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Introduction

The interpretation of symbolic visions by angels is one of the major literary motifs in biblical literature of the Second Temple period. It emerges from prophetic soil, with precursors in Amos 7:7-9; 8:1-3; Jer. 1:11-19; 24, but it takes on new life with the rise of apocalyptic literature in the sixth–second centuries BCE. With a few possible exceptions, it appears to be a distinctly Jewish innovation, although the influence of Mesopotamian, Persian, and Greek traditions is evident. The interpreting angel motif developed within a sociopolitical and religious matrix that also saw the transformation of the old Israelite religion of the monarchic period into the emerging Judaism of the Second Temple period. This new literary motif was but one part of a much larger religious shift that also included the birth of apocalypticism and the development of Jewish angelology in tandem with, or perhaps as a result of, the emergence of monotheism.[1]

The goal of this study is to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif in late prophetic and early apocalyptic literature.[2] This motif first appears in Ezekiel 40–48 and emerges more fully in Zechariah 1–6, where angelic mediation serves as the primary mode of divine revelation. Moving from prophetic literature into apocalyptic literature, angelic interpretation becomes a dominant motif that all but replaces direct divine revelation.[3] Angelic interpretation of visions is widely regarded as one of the central motifs of apocalyptic literature, and therefore its development in the late prophetic and early apocalyptic texts under consideration in this study is of great importance

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1. As I discuss below, one popular theory for the development of monotheism holds that the multi-tiered pantheon of early Israel collapsed into two tiers: the chief deity, now recognized as the only true God, and a host of subservient messenger deities (angels). This simple system does not appear to have lasted long, however, as by the end of the third century a vast angelic hierarchy had developed, once again expanding the "pantheon" into multiple levels.

not only for the study of Israelite and early Jewish religion, but also for the development of apocalyptic literature.[4]

The Interpreting Angel in Biblical and Extrabiblical Literature: An Overview

The interpreting angel appears in only a handful of biblical texts, all of them exilic or postexilic (Ezekiel 40–48; Zechariah 1–6; Daniel 7–8).[5] In these passages, a human prophet sees a highly symbolic and complex vision that, in

2. The primary texts containing angelic interpretation of visions upon which this study focuses include Ezek. 40:1-37, 43-49; 41:1—43:6; 44:1-5; 46:19—47:12; Zech. 1:7—2:5; 4:1-6a, 10b-14; 5:1—6:8; Dan. 7:15-28; 8:15-27. In addition, I will give somewhat less attention to materials from the Enochic corpus, which generally indicate developments between Zechariah 1–6 and Daniel 7–8. The relevant Enochic passages include *1 En.* 18:14—19:2; 21:1—33:4; 72:1; 74:2; 75:3-4; 78:10; 79:2—81:10; 82:7-8. The interpreting angel motif also appears prominently in the Enochic *Book of Similitudes* (*1 En.* 40:2, 8-10; 43:3-4; 46:2—47:2; 52:3-9; 53:4-7; 54:4-10; 56:2-8; 60:5-6, 9-25; 61:2-13; 64:2; 71:3-17), but this portion of the Enochic corpus dates to the first century CE and therefore falls outside the chronological parameters of this study (see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 178; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001], 7).

3. It should be noted that direct divine revelation continued unabated in certain traditions, and much of the Israelite prophetic corpus was composed or at least compiled in the Second Temple period. Thus it would be incorrect to speak, as some past scholars have, of the "end" of prophecy in the early Second Temple period and its replacement with apocalyptic literature. Yet within the stream connecting late prophetic literature (Ezekiel 40–48; Zechariah 1–8), angelic mediation does begin to supersede prophetic mediation, so that one may speak of the interpreting angel as "replacing" the prophet as the mediator of divine revelation, provided this replacement is not assumed to be a universal phenomenon signaling the "demise" of prophecy. Even within the tradition represented by Zechariah, for example, prophetic mediation continues in Zechariah 9–14. The transition from prophetic mediation to angelic mediation was gradual, and it was not universal.

4. Regarding the importance of interpreting angels in apocalyptic literature, see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 B.C.–A.D. 100* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 242–43; Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (SJ 8; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 10; Michael Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* (TSAJ 34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 114–29, 142–44; Donata Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur und ihre theologische Relevanz: Am Beispiel von Ezechiel, Sacharja, Daniel und Erstem Henoch* (Aachen: Shaker, 1998), 24, 255–57. Stefan Beyerle, on the other hand, sees two major forms of angelic revelation in apocalyptic: interpretation and instruction ("Angelic Revelation in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al. [Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007], 205–23). The latter is especially prominent in the Enochic *Book of Watchers* and in *Jubilees*.

many cases, draws on elaborate mythological imagery. The nature of the vision is such that the prophet is incapable of understanding its meaning apart from interpretation by a heavenly being. However, such visions with interpretations are hardly restricted to these relatively late texts. Earlier prophetic books such as the book of Amos include symbolic visions whose meanings Yahweh explains to the prophet. In Amos 7:7-9, the prophet sees the "Lord" (אדני) holding a plumb line in his hand. Yahweh then asks Amos what he sees, and following the prophet's answer, Yahweh proceeds to explain the vision of the plumb line as a symbol of the coming judgment on Israel. A similar vision and exchange involving a pun on the words קָיִץ, "summer fruit," and קֵץ, "end," appears in Amos 8:1-3. This same pattern appears in Jer. 1:11-19; 24, in which Yahweh grants the prophet a symbolic vision, asks him what he sees, and finally explains the meaning of the vision.

These examples of symbolic visions interpreted by a heavenly being differ from the motif of the interpreting angel in that it is Yahweh himself, rather than an intermediary divine being, who interprets the vision.[6] Not surprisingly, the transition from this mode of direct divine revelation to revelation through angelic intermediaries is often taken as a signal of a shift away from classical prophecy, as the view of God increasingly emphasizes God's transcendence.[7]

5. Ezekiel 40–48 is often included as an example of the interpreting angel motif, though it differs from the other examples in that the prophet does not express bewilderment at the visions or ask the angel for explanations of their meanings. Nevertheless, these chapters anticipate the form of the motif in some later apocalyptic texts (e.g., *1 Enoch* 17–36), namely the leading of a human visionary on a journey filled with elaborate visions, which an angelic guide explains (see George W. E. Nickelsburg, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001], 294–95).

