 2280, 2281; cf. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Bild und Wort...*, 118; M. CREMER, *Hellenistisch-römische Grabstelen im nordwestlichen Kleinasien*, vol. 2: *Bithynien*, Bonn 1992, 81, 165–167, Nos. B 30, 32, pl. 25.

⁴¹ *Protevangelium of James* VII, 2–VIII, 1 (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 42); Pseudo-Matthew IV (ibidem, 73).

⁴² G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 135.

⁴³ Matthew 1, 20–21; 2, 13; *Protevangelium of James* XIII, (M.R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal...*, 44); Pseudo-Matthew XI (ibidem, 74).

⁴⁴ A fragment of a sarcophagus lid from the 4th c. from the Couvent des Minimes in Arles: E. LE BLANT, *L'Étude sur les sarcophages chrétiens antiques de la ville d'Arles*, vol. II, Paris 1878, 24–25, No. 17, pl. 12; WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 20:1; F. BENOÎT, *Sarcophages paléochrétiens d'Arles et de Marseille*, Paris 1954, 66–67, No. 95; G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 41, fig. 5:a; P. TESTINI, *Alle origini dell'iconografia di Giuseppe di Nazareth*, "Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana" 48, 1972, 292, fig. 11; A.M. FAUSONE, *Die Taufe in der frühchristlichen Sepulchralkunst*, Città del Vaticano, 1982, 185–187, pls. 23:a,b; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, vol. III: *Frankreich, Algerien, Tunesien*, Wiesbaden 2003, 80–81, No. 138, pl. 37:7. The two-frieze sarcophagus of Servane, also in Arles, dated to 370–380 – E. LE BLANT, *L'Étude...*, 46–49, No. 35, pls. 29, 30; WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 15; F. BENOÎT, *Sarcophages...*, 48, No. 46, pl. 16:2; P. TESTINI, *Alle origini...*, 293–294, fig. 12; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 29–31, No. 42, pl. 15:5.

⁴⁵ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 134f; J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 26:1; P. TESTINI, *Alle origini...*, 291–292, fig. 10. Wilpert's

reconstruction of the next scene as the Adoration of the Magi is unconvincing; cf. also: *Guide Catalogue du Musée Crozatier*, Puy-en-Valay 1982, 28, fig. 23; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 133, No. 267, pl. 68:3,5,6.

⁴⁶ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 136f; cf. L. REEKMANS, "La dextrarum iunctio" dans l'iconographie romaine et paléochrétienne, "Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome" 31, 1958, 23–95; C. REINSBERG, *Die Sarkophage mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben*, vol. 1/3, Berlin 2006, 19–39, 75–85.

⁴⁷ E. LE BLANT, *Les sarcophages chrétiens de la Gaule*, Paris 1886, 75; R. GOUNOT, *Collections lapidaires du Musée Crozatier du Puy-en-Valay*, Puy 1957, 98f; Ch. PIETRI, *Les premières images de Marie en Occident*, (in:) Ph. Pergola, F. Bisconti (eds.), *Quaeritur inventus colitur, Miscellanea in onore di Padre U. Fasola*, Città del Vaticano 1989, 599–600.

⁴⁸ *Protevangelium of James* IX, (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 42).

⁴⁹ For all references cf. J. ZIEGLER, *Ochs und Esel an der Krippe. Biblisch-patristische Erwägungen zu Is. 1, 3 und Hab. 3, 2 (LXX)*, "Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift" 3, 1952, 385–402.

⁵⁰ P. TESTINI, *Alle origini...*, 277–278, fig. 4; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Windel und Gräbinnen*, "Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum" 29, 1986, 184, pl. 31:a; H. BRANDENBURG, *La scultura a Milano nel IV e V secolo*, (in:) C. Bertelli (ed.), *Milano, una capitale da Ambrogio ai Carolingi*, Milano 1987, 90–95, figs. 107–111; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium...*, 87–89, No. 250; D. MILINOVIC, *L'origine...*, 317, No. 22; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 56–57, fig. 13.

is flanked by a donkey and an ox, and placed in a kind of *aedicula* with columns, with the bust of an angel above it. He is sometimes taken for a shepherd but this is wrong, for the same figure appears on the right side of the sarcophagus, in the scene at the empty tomb Christi.⁵¹

The Adoration of the Magi, together with the Nativity, belongs to the earliest images of the Infancy of Christ in Christian iconography (beginning of the 4th c.). The Latin *Magi*, translating the Greek *Μαγοί*, is common in old Latin sources and captions of images, and describes the oriental wise men, who came to Bethlehem to adore the King of kings. During their journey they received advice in a dream from an angel on how to deal with Herod.⁵² However, there are no angels in the earliest scenes of the Adoration of the Magi (Roman catacomb paintings and sarcophagi reliefs). There are two well-known sarcophagi of interest for our purpose, the so-called “Dogmatic” sarcophagus at the Vatican (Museo Pio-Cristiano),⁵³ and a similar one at Arles (Musée de l’Arles antique), both commissioned by obviously wealthy patrons in 320–325.⁵⁴ The Adoration scene occurs on these masterpieces of the double-frieze type in the lower band on the left (**Fig. 9**). The Adoration is conventional, with Mary holding the Child on her lap and the three Magi offering their gifts, but there is another figure, seldom represented in this scene – a bearded man standing behind Mary’s *cathedra*. He appears elsewhere, as a young man without a beard, behind Mary’s *cathedra* on the lid of a sarcophagus in Rome from 330–335 (Museo

Nazionale Romano),⁵⁵ and between Mary’s *cathedra* and the first of the Magi on the lid of the city-gate sarcophagus in Milan (late 4th c.).⁵⁶ Moreover, we find him also on the slab of the *loculus* of Severa from the Roman catacombs.⁵⁷ On this slab the man points with his outstretched right hand to the star of Bethlehem. He is usually identified as the prophet Balaam pointing to the star that ‘shall come out of Jacob,’ and bring salvation to Israel.⁵⁸ This is also how this figure is identified on the two double-frieze sarcophagi, an identification repeated without any proof.⁵⁹ However, if one accepts the derivation of the scene of the Adoration of the Magi from imperial art, i. e. from the adoration of the emperor by oriental barbarians – the man behind Mary could derive from a figure attending the emperor.⁶⁰ His role in relation to Mary and Christ would be similar, that of a guard of honour. Anyhow, on both sarcophagi, exactly the same figure stands behind the *cathedra* of God the Father directly above the Adoration of the Magi (**Fig. 9**). It is usually interpreted as an angel.⁶¹ Identifying the figure in the scene underneath as an angel is equally plausible.

According to Manuel Sotomayor and Daniel Estivill, the two male figures (bearded or not) who usually flank the portrait of the deceased in the centre of the chest of many early 4th c. sarcophagi, could be also angels as guardians and protectors of the dead.⁶² As a matter of fact, there are two 4th c. Roman catacomb paintings of wingless angels, even captioned *angelus*. We find him as well on the Christian tomb in the hypogeum of Vigna Chiaraviglio,⁶³

⁵¹ Ibidem, 57, fig. 14.

⁵² Matthew 2, 1–12.

