

EUSTATHIUS OF THRACE

A fictitious personage created during the period of the CYCLES; he appears in particular in the Cycle of JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, exiled on the “island of Thrace,” thus identifying him with an imaginary island, for Thrace was no island. There, John consecrates the first bishop of the new community, named as Antimus in the homily described below, along with some presbyters. Among the latter stands Eustathius who will eventually become Antimus’ successor as second bishop.

The homily attributed to Eustathius, In *Michaelem archangelum*, is devoted almost entirely to the story of Euphemia. It recounts the many temptations suffered at the hands of the [devil](#) by the faithful woman so devoted to Michael. From a literary point of view, the prologue is greatly embellished. The listeners are invited to a spiritual banquet where dancers and musicians entertain the guests, who are themselves figures from the Old and New Testaments. Next follows the account of Euphemia, a member of the [senate](#) and inhabitant of Thrace, as well as the wife of General Aristarchus, whom the [Emperor Honorius](#) has designated as administrator of the region.

Euphemia and Aristarchus have been catechized by John Chrysostom, and Euphemia promises her husband that should he die first, she will not remarry. At this point Michael is invoked to be the custodian over her promise. Aristarchus dies, and after his death, the devil, disguised as a monk, appears to Euphemia and tries to convince her to marry the eparch Heraclius, a protégé of Honorius. However, Euphemia, strengthened by the powerful help of Michael, does not break her oath, whereupon the devil, trying anew, attempts to frighten her by appearing as a very tall and black Nubian.

He even assumes the form of Michael himself, but to no avail. When the good woman dies, Michael appears above the altar during her funeral services and remains there, suspended in mid-air. Even Honorius comes

to Thrace to meet with Arcadius and Eudossia so as to see this miracle in person. The homily finally concludes with praise for John Chrysostom, whose discourses are copied “in all the world, except in those regions occupied by diophysites.”

This treatise has survived in Coptic in four Sahidic manuscripts: one a complete codex (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M592, no. 8), and three in fragmentary codices (one from DAYR AL- BALAYZAH and two from DAYR ANBA SHINUDAH). Also there is one complete codex in Bohairic (British Library, Or. 8784; ed. Budge, 1894, pp. 93-135). The Sahidic text has been published in a critical edition by A. Campagnano (1977).

The literary qualities of this homily in relation to other [Coptic texts](#) are conducive toward dating its redaction in Coptic to the middle of the eighth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budge, E. A. W. *Saint Michael the Archangel*. London, 1894.
Campagnano, A.; A. Maresca; and T. Orlandi. *Quattro omelie copte*, 172.107-172. Milan, 1977.

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