6. Lester Grabbe has made much of the technical similarity of such mediations of divine revelation to human recipients by otherworldly beings in non-apocalyptic prophetic texts as an argument against the sharp distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic made by such scholars as O. Plöger (*Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman [Richmond: John Knox, 1968]) and Paul D. Hanson (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975]), as well as the definition of the apocalyptic genre by Collins and others (see Lester L. Grabbe, "Prophetic and Apocalyptic: Time for New Definitions—and New Thinking," in *Knowing the End From the Beginning*, ed. L. Grabbe and R. Haak [JSPSup 46; London: T&T Clark, 2003], 107–33). His objections notwithstanding, the shift from direct revelation from Yahweh to a human prophet to mediation through angels does mark a significant disjuncture between classical prophecy and apocalyptic.

7. See, for example, Karin Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter: The Interpreting Angel in Post-Exilic Prophetic Visions of the Old Testament" (in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al. [Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007]), 189–203; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (OTL; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:200; H. Delkert, "Die Engelwesen in Sach 1,8–15," *BN* 99 (1999): 20.

This transition is first seen in the sixth century, in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah. A heavenly figure appears in Ezekiel 40–48 and leads Ezekiel on a tour of the eschatological temple. He is described here as a "man whose appearance was like bronze and who had a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand" (Ezek. 40:3). Much of the vision is concerned with the measurements and workings of the future temple, and the prophet does not express confusion at his visions or request explanations from his heavenly guide. Nevertheless, the guide provides some commentary on and interpretation of the visions, making these passages at least a precursor to the apocalyptic motif of the interpreting angel.[8]

The first undisputed example of the interpreting angel motif appears in the night visions of Zechariah 1–6. Here an angel appears to the seer and interprets his visions. In Zech. 1:9 Zechariah asks "the angel who spoke with me" (המלאך הדבר בי) about the identity of the four horses in his vision.[9] The angel replies that he will show him what they are, and after this the "man standing among the myrtles" (האיש העמד בין־ההדסים)—who is identified as the "angel of Yahweh" (מלאך יהוה) in verse 11—answers the question: "These are the ones whom Yahweh has sent to go back and forth throughout the earth." The interpreting angel thus not only mediates between Yahweh and the seer, he also at times stands in a mediating position between the seer and the elements of his vision. As Schöpflin points out, "The angel is not a part of the vision, but an observer like Zechariah, though an observer initiated into the secret visionary world. At the same time the interpreting angel seems to have the opportunity also to cross the line and to exert influence on or to enter

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8. Schöpflin points out that the angel actually does not speak very much. Most of his interaction with Ezekiel takes the form of actions, such as taking measurements and directing the prophet's attention toward certain features. Schöpflin thus concludes that the figure in Ezekiel 40–48 "is not so much an interpreter then, but rather a guide" ("God's Interpreter," 197). Nevertheless, as in the case of Ezekiel 8–11, the heavenly guide may be regarded as a precursor to the *angelus interpres* proper, and later angelic interpreters also often act as guides on heavenly ascents (see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5–7; Robert North, "Prophecy to Apocalyptic Via Zechariah" in *Congress Volume, Uppsala 1971* [VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972], 67).

9. It is possible that the horses also have angelic riders, as the man standing among the myrtles is said to be riding on a red horse (1:8; see K. Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau. Die Visionen des Propheten Sacharja* [SBS 70; Stuttgart: KBW, 1974]). This possibility would seem to be further underscored by the fact that "they" speak to the angel of Yahweh in v. 11. Schöpflin notes this, yet maintains, "As these horses are celestial ones they might as well be celestial beings able to speak" ("God's Interpreter," 192, n. 16). While the text does not explicitly state that the horses all have riders, and it is therefore theoretically possible that it is the horses that speak in v. 11, it seems much more likely that the horses should be understood to have angelic riders.

the visualized sphere."[10] The interpreting angel stands between the seer and the vision and is able to interact with figures in both realms. But the same is also true of the seer at times, as in Zech. 2:1-2. Zechariah sees a "man" (אישׁ) with a measuring line in his hand, and he asks him where he is going. The figure, apparently able to hear the prophet, answers that he is going to measure Jerusalem. Thus, even the seer is able to enter into and interact with the visionary world. The interpreting angel's primary function, then, is not to mediate between the human seer and the visionary world, but to interpret visions that the seer does not understand. Chapters 4–6 consist of a series of symbolic visions of such items as a lampstand and bowl (4:2), two olive trees (4:3), a flying scroll (5:1), a basket with a woman inside (5:6-8), two women with wings (5:9), and four chariots with horses (6:1-3). Each vision follows the familiar pattern of the seer being asked, "What do you see?" and the angel explaining the meaning of the vision.

From Zechariah 1–6 onward, the interpreting angel becomes a persistent feature in Jewish apocalyptic literature. It appears throughout the Enochic corpus, beginning with Enoch's cosmic journey (*1 Enoch* 17–36), during which he engages in the vision question and answer pattern familiar from Zechariah 1–6. All of *The Book of Luminaries* (*1 Enoch* 72–82) is composed of revelations from the angel Uriel, who explains the workings of the universe to Enoch.[11] Interpreting angels also appear in Daniel 7–8. In Dan. 7:1-15, Daniel sees a vision of four beasts arising from the sea, and his vision perplexes him, so he asks one of the heavenly attendants in his vision to explain its meaning.[12] The angel agrees and proceeds to interpret the vision as concerning the rise of four kingdoms on earth (Dan. 7:16-27). Similarly, in Dan. 8:15-26, the angel Gabriel interprets another vision involving animals symbolizing kingdoms (8:1-14).

In addition to these earliest examples of the interpreting angel motif, interpreting angels continue to appear in numerous Jewish and Christian apocalyptic works, including *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the book of Revelation, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.[13]

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10. Ibid., 191.