⁵³ J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 96; F.W. DEICHMANN, G. BOVINI, H. BRANDENBURG, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Rom und Ostia*, vol. I, Wiesbaden 1967, 39–41, No. 43; F.W. DEICHMANN, *Zur Erscheinung des Sterns von Bethlehem*, (in:) E. Dassmann, K. Thraede (eds.), *Vivarium, Festschrift Th. Klauser zum 90 Geburtstag*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband 11, Münster 1984, 101, No. III:1.

⁵⁴ J.M. ROUQUETTE, *Trois nouveaux sarcophages chrétiens de Trinquetaille (Arles)*, “Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres” 118/2, 1974, 265–273, figs. 4, 7; E. DINKLER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 401, fig. 56; D. STUTZINGER, (in:) D. Stutzinger (ed.), *Spätantike und frühes Christentum. Ausstellung im Liebighaus Museum Alter Plastik*, Frankfurt 1983, 680–682, No. 258, fig. 140; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 23–25, No. 38, pls. 12, 13.

⁵⁵ J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 126:2; F.W. DEICHMANN, G. BOVINI, H. BRANDENBURG, *Repertorium...*, 316–317, No. 770.

⁵⁶ G. STUHLEAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 120–121; H. BRANDENBURG, *Repertorium...*, 99–107, fig. 121; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium...*, 57–58, No. 150, pl. 60:2; G. KOCH, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, München 2000, 298–312, 324–325, No. 133, fig. 80.

⁵⁷ E. KIRSCHBAUM, *Der Prophet Balaam und die Anbetung der Weisen*, “Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertums-

kunde” 49, 1954, 149–150, fig. 3; A. FERRUA, *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, n. s. vol. VIII, Roma 1983, No. 23279; F.W. DEICHMANN, *Zur Erscheinung...*, 101, No. III:6.

⁵⁸ E. KIRSCHBAUM, *Der Prophet Balaam...*, 129–144; cf. also in relation to the painted scenes in Roman catacombs with a sitting woman and a standing man: D. MAZZOLENI, *Le più antiche immagini del Natale nelle catacombe e nei sarcofagi romani*, “Lazio ieri e oggi” 35/12, 1999, 361–362.

⁵⁹ J. ENGEMANN, *Dreifaltigkeitsdarstellungen der frühchristlichen Kunst: gab es im 4. Jh. anthropomorphe Trinitätsbilder?*, “Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum” 19, 1976, 170; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 23.

⁶⁰ Cf. J. DECKERS, *Die Huldigung der Magier in der Kunst der Spätantike*, (in:) F.G. Zehnder (ed.), *Die Heiligen Drei Könige*, Köln 1982, 20–32, with bibliography.

⁶¹ J. ENGEMANN, *Dreifaltigkeitsdarstellungen...*, 170; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 23.

⁶² M. SOTOMAYOR *Notas sobre la orante y sus acompañantes en el arte paleocristiano*, “Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia” 34, 1961, 16; D.E. ESTIVILL, *La imagen...*, 209–219.

⁶³ Ibidem, 222–227, figs. 41–43:a – as “angels of a triumph”; C. PROVERBIO, *Nuove osservazioni su un affresco nella regione dell’ex Vigna Chiaraviglio in S. Sebastiano*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 81, 2005, 98–128 with bibliography; eadem, *La figura...*, 63–65.

as well as on the tomb of Vibia, a devotee of the oriental syncretistic god Sabazios.⁶⁴ In the latter a young angel, captioned *Angelus Bonus*, in tunica and *pallium* escorts deceased Vibia to the paradisiac banquet. This is usually attributed to Christian influence.⁶⁵

However an angel with wings appears in an Adoration scene in the late-4th c., on a badly damaged relief of Constantinopolitan provenance (**Fig. 10**), found in Carthage (National Museum).⁶⁶ The angel stands next to Mary and points out Jesus to the Magi. Three centuries later a winged angel became an integral part of the Adoration scene both in the eastern, but also in the western iconography, as we can see in the painting and in mosaics of pope John VIII in Santa Maria Antiqua and in the Vatican (now in Santa Maria in Cosmedin).⁶⁷

Returning to the earlier monuments, it is worth noting that a wingless angel, standing next to Jesus and holding a book-scroll, is also present in another scene of his life, his Baptism on two sarcophagi reliefs from the end of the 4th c., in Arles and Ancona (**Fig. 11**).⁶⁸ No angel is mentioned in the canonical gospels, the main sources for this event, so probably his appearance in the scene is attributed to a pre-Christian tradition of a supernatural figure witnessing an important religious event. On an ivory plate with the Baptism Christi, probably the 5th c. and western (now in the British Museum), the angel with wings stands frontally next to Jesus and much bigger John.⁶⁹ From the 6th c. onwards, especially in the Orient, we meet one or two angels attending the Baptism Christi. They stand on the bank of

the Jordan holding a *pallium* or other clothing for Christ. The earliest known representation of this type, dated to the 5th c., is on a fragment of a marble column from Tschinili-Kiosk in Istanbul (Archaeological Museum),⁷⁰ on which the scene of Baptism is surrounded by wine scrolls (**Fig. 12**). Next to the small naked figure of Jesus (in the centre) and John twice as big (on the right) there are two winged angels holding Christ's clothing (on the left). In the 6th c. such scenes of the Baptism can be found on many different art objects, as for instance on the lead ampullae from Monza and Bobbio.⁷¹

It is more important now to show some earlier scenes with an angel, related this time to the Resurrection. The earliest version has an angel and the Women at the Tomb. According to both the synoptic gospels and Apocrypha, it was the angel who announced to Mary Magdalene and to Mary, mother of James, that Christ had risen.⁷² I shall leave aside the painting from the Karmouz catacomb in Alexandria, with "an angel sitting at the Tomb," as it is no longer extant.⁷³

The four earlier examples date from about 400: the mosaic in the cupola of the baptistery in Naples with two women (damaged) and an angel sitting in front of the tomb;⁷⁴ the sarcophagus of San Celso at Milan already mentioned with two women approaching the Tomb from the left and an angel above them, partially visibile in a cloudlet;⁷⁵ two luxurious ivory plaques probably of Roman production – the so-called Trivulzio diptych (**Fig. 13**) in Milan (Castello Sforzesco),⁷⁶ and a similar diptych in Munich

⁶⁴ J. WILPERT, *Le pitture delle catacombe romane*, Roma 1903, pl. 132:1; C. CECHELLI, *Monumenti cristiano-eretici di Roma*, Roma 1944, 168–171, pl. 35; TH. KLAUSER, *Engel...*, 56; D.E. ESTIVILL, *La imagen...*, 201–208, with bibliography; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 62.

⁶⁵ C. CECHELLI, *Monumenti...*, 173; D.E. ESTIVILL, *La imagen...*, 207–208.

⁶⁶ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 122; H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. X:1, 1931, 1004–1005, Figs. 7464–7465; J. KOLLWITZ, *Oströmische Plastik der theodosianischen Zeit*, Berlin 1941, 178–184, pl. 52–53; cf. the hypothetical reconstruction of the Adoration scene by R. WARLAND, *Der Ambo aus Thessaloniki*, "Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts" 109, 1994, 375, fig. 6.

⁶⁷ P. NORDHAGEN, *The Mosaics of John VII (705–707 A.D.)*, "Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia" 2, 1965, 134–138, pl. 10–13; idem, *The Frescoes of John VII (A.D. 705–707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome*, "Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia" 3, 1968, 78–79, pl. 98–99.

