

PREFACE

This study originated as a PhD dissertation written under the direction of Dr. Joel S. Burnett at Baylor University. It has gone through a few minor changes since it was defended in July 2012, but the essence remains the same. I was led to the topic of the interpreting angel motif and the broader subject of Jewish apocalyptic literature through an early foray into biblical angelology in relation to ancient Near Eastern literature and religions during my days as an MA student at Washington University in St. Louis. At that time I was primarily concerned with traditions of “fallen angels”—a topic of considerable discussion in scholarly literature. Later, my doctoral advisor wisely suggested that I explore the broader subject of Israelite/Jewish angelology to see if there were any significant topics that had escaped the attention of scholars. I took his advice, and I quickly stumbled upon the motif of angelic interpretation of visions. Although frequently mentioned in discussions of apocalyptic literature, I discovered that no extended study of the interpreting angel motif existed. At the same time, however, I discovered that the interpreting angel motif is more than just a piece of biblical minutia that had escaped notice because it is not truly important. The interpreting angel motif, as the present study argues, appears at a critical juncture in the history of Israelite religion, and it facilitates the development of an important literary genre of the Second Temple period—apocalyptic literature. It also suggests a shift in the view of God and the nature of divine revelation in at least one stream of thought in earliest Judaism and offers support to the notion that the Israelite conception of the divine realm was modeled after sociopolitical institutions.

This study weaves together three different lines of evidence in order to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif from its first appearance in Ezekiel 40–48 through its maturation in Daniel 7–8. The first line of evidence is the biblical and, in the case of *1 Enoch*, pseudepigraphical textual data. Historical and literary analysis of the primary texts in which the

interpreting angel motif appears forms the core of this study. Given the considerable literary and historical sweep covered, it is impossible to offer an exhaustive analysis of the primary texts. Therefore, I have limited discussion to issues that relate to the development of the interpreting angel motif and its function, and have sought to minimize tangents into matters of secondary importance. For the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek biblical texts, all translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. For the Ethiopic text of *1 Enoch*, I have followed the critical edition of Michael A. Knibb.¹

The second line of evidence brought into this study is textual and archaeological data regarding the administration of the great empires of the Near East from the early sixth through the mid-second centuries BCE (Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid). Again, an exhaustive discussion is impossible in the present study, and I have limited the focus to issues relevant to the mediation of imperial authority and communication through political intermediaries, such as governors, messengers, and other sociopolitical institutions. The purpose here is to determine whether the transition from a local Judean monarchy to provincial status within large empires and the model of a transcendent imperial sovereign correlates with the model of the divine realm implied in texts containing the interpreting angel motif. With regard to ancient textual sources, in most cases I have followed major scholarly translations, with consultation of original languages.

Finally, this study sets the development of the interpreting angel motif in its broader literary and religious context through the examination of parallels and relevant evidence drawn from textual and archaeological evidence for religious beliefs and practices in surrounding cultures that may reasonably be supposed to have influenced Jewish authors. Once again, my focus is limited to data that relate to beliefs, practices, and literary motifs relevant to the interpreting angel motif. These data include direct parallels, as well as indications of broader religious concepts relating to the interpreting angel motif. As with the historical evidence, I generally follow standard translations of non-Hebrew/Aramaic texts, although in the case of Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Greek texts I have consulted the original languages.

1. Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).