11. *The Book of Luminaries*, along with the core traditions of *The Book of Watchers* (especially chs. 6–11), are generally held to be the oldest of the Enochic texts, with the oldest extant manuscript (4Q208) possibly dating to the late third century BCE. Nickelsburg sees *The Book of Luminaries* as the oldest of the Enochic works, with its roots in the Persian era, and he holds out the same possibility for *1 Enoch* 6–11 (*1 Enoch 1*, 7–10). Collins is more cautious, holding that "no section of *1 Enoch* as we have it can be dated prior to the Hellenistic age, although it undoubtedly draws on older traditions" (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 44).

12. John Goldingay suggests that the figure in Dan. 7:16 should be identified with the angel Gabriel, who appears in Dan. 8:16 (*Daniel* [WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989], 173).

The later development of the motif, however, extends beyond the scope of this study. Most of the major features of the interpreting angel motif had developed and stabilized by the time of the composition of Daniel 7–12 (c. 165 BCE), and therefore this study is limited to the early development of the motif from c. 573–165BCE, as demarcated by Ezekiel 40–48 on the early end and Daniel 7–12 on the late end.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN ISRAELITE ANGELOLOGY

Despite its prominence and importance in postexilic literature, the development of the interpreting angel motif has received little attention from scholars and constitutes a gap in the scholarship on Israelite angelology. A few scholars, however, have attempted to discern the significance of the motif and its emergence at the beginning of the Persian period in conjunction with the rise of apocalypticism.[14]

Walther Eichrodt points to the appearance of angelic intermediaries in the postexilic period as evidence of "the ever-increasing emphasis on the divine transcendence . . . which definitely involves an obscuring of the idea of God."[15] Similarly, Karin Schöpflin sees the interpreting angel as "indicative of a

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13. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 20.

14. There is considerable disagreement as to when and in which texts the apocalyptic genre first appears. Many would consider *1 Enoch* (or, more precisely, the *Book of Watchers*) to be the oldest true apocalypse (John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 25–26; Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History*, trans. William J. Short [JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997]). Others would place the origin of apocalyptic in the postexilic prophetic books (Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975]; O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology,* trans. S. Rudman [Richmond: John Knox, 1968]; Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995]). Lester Grabbe, on the other hand, denies any significant disjuncture between "prophecy" and "apocalyptic," and points to visionary revelations in Amos and Jeremiah as being essentially the same as apocalyptic revelations (Lester L. Grabbe, "Prophetic and Apocalyptic: Time for New Definitions—and New Thinking," in *Knowing the End From the Beginning*, ed. L. Grabbe and R. Haak [JSPSup 46; London: T&T Clark, 2003], 107–33). In the two latter views, the appearance of the interpreting angel in Zechariah 1–6 and even its precursors in Ezekiel 8–11; 40–48 may be seen as early movements toward the apocalyptic form.

15. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (OTL; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 2:200. A similar assessment is offered by Helmer Ringgren, who describes the increasing transcendence of God in postexilic Judaism in terms of a preference for divine hypostases. However, Ringgren takes this development not as a sign of Yahweh's distance (and thus as an "obscuring of the idea of God"), but as way to express humanity's closeness to God while at the same time maintaining God's holiness (*Israelite Religion*, trans. David Green [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], 308–09).

theological tendency to increase God's transcendent nature."[16] Unlike Eichrodt and other earlier scholars, however, Schöpflin does not conclude from this observation that Yahweh is necessarily absent from the world. Rather, angelic mediators become an extension of God's presence and evidence of his continuing involvement in the world.[17]

William Oesterly and Theodore Robinson attribute the appearance of divine intermediaries in Ezekiel to the prophet's "doctrine of divine transcendence," while at the same time suggesting that Ezekiel develops ideas found in earlier biblical texts.[18] They trace a development from the "spirit" in Ezekiel to the interpreting "angel" in Zechariah 1–6, and argue that whereas the former closely associated the intermediary with Yahweh, the latter "express[es] more pronouncedly the distinction, or separation, between God and His supernatural instrument."[19] They attribute this development to the influence of Old Iranian religious ideas, which persisted in Persian Zoroastrianism.[20]

A number of major studies of Israelite angelology either do not treat the interpreting angel at all or do so only briefly. William G. Heidt first provides a brief description of the various categories and terminology used to describe angels in the Old Testament, and then discusses a number of characteristics of angels in the Bible.[21] Although Heidt notes a few distinctive features of postexilic angelology, such as interpreting angels in Zechariah and Daniel, he minimizes new development in the postexilic period and rejects the view that angels were introduced in the postexilic period to mediate between humans

16. Karin Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter: The Interpreting Angel in Post-Exilic Prophetic Visions of the Old Testament," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception,* ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al. (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007 Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 201.

17. Ibid., 201–02. Here Schöpflin's view of the interpreting angel comes close to Alexander Fischer's understanding of the "exodus angel," which appears in several passages in Exodus (3:2; 14:19-20; 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2). Fischer argues that these angelic appearances are part of a redactional layer that continues into Judg. 2:1-5 and are intended to indicate Yahweh's real presence with the Israelites in the wilderness ("Moses and the Exodus-Angel," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception,* ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al. [Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 79–93).

18. W. O. E. Oesterly and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 250–51. Oesterly and Robinson point to the "spirit" mentioned in texts such as Judg. 14:19; 1 Kgs. 22:21; 2 Kgs. 2:16, as possible sources for a concept that Ezekiel has modified in accordance with his unique thought.