⁶⁸ H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. II:1, 1925, 375, fig. 1310; TH. KLAUSER, *Engel...*, 263, Nos. 22, 23; J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pls. 11:2, 14:3; M. FAUSONE, *Die Taufe...*, 172f, 202–203, pls. 20:b, 21:a, 27:b; B. CHRISTERN-BRIESENICK, *Repertorium...*, 35–36, No. 49, pl. 17:2; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium...*, 55, No. 149, pls. 58:1, 59:2.

⁶⁹ H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. II:1, 1925, 363, fig. 1297; TH. KLAUSER, *Engel...*, 268, No. 41.

⁷⁰ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 191; H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. II:1, 1925, 374, fig. 1307; TH. KLAUSER, *Engel...*, 2271, No. 57; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst, die Kunst der Spätantike in West- und Ostrom*, München 1958, pl. 76; A. GRABAR, *Sculptures...*, 68–69, pl. 21; N. FIRATLI, *La sculpture...*, 102, No. 190, pl. 61.

⁷¹ A. GRABAR, *Ampoules...*, 19, 40–42, pl. 5–7, 47, 50.

⁷² Matthew 28, 1–8; Mark 16, 1–8; Luke 24, 1–8; John 20, 1–2; Apocrypha: *Gospel of Peter* 50–57 (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 93); *Gospel Nicodemus or Acts of Pilate* 13, 1 (ibidem, 106).

⁷³ H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. I:1, 1907, 1134–1135; J. REIL, *Die altchristlichen Bildzyklen des Lebens Jesu*, Leipzig 1910, 11–12.

⁷⁴ A. EFFENBERGER, *Frühchristliche Kunst und Kultur*, Leipzig 1986, 238; J. WILPERT, W.N. SCHUMACHER, *Die römischen Mosaiken der kirchlichen Bauten vom 4. bis 13. Jh.*, Freiburg 1976, 304, pl. 16:b.

⁷⁵ J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 243:6; J. DRESKEN-WEILAND, *Repertorium...*, 87–89, No. 250; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 57, fig. 14.

⁷⁶ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 140; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 92; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 58, No. 111, pl. 33; G. VIKAN, (in:) *Age* 1979, 504–505, No. 453; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 94–95, fig. 48, pl. 21.

(Bayerisches Nationalmuseum).⁷⁷ The angel sits here in front of a richly decorated mausoleum on the left, and the women approach from the right. On the roof of the mausoleum in the Trivulzio diptych there are two kneeling soldiers, whereas in the Munich diptych the mausoleum is flanked by two standing soldiers; above the women there is a representation of the Ascension. In all these examples the angel is wingless. However, on both diptychs he is young and handsome, and on the Trivulzio diptych he has a nimbus. In some other but not numerous 5th c. examples the angel has wings and sometimes a more solemn aspect, as for instance in the relief on the wooden door of Santa Sabina in Rome (432–440),⁷⁸ or in the mosaic in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (end of the 5th c.).⁷⁹ Throughout the 6th c. both the angel and the composition of the scene will remain the same. It is of no significance whether the angel sits on the right and the Women stand on the left or the other way round. Only the form of the sepulchre varies, sometimes considerably, as for instance in the miniature in the Rabbula Codex (Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence),⁸⁰ in the painting on the inside of the lid of a reliquary of wood containing stone fragments from the Holy Land (Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican)⁸¹ or in the micro-reliefs on the numerous lead *ampullae* in Monza and Bobbio.⁸²

The scene of the Women at the Tomb in the mosaic in San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna is part of a cycle of

the Passion of Christ. On the opposite wall of the church, among the mosaic scenes of another cycle, that of the Miracles of Christ, there is a scene unique at that time: two angels differing in colour and general character standing on either side of Christ (Fig. 14).⁸³ According to the Gospel of Matthew the angel on the left – in the mosaic the red one, standing above three sheep – is the good angel, the protector of the saved; the other angel – the blue one, in the mosaic, standing above three goats – is the devil, the “protector” of the damned.⁸⁴ There is no place here to analyze this image in detail, let me just point out that it is earliest representation of the devil in the guise of an angel.

More to the point is to stress that the scenes just discussed belong to extended cycles of the life of Jesus. In the formation of these cycles, from the 5th c. onwards, angels play a major role. The earliest and largest selection of scenes with many angels forming a cycle of the Infancy of Jesus occurs in the first half of the 5th c., in the mosaic decoration of the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (Fig. 15).⁸⁵ Two scenes are missing, i.e., the Presentation of Mary in the Temple and the Nativity, but there is the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Arrival of the Holy Family to Egypt. The cycle was invented at Rome. Iconographically it borrows a great deal from the imperial, representative monuments while following closely the text of Pseudo-Matthew.⁸⁶ Some of scenes can also be connected

⁷⁷ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 138–140; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 93; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 57–58, No. 110, pl. 33; C. PROVERBIO, *La figura...*, 93–94, fig. 47, pl. 20.

⁷⁸ G. JEREMIAS, *Die Holztür der Basilika S. Sabina in Rom*, Tübingen 1980, 63–65, No. 2, pl. 53.

⁷⁹ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna*, Baden-Baden 1958, pl. 206; idem, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. II:1, Wiesbaden 1974, 177–178, pl. 206.

⁸⁰ C. CECHELLI, G. FURLANI, M. SALMI, *The Rabbula Gospels*, Olten, 1959, pl. 81:a.

⁸¹ M.F. FRAZER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 564, fig. 76; A. Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult, zwischen Antike und Aufklärung*, Darmstadt 1995, 60, fig. 12.

⁸² G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 143–144; A. GRABAR, *Ampoules...*, 20–31, 58, pls. 9, 11:2, 12:2, 13:2, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28.

⁸³ E. KIRSCHBAUM, *Angelo rosso e l'angelo turchino*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 17, 1940, 209–248; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 151; F.W. DEICHMANN, *Frühchristliche Bauten...*, pl. 174; idem, *Ravenna...*, 169–170; cf. J. MICHL, *Engel IV (christlich)*, (in:) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* V, 1962, 112, 132–133.

⁸⁴ Matthew 25, 41; 2 Cor. 11, 14.

⁸⁵ Main bibliography: G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 207–212;

A. GRABAR, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1936, 211–230; A. SCHUCHERT, *Der Jugend-Jesu-Zyklus...*; C. CECHELLI, *I mosaici della basilica S. Maria Maggiore*, Torino 1956, 197–236; G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 93–130; P. Künzle, *Per una visione organica dei mosaici antichi di S. Maria Maggiore*, “Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Rendiconti” 34, (1961–62), 1961, 153–190; H. KARPP, *Die frühchristlichen...*; G. SPAIN, *The Program of the fifth-century Mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore*, Ann Arbor 1969; B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*; J. DECKERS, (in:) J. Wilpert, W.N. Schumacher, *Die römischen Mosaiken...*, 316–318; D. MAZZOLENI, *Natale con i primi cristiani*, “Archeo, Dossier” 10, 1985, 36–37; E. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Archetyp ewangelii Pseudo-Mateusza*, “Studia Źródłoznawcze” 30, 1987, 151–157; M.V. MARINI Clarelli, *La controversia nestoriana e i mosaici dell'arco trionfale di S. Maria Maggiore*, (in:) C. Barsanti et al. (eds.), *Bisanzio e l'Occidente: arte, archeologia, storia. Studi in onore di Fernanda de Maffei*, Roma 1996, 323–342; P.O. FOLGERØ, *The Sistine Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome: Christology and Mariology in the Interlude between the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon*, “Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia” XXI, n. s. 7, 2008, 10, 36–64.