19. Zechariah's use of the term "angel" (מלאך) emphasizes the distinction between the intermediary and Yahweh, in contrast to Ezekiel's close identification and even blurring of the two. Oesterly and Robinson point to this distinction as "a further step in the teaching of the wide distance between God and man" (ibid., 280).

and an increasingly transcendent God.[22] Heidt devotes several pages to the "exegete" (interpreting) angel in Zechariah 1–6 and Daniel 7–12, but he offers no explanation for the origin or significance of this motif.[23]

Alexander Rofé examines the development of Israelite angelology from its early polytheistic roots, through the adaptation of belief in angels to monotheistic faith, and finally to the anti-angel programs of the Prophetic, Deuteronomic, Wisdom, and Priestly movements. Rofé ends his diachronic analysis of the development of Israelite angelology by noting briefly that angels, while virtually absent throughout most of the Prophets, reappear in late prophetic literature (for example, in Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8), but he neither provides a detailed explanation for why this is the case nor does he trace the development of the interpreting angel motif specifically.[24] Likewise, K. Merling Alomia's extensive comparative study of lesser deities in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible says very little about the interpreting angel, noting only the presence of angelic interpreters in Daniel and saying nothing of their appearance in Zechariah 1–6.[25] Michael Mach's important study of pre-rabbinic angelology includes only two pages on the interpreting angel motif in

20. Ibid., 275; cf. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 312. Unfortunately, they do not go into detail about these earlier Iranian ideas that they maintain influenced Jewish angelology via Zoroastrianism, nor do they explain in detail how Persian religion affected Judaism. This latter omission is particularly problematic in light of the fact that all of the parallels to Jewish angelology in Persian religious texts post-date the biblical texts and even most postbiblical apocalyptic texts (see M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 90–94). It is difficult to determine the genuine antiquity of most Zoroastrian traditions, since the earliest texts date from the ninth–tenth centuries CE in their present form. Boyce, however, maintains that many of these traditions are indeed quite old, and that some, especially the Gathic portions of the Avesta, go back to Old Iranian religion and perhaps even to Zoroaster himself. The teachings were transmitted orally until perhaps the fifth century CE (1).

21. William George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology Second Series 24; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), esp. 59–62, 101–11. With regard to the interpreting angel in Zechariah 1–6, Heidt is content to note that Yahweh also communicates directly in these chapters. Therefore, according to Heidt, the presence of the interpreting angel cannot be taken as a sign of a more transcendent, distant deity (110–11).

22. Ibid., 101–11.

23. Indeed, of the use of angels to interpret visions, Heidt confesses "[w]hy such a method was used remains a mystery" (ibid., 59).

24. Alexander Rofé, *The Belief in Angels in the Bible and in Early Israel* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), esp. 330–42.

25. K. Merling Alomia, "Lesser Gods of the Ancient Near East and Some Comparisons with Heavenly Beings in the Old Testament" (PhD diss., Andrews University/Seventh Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1987), 477–78.

extrabiblical texts only.[26] His treatment of the motif, like much of the rest of his study, does not concern itself with identifying the forces that contributed to its development.

In a study of Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, Janet Tollington suggests that the angelic "interpretation" of Jacob's dream in Gen. 31:10-13 may provide evidence of an early pattern that Zechariah revives.[27] Tollington's treatment of the interpreting angel motif is brief, however, and is restricted to Zechariah 1–6. Furthermore, she does not go into detail about why such archaism would have arisen in the early Persian era and continued with such prominence throughout the Second Temple period and beyond.

Finally, Donata Dörfel includes a short excursus on the development of the interpreting angel motif from Ezekiel 40–48 through Daniel in her study of angelology in the early apocalyptic tradition.[28] Dörfel proposes that the phrase המלאך הדבר בי in Zechariah 1–6 should be translated, "the angel who spoke *through* me."[29] Thus, the "angel" in Zechariah 1–6 is a form of the prophetic spirit.[30] The emergence of the interpreting angel as an autonomous intermediary did not occur until Daniel 8.[31] Dörfel's brief treatment of the development of the motif is essentially descriptive in nature and does not explain why this development took place.[32] Elsewhere, she includes another excursus on the impact of political models upon the concept of the heavenly

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26. Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* (TSAJ 34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 142–44.

27. Janet Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation in Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (JSOTSup 150; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 98–99. Tollington sees Zechariah's use of angelic mediators not as an indication of a remote God, but rather as a counter to the view that God's transcendence implied that he was distant from humanity. By reviving the pattern of the earliest period of Israelite religion (patriarchal), when Yahweh and his angels conversed with humans face to face, Zechariah emphasizes God's nearness and presence in the world (99; cf. Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter," 201).

28. Donata Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur und ihre theologische Relevanz: Am Beispiel von Ezechiel, Sacharja, Daniel und Erstem Henoch* (Aachen: Shaker, 1998), 255–57.

29. Dörfel points out that beginning in Zech 1:9 and continuing throughout Zechariah's night visions, the prophet addresses המלאך הדבר בי as אדני "my lord." She then asserts that in preexilic texts, the word אדני, when referring to a heavenly being, only describes Yahweh (ibid., 94). However, in Gen. 19:2, 18, Lot addresses the two angels as אדני, and although Dörfel cites Genesis 18–19, she does not address this seeming contradiction to her claim.

30. Ibid., 94–95.

31. Ibid., 256.

32. Dörfel does, however, make the important observation that the mediation of divine revelation through angels does not indicate that God had come to be viewed as remote and inaccessible during the Second Temple period, as has been so often charged, but rather that "[a]uch das dem Menschen zugänglich werden göttliche Wort erfährt im Blick auf seine Herkunft eine Relativierung" (ibid., 256).

realm in the Second Temple period in general.[33] Here again, Dörfel's treatments are brief, and in this case they do not focus specifically on the interpreting angel.

As the above survey demonstrates, the development of the interpreting angel motif remains a largely unexplored subject within scholarship on Israelite angelology. Several major studies touch upon angelic interpretation briefly as an example of the increased transcendence of Yahweh in the postexilic period. In addition, several scholars posit significant foreign influence on the development of postexilic angelology. A few recent studies attempt to go beyond these older views by attributing the emphasis on angelic mediation in postexilic texts to archaism in the Persian period (Tollington) or by revisiting the notion of transcendence and attempting to understand interpreting angels as a sign of divine *immanence*, rather than divine *remoteness* (Dörfel, Schöpflin).

What is lacking even from the more recent studies is a sustained examination of the development of the interpreting angel motif in biblical and extrabiblical literature, the brief excursus by Dörfel notwithstanding. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of the development of the interpreting angel motif from the Neo-Babylonian period through the early Hellenistic period.

The Emergence of Apocalyptic Literature

The interpreting angel first appears in postexilic prophetic literature—the same soil from which apocalyptic literature is often believed to have originated—and it forms one of the central motifs within the apocalyptic tradition. Therefore, an overview of the history of scholarship on the origins of apocalyptic literature provides the broader background against which the development of the interpreting angel motif should be understood. Although this study focuses on the development of the interpreting angel motif rather than the emergence of apocalyptic literature, the trajectory within which I trace the development of the motif is that of the birth of apocalypticism out of late Israelite prophecy, particularly Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8.

R. H. Charles is without a doubt the father of the study of apocalyptic literature in the twentieth century Charles decried the then-widespread idea that the four centuries between Malachi and the dawn of Christianity were "silent years" in which all divine inspiration and revelation ceased. On the contrary, he argued that the intertestamental era was a time of tremendous

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33. For example, Dörfel notes the similarity of Yahweh's now mobile chariot throne (e.g., Ezekiel 1; 10) to the chariot throne of the Persian kings (ibid., 268).

religious development.[34] At the same time, Charles connected apocalypticism with earlier prophecy and argued that apocalyptic literature's use of pseudonymity arose from the suppression of prophetic revelation in favor of "the supremacy of the Law, which left no room for prophecy."[35] The only task that remained for any "prophets" in this period was the interpretation of *past* prophecy. Therefore, pseudonymous apocalyptic literature provided a way around the obstacle of a closed canon by attributing its revelations to figures from earlier times, when prophecy had not yet ceased.

For the first half of the twentieth century, most studies of apocalypticism viewed it as the product of foreign influence on Israelite prophetic thought. H. H. Rowley, for example, argued that apocalypticism arose to a significant degree due to the influence of Persian dualism on Israelite prophecy.[36] Similarly, D. S. Russell identifies Persian religious thought as a primary source of the dualistic element in apocalyptic literature, as well as its determinism and angelology/demonology, although he also posits significant Babylonian and Greek influence as well.[37] Regardless of the specific source, for much of the early and mid-twentieth century apocalypticism was considered largely a synthesis of Israelite prophecy with foreign cosmologies, mythologies, and mantic practices.[38]

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34. R. H. Charles, *Religious Development Between the Old and the New Testaments* (Repr.; London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 14–15. Similarly, Charles denounces the notion that apocalyptic is ethically inferior to Old Testament prophecy. Rather, the opposite is the case: "The ethical teaching . . . in apocalyptic is a vast advance on that of the Old Testament, and forms the indispensable link which in this respect connects the Old Testament with the New" (32).

35. *APOT*, viii. Of the cessation of prophecy in the Second Temple period, Charles writes, "When once this idea of an inspired Law—adequate, infallible, and valid for all time—had become an accepted dogma of Judaism, as it became in the post-Exilic period, there was no longer any room for independent representatives of God appearing before men, such as the pre-Exilic prophets" (viii). See also Charles, *Religious Development*, 8–9, 35–45.

36. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (3rd ed.; New York: Association, 1963), esp. 42–43.

37. For Russell, Babylonian and Persian ideas were mediated to Second Temple Judaism by Hellenism, which he understands as "a syncretistic system which incorporated the beliefs and legends of older religions not only of the West but also of the East . . . a Greek-philosophized blend of Iranian esotericism with Chaldean astrology and determinism" (ibid., 18–19). Of special note with regard to the Babylonian element in apocalyptic is the not-infrequent appearance of the "tablets of heaven" in apocalyptic literature, which recalls the "tablets of destiny" familiar from Mesopotamian mythology (see Helge Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and the Son of Man* [WMANT 61; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1988], 239–42; Andrei A. Orlav, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* [TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 36–39).

38. This view is typified especially by W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (3rd ed.; ed. H. Gressmann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926).

The one major voice of dissent with regard to this view was that of Gerhard von Rad. Noting that the sole canonical apocalypse in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Daniel, portrays Daniel and his colleagues as *wise men*, von Rad argued that apocalypticism arose from the Wisdom tradition rather than classical prophecy.[39] He also observed the determinism of apocalyptic literature, along with the tendency in many of the apocalypses toward cosmological observation and speculation, and the concern for the periodization of history. All of these seem to point toward a Wisdom background.[40]

Von Rad's proposal initially found little acceptance, but there is now a greater awareness that apocalyptic literature does include a Wisdom element.[41] The difficulty with von Rad's hypothesis lay in his lack of nuance regarding Wisdom literature. He treated all of Wisdom as a single, cohesive tradition, yet it was difficult for most to accept the notion that apocalyptic literature is more akin to Proverbs and Sirach than to Ezekiel and Zechariah.[42] The Wisdom-Apocalyptic perspective received a boost, however, with Michael Stone's essay "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in which he pointed out that several apocalyptic works dwell at length on the creation of various cosmological features that are also the subject of speculation in Wisdom texts.[43] Most, however, have understood the type of wisdom that relates to apocalyptic

39. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (2 vols; Peabody, MA: Prince, 2005), 2:301–15; trans. of *Theologie des alten Testaments* (München: Kaiser, 1957–60).

40. Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 263–83; von Rad further pointed out that certain Egyptian predictive texts that use the familiar *vaticinum ex eventu* form of apocalyptic derive from Egyptian Wisdom circles (280).

41. The Wisdom element is particularly prominent in some of the later apocalypses, such as *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, both of which focus closely on questions of theodicy. Theodicy may also stand in the background of the *Book of Watchers*, which is preoccupied with explaining the origin of evil through the myth of the fallen Watchers (see Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History*, trans. William J. Short [JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997]).

42. As I demonstrate below, with regard to the motif of the interpreting angel—and indeed, angelology in general—the early apocalypses *1 Enoch* and Daniel stand in close continuity with Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8.