⁸⁶ Pseudo-Matthew IX–XXIV (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 74–76); cf. G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 212–213; C. CECHELLI, *Mater Christi. La vita di Maria, nella storia, nella legenda, nella commemorazione liturgica*, vol. III/2, Roma 1954, 347, 362; E. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Archetyp...*, 151–157.

with the Protevangelium of James (Annunciation with Mary spinning), or to the canonical Gospel of Matthew (the first dream of Joseph, Adoration of the Magi, their visit to Herod, and the Massacre of the Innocents), or to the Gospel of Luke (Presentation of Jesus in the Temple). But the important and symptomatic link is to Pseudo-Matthew with the Arrival of the Holy Family in Sotinen, mentioned exclusively in this source.⁸⁷ The scene in Santa Maria Maggiore derives iconographically from the imperial *adventus*.⁸⁸ Angels are present in every scene of the two upper horizontal bands of the arch, which as a whole is reminiscent of the decoration of Roman triumphal arches on the city Forum.⁸⁹ In the topmost band on the left there is the Annunciation, already described, followed by a relatively small First Dream of Joseph, who does not sleep (he either lies or sits), but stands in front of his house addressing with a sorrowful gesture of his raised right hand the angel who approaches him from the left. The angel has wings and a nimbus, like all other angels in this mosaic, and wears a white tunic and *pallium*.

To the right of the arch the upper band contains the largest scene in this decoration, the *Occursus Domini* or *Hypapante*, better known as the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.⁹⁰ The Temple of Jerusalem is shown on the right. It has the shape of a typical Roman temple. Its tympanum is decorated with the statue of the enthroned personification of Roma. The Jewish Temple of Jerusalem certainly looked different, but this was more the symbolic expression of

political and religious ideas in a shape that would be understandable to Romans at that time.⁹¹ On the steps of the Temple there are the four pigeons that – according to Pseudo-Matthew – Joseph offered for Jesus.⁹² The main scene of the Presentation begins on the left, with two angels forming the guard of honour for Mary who holds the Child in her arms. In the centre there is a group consisting of Joseph, the Prophetess Anna and another angel speaking together.⁹³ From the right old Simeon approaches them at the head of a group of eight Jewish priests who leave the Temple. Below the Temple there is another small scene, representing the Second Dream of Joseph. It seems that the only reason for its presence here was the space available for the composition, which comprises the figure of Joseph lying asleep on the right and an angel approaching from the left and addressing him with a gesture of his right hand.

In the Adoration of the Magi (in the middle band on the left) the Child is placed centrally (**Fig. 16**), sitting alone on a large throne and guarded from behind by four angels with wings and nimbi, with the star of Bethlehem above them. The angels form here a guard of honour to the Child-Jesus. Mary sits on a smaller throne on the left. There is another sitting woman on the right, probably Salome the midwife.⁹⁴ According to the Protevangelium of James, Salome was the first woman to recognize the true God in the newborn Child and adored him before the Magi did.⁹⁵ The latter, in brightly colored Eastern garments, are divided into two groups to the right and left of Jesus.

⁸⁷ Pseudo-Matthew XXII, 2–XXIV, 1 (M.R. James, *The Apocryphal...*, 75–76).

⁸⁸ A. GRABAR, *L'Empereur...*, 228–229; G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 114; B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 30.

⁸⁹ U. CLEMEN, *De la colonne trajane à la mosaïque de Sainte-Marie-Majeure: le Massacre des Enfants*, "L'Antiquité classique" 44, 1975, 581–588.

⁹⁰ Cf. G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 101–109; E.H. KANTOROWICZ, *Puer exoriens, On the Hypapante in the Mosaics of the Santa Maria Maggiore*, (in:) H. Rahner, E. von Severus (eds.), *Perenmitas. Beiträge zur christlichen Archäologie und Kunst... P. Thomas Michels OSB zum 70. Geburtstag*, Münster, 1963, 118–135.

⁹¹ Cf. B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 21; M.V. MARINI CLARELLI, *La controversia nestoriana...*, 333–334. It is interesting that already in the 4th century it was called *templum Urbis*.

⁹² Cf. A. SCHUCHERT, *Der Jugend-Jesu-Zyklus...*, 104–105; B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 21.

⁹³ G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 109; B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 21; CH. WALTER, *The Dextrarum Iunctio of Leptis Magna in Relationship to the Iconography of Marriage*, "Antiquités Africaines" 14, 1979, 278; M.V. MARINI CLARELLI, *La controversia nestoriana...*, 332–333. The often adduced analogy with Roman *dextrarum iunctio* is not valid except in a purely formal sense.

⁹⁴ A. DE WAAL, *Die apokryphen Evangelien in der altchristlichen Kunst*, "Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde" 1,

1897, 187; G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 208; E. JASTRZĘBOWSKA, *Archetyp...*, 155. This person is by the way interpreted in many ways: the prophetess Anne by P.S. SCAGLIA, *I mosaici di S. Maria Maggiore*, Roma 1910, 30–31; Anne Mary's Mother by A. SCHUCHERT, *Der Jugend-Jesu-Zyklus...*, 140, 144; Sophia Theu by C. CECHELLI, *I mosaici...*, 219; Ecclesia ex circumcissione by A. WEIS, *Die Geburtsgeschichte Christi am Triumphbogen von S. Maria Maggiore in Rom*, "Das Münster" 13, 1960, 79–80 and CH. PIETRI, *Les premières images...*, 601–602; Ecclesia ex gentibus by G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 111, and B. BRENK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 27; Eva by: P. GOUBERT, *L'influence des évangiles apocryphes sur l'iconographie mariale (de Castelseprio à la Cappadoce)*, (in:) *Maria et Ecclesia, Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani in Civitate Lourdes Anno 1958 celebrati*, vol. XV, Rome 1964, 206–207; Sybilla by M.-L. THÉREL, *Une image de la Sybille sur l'arc triomphale de Sainte-Marie-Majeure à Rome*, "Cahiers Archéologiques" 12, 1962, 158; M.V. MARINI CLARELLI, *La controversia nestoriana...*, 336–337; Mary represented for the second time by G. SPAIN, *The Program...*, 129; Rachel by J. DECKERS, *Der alttestamentliche Zyklus von S. Maria Maggiore in Rom*, Bonn 1976, 298–299, who later, (in:) J. WILPERT, W.N. SCHUMACHER, *Die römischen Mosaiken...*, 317 has changed this interpretation for the Ecclesia ex circumcissione; cf. recently P.O. FOLGERØ, *The Sistine Mosaics...*, 40–43.

⁹⁵ *Protevangelium of James* XIX, 2–3 – XX (M.R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal...*, 46–47).