43. Michael Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in *Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52. Stone is cautious, however, about following von Rad in concluding that Wisdom was the primary source of apocalyptic. He writes, "In short, what appears to be clear is that in the Wisdom literature which antedates the apocalypses we do not find anything which helps us directly to explain the more curious and less obvious objects of apocalyptic speculation. It seems most probable that part of this speculative concern of the apocalyptic lists derived from Wisdom sources, although the lines of connection may prove difficult to trace. It is impossible, however, to see the Wisdom tradition as the only source from which the interest in these subjects sprang" (438).

literature as *mantic* wisdom, particularly of a Babylonian type. Such apocalypses as *1 Enoch* and Daniel show close affinity with Babylonian divination, the interpretation of dreams and omens, and *ex eventu* prophecy.[44]

The discussion of apocalyptic origins in the last quarter of the twentieth century was dominated by the theses of Otto Plöger and Paul Hanson, as well as reactions against them. Plöger's 1959 work *Theokratie und Eschatologie* sought to reconstruct the social setting of the emergence of apocalypticism in the early postexilic period.[45] According to Plöger, the postexilic community included two disparate social groups: a priestly-theocratic party and a visionary group consisting of the heirs of Second Isaiah. The former group, whose views are represented in the Priestly literature and the works of the Chronicler, could be characterized as having a "realized eschatology" focused on the temple cult, while the latter, whose views are represented in Isaiah 24–27, Zechariah 12–14, and Joel, continued to look forward to a cataclysmic divine intervention in the form of a final, cosmic judgment.[46]

Paul Hanson's 1975 work *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* takes up Plöger's basic historical reconstruction of the social situation of the early postexilic period as

44. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 21; John J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* 94 (1975): 218–34; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 67–88; H.-P. Müller, "Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik," in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* (VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 268–93; James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 52–75; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 184–91, 236–423, 345–613; Orlav, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 23–39. The great similarity between apocalyptic revelation and Babylonian divination is especially relevant to the study of the interpreting angel motif. As a rule, Babylonian diviners interpreted dreams and omens based upon a body of received knowledge that ostensibly traced back to antediluvian times (see Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* [SAAS 19; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008], 67–134). While there may be a point of contact with the interpreting angel motif insofar as this body of received knowledge was originally mediated to humans through semi-divine beings (the *apkallū*), apocalyptic texts typically portray their visionaries as incapable of deciphering their visions without the help of an angel (Dan. 7:15–27; 8:15–26; 12:8; Zech. 1:9–17; 2:1–9; 4:1–6a, 10b–14; 5:1–6:8; see also Karin Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter: The Interpreting Angel in Post-Exilic Prophetic Visions of the Old Testament," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al. [Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007 Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007], 189). Collins further notes the shift from revelation through dreams in Daniel 1–6 and revelation through visions in Daniel 7–12, both of which require supernatural interpretation, and posits that whereas dreams were a common mode of revelation in Gentile (i.e., Mesopotamian) religions, visions are more typical of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Collins, "Court Tales in Daniel," 230).

45. O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman (Richmond: John Knox, 1968).

it relates to the emergence of apocalyptic literature and refines it by applying the social-scientific relative deprivation theory of Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, and Ernst Troeltsch to the postexilic community in Yehud. Combining Plöger's reconstruction of the social groups in Persian period Yehud with Cross's suggestion of a sixth-century origin of the apocalyptic phenomenon via the recrudescence of early Canaanite myth, Hanson traced the development of apocalypticism from prophecy through an intermediary stage he labeled "proto-apocalyptic."[47] These proto-apocalyptic texts include "Third Isaiah" (Isaiah 56–66) and Zechariah 9–14, in which Hanson finds evidence of sectarian conflict and the alienation/marginalization of a once-powerful group of Levites by the new Zadokite hierocracy, the re-mythologization of the divine warrior myth that had been historicized by the earlier prophets (e.g., Second Isaiah), and the projection of hopes for salvation into the eschatological future.[48]

Although the hypotheses of Plöger and Hanson have fallen out of vogue in recent years, nearly every treatment of apocalyptic origins since them defines itself in relation to their works. Hanson in particular has been heavily criticized for his application of social deprivation theory to the postexilic Jewish community and to apocalyptic literature. Stephen Cook points out that one flaw in the use of deprivation theory to explain the origin of Jewish apocalypticism is the assumption that millenarian groups that produce apocalyptic must be oppressed and marginalized in a physical sense.[49] On the

46. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 26–52; see also the helpful overview in Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 6–7. Plöger identifies these two groups as the predecessors of the Maccabees on the one hand and the Hasidim on the other.

47. Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). Cf. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 343–46; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon, 1963); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. L. Wirth and E. Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936); Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. O. Wyon (2 vols.; New York: Harper, 1960).

48. According to Hanson, the "visionaries" among whom apocalyptic arose were the heirs of Second Isaiah, perhaps even the school that collected his oracles and added to them (chs. 56–66; *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 32–46). Having once held power in the preexilic kingdom, they were displaced by the Zadokite group that controlled the temple cult during the postexilic period and whose views were inspired to a significant degree by Ezekiel (especially chs. 40–48) and are reflected in the Priestly literature, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, as well as Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, at least insofar as they supported the temple reconstruction (209–79).

49. As Hanson puts it, "Modern sociologists like Mannheim and Weber have demonstrated convincingly that powerful officials ruling over the religious or political structures of a society do not dream apocalyptic visions of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order of things. Temple priests are not likely candidates for apocalyptic seers" (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 232).

contrary, the cognitive dissonance that gives rise to apocalyptic and millenarian thinking can arise amongst those who actually enjoy considerable wealth and prestige.[50] In fact, the high level of literary artistry, interest in Wisdom concerns, and apparent familiarity with not only ancient Near Eastern but also Hellenistic mythology and literature suggests that the apocalyptic writers were actually highly educated, perhaps even scribes or court "wise men."[51]

Further criticisms of Hanson include his characterization of apocalyptic language as "mythic" in contrast to "historical" prophecy,[52] his identification of eschatology as the central focus and primary identifying characteristic of apocalyptic literature,[53] and his contradistinction between apocalyptic sects and the Zadokite "hierocracy" of the Second Temple period, especially as it is expressed in Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8.[54] On the contrary, it is precisely to the appearance of apocalyptic motifs—including notably the interpreting

50. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 15–16.

51. Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 177–92; see also Collins, "Court Tales in Daniel."

52. See especially Lester L. Grabbe, "Prophetic and Apocalyptic: Time for New Definitions—and New Thinking," in *Knowing the End From the Beginning*, ed. L. Grabbe and R. Haak (JSPSup 46; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 111–18. Grabbe argues that, on the one hand, there is quite a bit of "myth" in classical prophecy, and on the other, apocalyptic groups believe their visions of cosmic judgment and theophany to be quite real, literal, and "historical" (e.g., evangelical expectations of the *parousia* of Christ and the final judgment).

53. Collins acknowledges that apocalyptic may not be equated with eschatology or even with apocalyptic eschatology, although he maintains that eschatology plays an "essential role" in apocalyptic literature (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 10–12). Others, however, identify non-eschatological concerns as the central components of apocalyptic. C. Rowland defines apocalyptic as "the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity," whether of an eschatological nature or otherwise (*The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 14). Similarly, E. P. Sanders defines apocalyptic as the synthesis of the themes of divine revelation and the miraculous reversal of fortunes for oppressed groups ("The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979,* ed. D. Hellholm [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983], 447–59). Paolo Sacchi, on the other hand, identifies the chief concern of the oldest apocalypse, the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36) as the origin of evil as the result of angelic rebellion and corruptio of the earth. He traces the development of this apocalyptic take on theodicy through the Enochic corpus, *2 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch* (Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*).

54. Here see especially Cook (*Prophecy and Apocalypticism*), who traces the origins of apocalyptic to the central Priestly (Zadokite) groups that stand behind Ezekiel 38–39, Zechariah 1–8, and Joel 2–4, all of which he identifies as proto-apocalyptic literature. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 41–42.

angel motif—in Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8 that many point as the source of apocalyptic literature.[55]

The Qumran texts have also entered into the discussion of apocalyptic origins in recent years. Two non-apocalyptic texts from Qumran, 4QMysteries (4Q299–301) and 4QInstruction (4Q415–18), link wisdom with eschatology in a manner reminiscent of apocalyptic literature such as *1 Enoch*.[56] Didactic wisdom, comparable to Proverbs, dominates 4QInstruction, but the book begins by describing God's ordering of the universe and his establishment of (eschatological) judgment for the wicked and salvation for the righteous.[57] Both texts exhort the reader to meditate on "the mystery of existence" (רז נהיה), which appears to refer to knowledge of all of time—past, present, and future—the order of the cosmos, and eschatological judgment.[58] This is revealed wisdom, similar to that which preoccupies much of *1 Enoch* and other extracanonical apocalypses. In these apocalyptic texts, heavenly "mysteries" are revealed to human recipients by angels (usually interpreting angels), which may imply that apocalyptic literature in general, and the interpreting angel motif in particular, reflects a concern for the proper reception and transmission of heavenly wisdom. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, a chief function of the interpreting angel motif is to provide a legitimate alternative to

55. H. Gese, "Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sacharjabuch," *ZTK* 70 (1973): 20–49; North, "Prophecy to apocalyptic, 47–71; Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*; E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of the Watchers, and Apocalyptic* (OTS 35; Leiden: Brill, 1996). Hanson recognizes the similarity between many features of the "hierocratic" prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah 1–8—and here he mentions the interpreting angel specifically—and apocalyptic motifs, yet he attributes these to apocalyptic's use of older literary forms (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 250–51). The problem with this explanation is that, while angelic messengers are indeed a genuinely old feature of Israelite religion, tracing all the way back to Bronze Age Canaanite religion, the specific motif of the angelic guide who interprets visions for a human visionary is not attested at all before the sixth century at the earliest, either in biblical or extrabiblical texts. It appears that the interpreting angel motif, although certainly drawing on earlier Israelite and foreign concepts, originated with apocalyptic (or more precisely, with proto-apocalyptic literature).

56. See Michael A. Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (SVTP 22; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 27–29.

57. See John Strugnell and Daniel Harrington, "4QInstruction," in *Qumran Cave 4.XXIV. Sapiential Texts, Part 2*, ed. John Strugnell, Daniel Harringon, and Torleif Elgvin (DJD 34; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 8. See also Knibb, *Essays*, 27–28.

58. Ibid., 28. Torleif Elgvin understands רז נהיה as "a comprehensive word for God's mysterious plan for creation and history, his plan of man and for redemption of the elect," and he traces this concept back to the figure of wisdom in Proverbs 8, Job 28, and Sirach 24 ("The Mystery to Come: Early Essene Theology of Revelation," in *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Frederick Cryer and Thomas L. Thompson [JSOTSup 290; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998], 113–50).

prohibited sources of revelation and ensure the validity and authority of both the vision and its interpretation by de-emphasizing the human role in revelation.

As the above survey of scholarship shows, the question of apocalyptic origins remains largely unanswered. There is general agreement that apocalyptic literature draws on early imagery, motifs, and traditions, especially mythology. There is also general consensus that apocalypticism is in some way related to prophecy, and most scholars now identify the emergence of apocalyptic motifs and eschatology in postexilic prophecy (for example, Ezekiel; Zechariah 1–8; Joel 2–4). Prophecy, however, is now recognized as only one source—though perhaps the most important source—of apocalyptic thought. Wisdom, especially of a mantic type, appears to have contributed significantly to the apocalyptic tradition. In recent years the role of apocalyptic literature as interpretation of prophecy has attracted interest.[59] The universal pseudonymity of Jewish apocalyptic literature underscores the fact that, at least as the apocalyptic writers have presented it, these visions were not recent revelations to prophetic "heirs" but had been received in the distant past by such biblical figures as Adam, Enoch, and Moses.[60]

It is truly surprising that the development of Jewish angelology has not figured more prominently in the discussion of apocalyptic origins. It is, after all, in apocalyptic literature that angels with personal names first appear (*1 En.* 6:3–8; Dan. 8:16), that a vast hierarchy of angelic beings—both good and evil—appears (*1 En.* 6:7–8; 8:1–4; 20; 40), and that the myth of the "fallen angels" is developed as an explanation for the origin of evil (*1 Enoch* 6–11; 86–88). Angels, moreover, provide a point of contact between Jewish apocalypticism and earlier Israelite religion (at least as expressed in the Hebrew Bible). Continuity or discontinuity between apocalyptic literature and the various corpora of earlier biblical literature provides valuable evidence with regard to the trajectories within Israelite religion that gave rise to apocalypticism. The interpreting angel motif is among the most prominent apocalyptic motifs, and its importance extends beyond angelology and into the very heart of apocalypticism—the break with earlier forms of divine revelation and the use of new modes of revelation. Therefore, in the following chapters

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59. Bauckham writes, "In this [apocalyptic] tradition the transcendent eschatology of post-exilic prophecy was taken up and further developed in a conscious process of reinterpreting the prophets for the apocalyptists' own age. The apocalyptists understood themselves not as prophets but as inspired interpreters of prophecy. . . . The authority of the apocalyptists' message is only derivative from that of the prophets" (*The Jewish World*, 53).