On the right in the middle band, below the Presentation of Jesus, we see the arrival of the Holy Family in an Egyptian town. Little Jesus stands in the middle of the group. Mary and Joseph as well as four angels, forming a guard of honour, accompany him. On the left side the inhabitants of the town come to meet them, with a philosopher and a local ruler at their head. This scene contains two traditions. It can only be intelligible in forms of both. Formally, it depends on the well-known theme, of the Roman imperial *adventus*. But the *adventus* by itself offers no clue as to the reference of the scene. For this one has to go to the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the only source to describe in detail the Egyptian journey of the Holy Family. They arrive at Sorinen, which was ruled by one Aphrodisius. Four angels accompanying the Holy Family emphasize in a traditional way, and to great effect, the religious significance of the event. This scene serves as a kind of extension of the Adoration of the Magi and of Salome on the opposite side.⁹⁶

Among the most securely dated and attributed examples of cycles of the life of Christ is the mid-6th c. ivory masterpiece from a Constantinopolitan workshop – the chair of Maximian, archbishop of Ravenna (Museo Arcivescovile).⁹⁷ Scenes from the life of the maiden Mary and the Infancy of Jesus, covering the front side of the back of a chair are – with the exception of two lost panels – preserved (Annunciation to Mary spinning, trial of the bitter waters, the first dream of Joseph, journey to Bethlehem, Nativity with Salome, Adoration of the Magi), the scenes on the rear of the chair are few (Baptism, Multiplication of loaves, Healing of the blind man, the Samaritan woman at the well and the triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem). Anyhow it is clear that the selection of these scenes is parallel to the repertory of the scenes decorating the ivory covers of gospel-books, e. g. the best and entirely preserved from

the 6th c. examples – one now in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale)⁹⁸ and another in Erivan (Museum Metenadaran).⁹⁹ Their top side shows the scenes from the life of the maiden Mary, around her image with little Jesus on her lap between two angels, while the back side has scenes of the miracles of Christ, grouped round his enthroned figure. It may be thought surprising that motives taken from the Apocrypha should decorate an archbishop's chair and the covers of a book presumably containing canonical texts.

On the chair of Maximian we meet angels in many scenes, especially in the Infancy cycle. In the Annunciation the angel stands and greets Mary with his right hand. She spins a purple thread. The angel has wings, a long tunic and a *pallium* and holds a long staff in his left hand, but has no nimbus.¹⁰⁰ In the scene of the trial of the bitter waters an angel stands behind Joseph and Mary, who give each other a cup of water to drink (Fig. 17).¹⁰¹ According to the Protoevangelium of James, the main source for this episode, it was Zacharias, the high priest of the Temple of Jerusalem, not the angel, who tested the truthfulness of the holy couple.¹⁰² In the double scene of the first dream of Joseph and of the journey to Bethlehem there is an angel speaking to Joseph asleep (above) and leading the donkey carrying pregnant Mary (below), who is supported by Joseph (Fig. 18).¹⁰³ The scene of the Adoration of the Magi is only partly preserved, with Mary enthroned and Jesus on her lap, and Joseph standing behind them. The angel stands on the right, he points out Jesus to the Magi in the next panel, which is not extant.¹⁰⁴ This composition is the same as that one already mentioned in the mosaic from the Vatican now in Santa Maria in Cosmedin in Rome. In the scene of the Baptism of Christ on the ivory *cathedra*, beside Jesus, John and a half figure personifying the river Jordan, there are two standing angels with Jesus' clothing in their hands (Fig. 19).¹⁰⁵ It seems that those angels, whether mentioned

⁹⁶ Cf. J. WILPERT, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom 4. bis 13. Jh.*, Freiburg 1917, 489; G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 113–114; B. BRENNK, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken...*, 30.

⁹⁷ C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra di Massimiano ed altri avori romano-orientali*, Roma 1936–1944; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 93–94, No. 140, pls. 73, 74; idem, *Avori di scuola ravennate nel V e VI secolo*, Ravenna 1977, 43–44, 50 (school of Ravenna?); E. JÜRGENSEN, *Die „Stile“ und der „Umkreis“ der Maximians Kathedra in Ravenna. Deutungen formaler Sachverhalte an frühchristlich-byzantinischen Elfenbeinschnitzereien*, Hamburg 1975, 55, 109–110; L. KÖTZSCHE-BREITENBRUCH, *Geburt...*, 209–210, fig. 7; D. GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Elfenbeinkunst...*, 33–35, 183, No. 25, fig. 27.

⁹⁸ F. STEENBOCK, *Die kirchliche Prachtband...*, 76–77, No. 10; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 97, No. 145, pl. 77; E. JÜRGENSEN, *Die „Stile“...*, 57–60; D. GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Elfenbeinkunst...*, 184, No. 28, fig. 30.

⁹⁹ F. STEENBOCK, *Die kirchliche Prachtband...*, 77–78, No. 11; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 94–95, No. 142, pl. 75; E. JÜRGENSEN, *Die „Stile“...*, 63–65.

¹⁰⁰ C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, 151–152, pl. 22; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 231.

¹⁰¹ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 188; C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, 154–155, pl. 23.

¹⁰² *Protoevangelium of James*, XVI (M.R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal...*, 45).

¹⁰³ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 135–136, 184–185; C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, 156–160, pl. 24; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 230.

¹⁰⁴ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 127–128; C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, 162–164, pl. 26.

¹⁰⁵ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 192–193; C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, 164–170, pl. 27; W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 232.

in the biblical sources or not, were necessary here to stress the solemnity of occasion, and by extension, the status of the occupant of the chair.

The scenes on Maximian's chair do not include the Ascension, where the angels are always present, and which is otherwise integral to Christological cycles from the 5th c. onwards. The Ascension is mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and in the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁰⁶ In one of the earliest representations in the early half of the 5th c., the relief on the door of Santa Sabina, Christ is pulled up to heaven in a naïve way by the hands of two angels reaching down from the clouds, with a third angel as an acclaiming witness.¹⁰⁷ All three have wings, wear tunics and *pallia*, but are shown only as half figures. In the 6th c. the iconography of the Ascension becomes established: Christ sitting or standing in an oval, almond-shaped halo, the so-called *mandorla*, is taken by angels flying symmetrically at either side, above a group of standing Apostles with Mary in the middle.

This eastern iconographic type of the Ascension goes back to the Roman image of the deceased (*imago clipeata*) with *Victoriae* or *genii* on either side (Fig. 1), well known from sarcophagi and some tomb paintings, and the apotheosis of Roman emperors.¹⁰⁸ A parallel scene is the *Majestas Domini*, where angels instead of holding the *mandorla*, adore Christ on either side, often Mary with Child Jesus on the throne in the midst of apostles below – as we see in the apse of Chapel VI in the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit in Egypt (now in the Coptic Museum, Cairo).¹⁰⁹ The Ascension is also represented in gospel miniatures (e. g. the Rabbula Codex, Biblioteca Laurenziana,

Florence; see Fig. 20),¹¹⁰ and on smaller objects like the lid of a reliquary in the Vatican,¹¹¹ also in many micro-reliefs on lead ampullae in Monza and Bobbio.¹¹²

Whether two or four angels hold the *mandorla* in the Ascension or the *Majestas Domini* is not significant. Their number seems to vary according to the destination and the size of the image, and of the space available. However four angels are necessary to hold a clipeus or a wreath with the heavenly cross, the Lamb of God or the triumphal Chrismon in the centre of church vaults or cupolas. This iconography derives from the imperial apotheosis. A striking example is the Archbishop's Chapel and the San Vitale in Ravenna.¹¹³ Two standing angels or arch-angels, sometimes captioned, became the usual assistants or guardians of Mary enthroned with the Child Jesus, both in monumental church decoration (the mosaic in the apse of the Basilica Eufrasiana in Poreč),¹¹⁴ and on de luxe cult objects, for instance the ivory diptych from Constantinople (Bode Museum, Berlin),¹¹⁵ or the Egyptian tapestry (Cleveland Museum of Art).¹¹⁶ Angels attend also Christ as a heavenly guard of honour or mediate between him and saints or eminent personages, as for instance in the apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 21).¹¹⁷ Two angels present the martyr Vitalis on the right and the bishop Ecclesius on the left to Christ the Cosmocrator in the centre.

So, during 200 years of the Early Christian Art, angels transformed from the human interlocutors of Mary, Joseph and the Women at the Sepulchre into astral winged beings who took their features from Roman *Victoriae* and other pagan winged *genii*. As messengers of God and as witnesses of wonderful events, they become part of the

¹⁰⁶ Mark 16,19; Luke 24, 50–53; Acts 1, 9–11.

¹⁰⁷ G. JEREMIAS, *Die Holztür...*, 68–72, No. 7, pl. 60.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. I/2, 1907, 2115–2126, fig. 633–635, 645–651; K. Felis, *Die Niken und die Engel in altchristlicher Kunst*, "Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde" 26, 1912, 9, fig. 3.

¹⁰⁹ G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 168–169, fig. 31:a; H.-G. SEVERIN, *Frühchristliche Baukunst in Ägypten*, (in:) B. Brenk (ed.), *Spätantike und Frühes Christentum*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte Suppl. 1, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, 253, pl. 291:a; M.F. FRAZER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 557, fig. 75.

¹¹⁰ C. CECHELLI, G. FURLANI, M. SALMI, *The Rabbula Gospels*, fol. 13b.

¹¹¹ M.F. FRAZER, (in:) *Age* 1979, 564, fig. 76; A. LEGNER, *Reliquien...*, 60, fig. 12.

¹¹² A. GRABAR, *Ampoules...*, 17, 20, 26–27, 29–30, 38, 40, 58–59, pls. 3, 5–7, 17, 19–21, 27, 29–30, 33, 47, 50.

¹¹³ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Frühchristliche Bauten...*, pls. 220–223, 342–346.

¹¹⁴ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 206; C.R. MOREY, *Early Christian Art*, Princeton N.J. 1953, pl. 186; G.A. WELLEN, *Theotokos...*, 150–151, fig. 29:a; N. CAMBI, *Jugoslawien*, (in:) B. Brenk (ed.), *Spätantike und Frühes Christentum*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte Suppl. 1, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, 306–307, pl. 375; A. EFFENBERGER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, 250, pl. 133; A. TERRY, T. MUHLSTEIN, *New documentary evidence...*, vol. II, fig. 12, with earlier bibliography 1047.

¹¹⁵ G. STUHLFAUTH, *Die Engel...*, 204–205; W.F. VOLBACH, *Elfenbeinarbeiten...*, 67, No. 137, pl. 42; S.A. BOYD, (in:) *Age* 1979, 528–530, No. 474; A. EFFENBERGER, H.-G. SEVERIN, *Das Museum...*, 140–141, No. 53.

¹¹⁶ S.A. BOYD, (in:) *Age* 1979, 532–533, No. 477; H.A. KLEIN, (in:) R. Heikermann (ed.), *The Cleveland Museum of Art. Meisterwerke von 300 bis 1550*, München, 2007, 42–45.

¹¹⁷ F.W. DEICHMANN, *Frühchristliche Bauten...*, pl. 351–355; idem, *Ravenna*, vol. II/2, 1976, 178–187.

iconography of many episodes both in the New Testament and outside it. But above all, they became the indispensable companions of Christ and his Mother in the images of their glory.

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Abbreviations

Age 1979 = K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, New York

ASR = *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs*

DACL = *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*

ELŻBIETA JASTRZĘBOWSKA

ANIOŁY Z NOWEGO TESTAMENTU W SZTUCE WCZESNOCHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEJ: POCHODZENIE I ŹRÓDŁA

Wyniki badań nad ikonografią aniołów w sztuce wczesnochrześcijańskiej (IV–VI w.) podważają tradycyjną opinię na temat genezy tych przedstawień, łączonej z wyobrażeniami pogańskich figur skrzydlatej Wiktorii czy innych geniuszy ze skrzydłami. Postacie aniołów pojawiają się w ikonografii chrześcijańskiej dopiero na początku IV w. i to w pojedynczych scenach ze Starego Testamentu (Ofiara Abrahama i trzech młodzieńcy w piecu ognistym).

W artykule omówiono jednak postacie aniołów występujących w scenach odnoszących się wyłącznie do Nowego Testamentu, gdyż lepiej niż aniołowie starotestamentalni mogą oni zobrazować rozwój ikonografii chrześcijańskiej i jej zależność zarówno od źródeł biblijnych, jak i od antycznej tradycji ikonograficznej. Także w tekstach kanonicznych Nowego Testamentu aniołowie pojawiają się sporadycznie (Zwiastowanie Marii, obudzenie pasterzy podczas Bożego Narodzenia, Sny Józefa i magów oraz przybycie kobiet do Grobu Świętego). Częściej aniołowie występują w tekstach apokryficznych (Protoewangelia Jakuba i ewangelia Pseudomateusza), i te teksty stały się kluczem do identyfikacji tych postaci w sztuce, zarówno w malarstwie katakumbowym, jak i w reliefach sarkofagowych powstałych w IV w. Bowiem w ciągu niemal całego tego stulecia aniołowie we wszystkich przedstawieniach biblijnych pozbawieni są skrzydeł oraz innych atrybutów potocznie im przypisywanych jako niezbędne (np. nimb wokół głowy). Zatem w najstarszej sztuce chrześcijańskiej można ich odróżnić od innych postaci biblijnych wyłącznie dzięki napisom lub kontekstowi ikonograficznemu.

W dwóch następnych stuleciach aniołowie są coraz częściej dodawani do scen biblijnych, choć nawet według

apokryfów nie zawsze w danych scenach byli w ogóle obecni. Na przełomie IV i V w., wraz z wpływem reprezentacyjnych przedstawień cesarzy rzymskich na sztukę chrześcijańską, aniołowie wzorem Wiktorii „otrzymali” nieodłączne odtąd skrzydła, a na wzór antycznych świadków cudownego wydarzenia stali się też niezbędnymi uczestnikami scen biblijnych; wzrosła również ich liczba w otoczeniu Chrystusa-Króla, co nawiązywało do gwardii honorowej, zawsze towarzyszącej wizerunkom cesarza rzymskiego.

W artykule omówiono i zanalizowano – pod względem zależności od chrześcijańskich źródeł pisanych i antycznej tradycji ikonograficznej – następujące sceny: Zwiastowanie Marii, Pokłon Magów, Małżeństwo Marii i Józefa, oba Sny Józefa (na temat brzemiennej Marii i przed ucieczką do Egiptu), Chrzest Chrystusa, Jego Zmartwychwstanie i Wniebowstąpienie. Omówiono też te sceny w połączeniu z innymi przedstawieniami figuralnymi (głównie rodem z apokryfów) w ramach ukształtowanych już cykli scen z dzieciństwa i życia Chrystusa. Powstały one zarówno na użytek monumentalnej dekoracji malowanej i mozaikowej wewnątrz kościelnych, jak i do dekoracji tzw. drobnej plastyki, głównie biżuterii nabożnej i dewocjonajów pielgrzymich. Zobrazowanie tego rozwoju angelologii w sztuce chrześcijańskiej zamkną monumentalne przedstawienia mozaikowe z apsyd kościelnych z VI w., pozbawione już jakichkolwiek odniesień biblijnych, a wyobrażające Matkę Bożą z Dzieciątkiem oraz Chrystusa między aniołami, pełniącymi wyłącznie rolę honorowej gwardii Boga i pośredników między Nim a ludźmi.

PLATE 176



Fig. 1. Front of a sarcophagus of an anonymous woman in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (Photo author).

Ryc. 1. Front sarkofagu anonimowej kobiety, Muzea Kapitołińskie, Rzym.

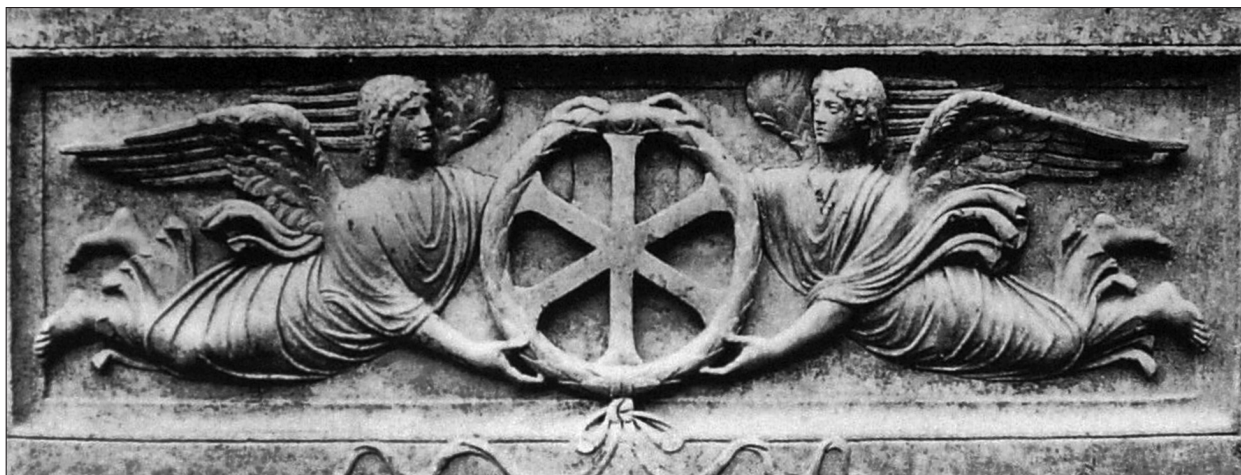


Fig. 2. Sarcophagus of the so-called Prince in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 75).

Ryc. 2. Sarkofag tzw. Księcia, Muzeum Archeologiczne, Stambuł.



Fig. 3. Victoria, relief of the arch of Constantine, Rome (Photo author).

Ryc. 3. Wiktoria, relief na łuku Konstantyna, Rzym.



Fig. 4. Angel of the Annunciation, mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (H. KARPP, *Die frühchristlichen und mittelalterlichen Mosaiken...*, pl. 7).

Ryc. 4. Anioł ze sceny Zwiastowania, mozaika w S. Maria Maggiore, Rzym.



Fig. 5. *Annunciation*, lid of the sarcophagus of Adelfia, Syracuse (W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 37).

Ryc. 5. *Zwiastowanie*, pokrywa sarkofagu Adelfii, Syrakuzy.



Fig. 6. *Annunciation*, dry-clay token, Monza (H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, I/2, 1907, fig. 765).

Ryc. 6. *Zwiastowanie*, gliniana eulogia, Monza.

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Fig. 7. *Annunciation*, left side of the Pignatta sarcophagus, Ravenna (H. LECLERCQ, (in:) *DACL*, vol. I/2, 1907, fig. 764).

Ryc. 7. *Zwiastowanie*, lewy bok sarkofagu Pignatta, Rawenna.



Fig. 8. *Dream of Joseph and his marriage with Mary*, fragment of a sarcophagus, Puy-en-Velay (J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 26, 1).

Ryc. 8. *Sen Józefa i jego ślub z Marią*, fragment sarkofagu, Puy-en-Velay.

Fig. 9. *Adoration of the Magi*, the ›Dogmatic‹ sarcophagus, Vatican (J. WILPERT, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 96).
 Ryc. 9. *Pokłon Magów*, sarkofag tzw. ›Dogmatyczny‹, Muzea Watykańskie.

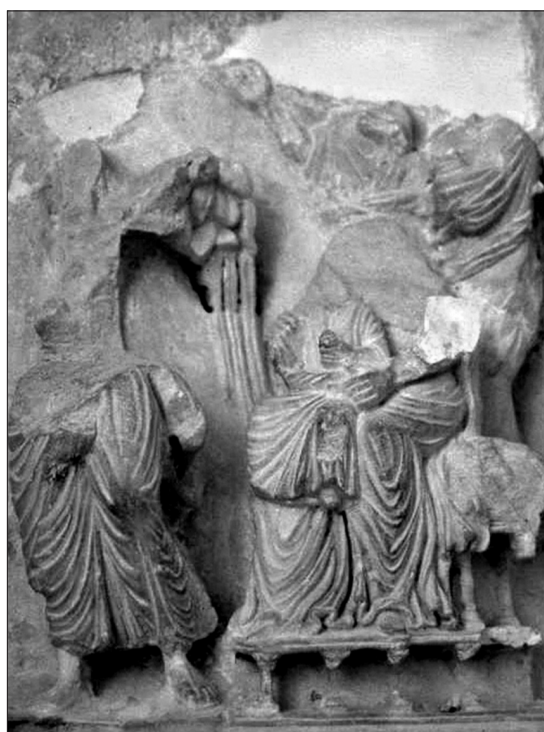


Fig. 10. *Adoration of the Magi*, relief from Constantinople, Carthage (Photo author).

Ryc. 10. *Pokłon Magów*, relief z Konstantynopola, Muzeum w Kartaginie.

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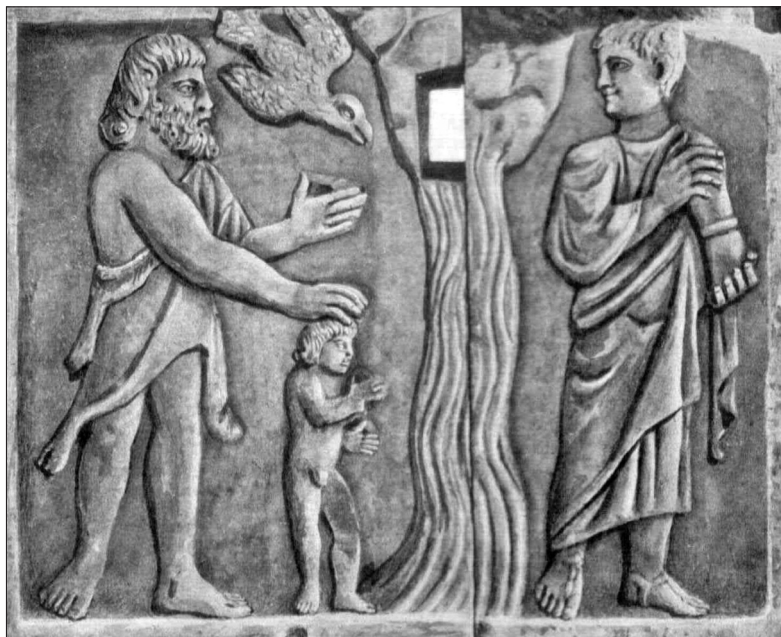


Fig. 11. *Baptism Christi*, sarcophagus, Ancona (J. Wilpert, *I sarcofagi...*, pl. 11:2).
Ryc. 11. *Chrzest Chrystusa*, sarkofag, Ancona.



Fig. 12. *Baptism Christi*, relief of a column from Tschinili-Kiosk, Istanbul (W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 76).

Ryc. 12. *Chrzest Chrystusa*, relief na kolumnie, Muzeum Archeologiczne, Stambuł.

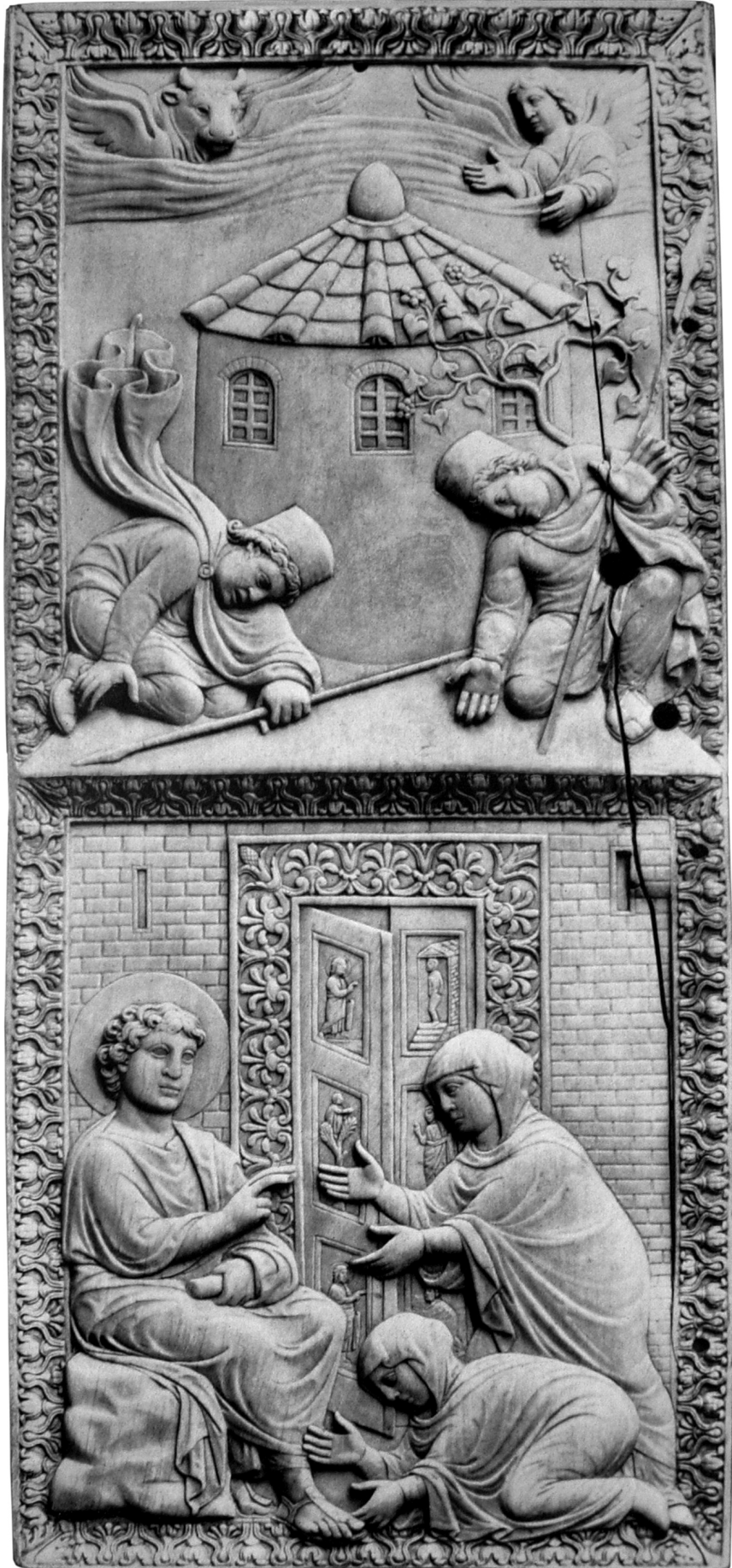


Fig. 13. *Women at the Tomb*, the ivory ›Trivulzio‹ diptych, Milan, (W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 92).

Ryc. 13. *Kobiety u Grobu Świętego*, dyptych z kości słoniowej tzw. Trivulzio, Mediolan.

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Fig. 14. Christ between an angel (red) and a devil (blue), mosaic S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenne (G. BOVINI, *Ravenna*, pl. between pp. 128/129).

Ryc. 14. Chrystus między aniołem (czerwony) i diabłem (niebieski), mozaika w S. Apollinare Nuovo Rawenna.



Fig. 15. Mosaic of the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (O. WULFF, *Altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst*, vol. I, Berlin 1914, pl. 20:1).

Ryc. 15. Mozaika na łuku triumfalnym w S. Maria Maggiore, Rzym.

Fig. 16. *Adoration of the Magi*, mosaic S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (H. KARPP, *Die frühchristlichen...*, pl. 18).

Ryc. 16. *Pokłon Magów*, mozaika w S. Maria Maggiore, Rzym.



Fig. 17. *Trial of the bitter waters*, ivory chair of Maximian, Ravenna (C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, pl. 23).

Ryc. 17. *Próba gorzkiej wody*, katedra z kości słonowej arcybp. Maksymiana, Rawenna.

PLATE 184



Fig. 18. *Dream of Joseph, Journey to Bethlehem*, ivory chair of Maximian, Ravenna (C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, pl. 24).

Ryc. 18. *Sen Józefa, Podróż do Betlejem*, tron z kości słoniowej arcybp. Maksymiana, Rawenna.



Fig. 19. *Baptism Christi*, ivory chair of Maximian, Ravenna (C. CECHELLI, *La cattedra...*, pl. 27).

Ryc. 19. *Chrzest Chrystusa*, tron z kości słoniowej arcybp. Maksymiana, Rawenna.

Fig. 20. *Ascension*, miniature, Rabbula Codex, Florence (C. CECHELLI, G. FURLANI, M. SALMI, *The Rabbula Gospels*, fol. 13b).

Ryc. 20. *Wniebowstąpienie*, miniatura, Kodeks Rabbuli, Florencja.



Fig. 21. *Christ between angels and saints*, mosaic S. Vitale, Ravenna (W.F. VOLBACH, M. HIRMER, *Frühchristliche Kunst...*, pl. 158).

Ryc. 21. *Chrystus między aniołami i świętymi*, mozaika w S. Vitale, Rawenna.