60. See Bauckham, *The Jewish World*, 54–55.

I examine the appearance of interpreting angels in four bodies of Israelite/ Jewish revelatory literature spanning the transition from prophetic literature to apocalyptic literature (Ezekiel 40–48; Zechariah 1–6; *1 Enoch* 17–36; 72–82; Daniel 7–8) in order to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif, thus filling a gap not only in the study of Israelite angelology within the larger field of the study of Israelite religion, but also providing further evidence of the relationship between Israelite prophecy, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature.

Methodology, Definitions, and Structure

This study traces the development of the interpreting angel motif in its early stages, during the period from the sixth–second centuriesBCE. This process entails the detailed historical and literary exegesis of the relevant biblical and extrabiblical texts in which interpreting angels appear, including treatments of standard historical-critical issues for each primary text under consideration. The focus of the textual analysis, however, is on the interpreting angel motif, its function and development. As a result of this focus, not all aspects of the texts receive attention. This analysis of the texts in which the interpreting angel motif appears is conducted throughout in consultation with relevant extrabiblical evidence pertaining to the sociopolitical and religious context of exilic and postexilic Israelite/Jewish religion.

Because the interpreting angel motif did not develop in a historical, cultural, and religious vacuum, it is necessary to include relevant historical/ sociopolitical and comparative religious data in a study of the motif's development. The inclusion of historical and comparative material is all the more important in light of the fact that recent treatments of the pantheon of preexilic Israelite religion see a divine hierarchy patterned after social institutions and structures.[61] I begin my analysis of each of the three major historical periods covered by this study (Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Early Hellenistic) with a brief examination of the historical and sociopolitical background of the primary texts under consideration. The reasons for doing so are twofold. First, the interpreting angel appears in biblical literature immediately following the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the demise of the Davidic monarchy as political rulers in Jerusalem and develops throughout the postexilic period, in which Judah continued to live under foreign imperial rule, rather than native/local rule. One must ask, then, whether

61. See Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

the experience of the loss of the local monarchy and its replacement with imperial administration through appointed governors contributed to the development of a preference for mediated revelation in revelatory literature, of which angelic interpretation is one of the primary examples.[62] Second, in independent studies of the Israelite and Syro-Palestinian pantheons, Lowell K. Handy and Mark S. Smith argue convincingly that West Semitic pantheons (including that of ancient Israel) reflected the social structures of West Semitic societies.[63] As I argue below, major changes in the sociopolitical structure of the ancient Jewish community, namely its absorption into a vast imperial society with a "distant" king who ruled through intermediary bureaucrats, may have contributed to the evolution of a new Jewish conception of the heavenly hierarchy in which divine intermediaries played a greater role.

In each chapter, analysis of the primary biblical/pseudepigraphical texts is followed by a discussion of the religious environments in which they were written through a comparative examination of contemporary religious texts and/or material evidence. This material includes both "canonical"/mythological texts and cultic texts, as well as any pertinent archaeological evidence for religious practices. The purpose of including comparative religious evidence is to provide a context for the development of angelic mediation and interpretation of revelation. Just as preexilic Israelite religion did not develop apart from its context within the religions of the ancient Near East, so also exilic/postexilic Judaism was influenced by the religious environments of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods.[64] For both of these discussions, I use both primary sources (textual and archaeological) and secondary scholarship, with secondary scholarship leading the discussion because of practical considerations of space and scope.

62. In their commentary on Zechariah 1–8, Carol and Eric Meyers briefly suggest that the appearance of an interpreting angel in Zechariah 1–6 is a reflex of the increased importance of messengers and bureaucratic intermediaries in the Persian Empire, of which Yehud was a part (Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Commentary and Introduction* [AB 25B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1987], lviii–lix).

63. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*. For a fuller discussion of the models of Handy and Smith, see below.

64. On the importance of studying Israelite religion within its ancient Near Eastern religious, historical, and cultural context, see Hallo's introductory essay in the first volume of *COS* ("Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis," *COS*, 1:xxiii–xxviii). Here Hallo compares and contrasts the "contextual" method, which appreciates both continuities and discontinuities between biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, with the popular "comparative" method of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries, which often descended into "parallelomania."

The methodology employed in this study is historical and contextual[65] in nature. It assumes and builds upon the major treatments of the evolution of Israelite conceptions of the divine realm, especially those that treat the development of Israelite/Jewish angelology. Chief among these are the studies conducted by Mark S. Smith, Lowell K. Handy, and Lester L. Grabbe. Primarily on the basis of the Ugaritic texts, Smith and Handy have both (independently) reconstructed a four-tiered ancient Israelite pantheon in which angelic beings form the lowest tier of divinity—the messenger gods.[66] While Smith and Handy provide a helpful template for understanding the historic relationship between angels and Yahweh and their position within the ancient Israelite pantheon, Grabbe's works on Jewish religion in the Second Temple period lay the foundation for my own examination of this aspect of postexilic religious belief, as reflected in the literature of the period.[67] While his agenda is much more expansive than that of this study, Grabbe's approach closely corresponds to the one employed here, insofar as he takes into account the sociohistorical background and the surrounding religious environment of Second Temple Judaism.[68]

In order to analyze the functions of interpreting angels in the relevant texts, I draw upon the studies of messengers in the ancient Near East conducted by Samuel A. Meier[69] and, to a much lesser extent, John T. Greene.[70] Greene provides an analysis of the different roles of messengers, their positions within

65. See Hallo, "Ancient Near Eastern Texts," xxiii–xxviii.

66. Although their four-tiered pantheons are virtually identical, Smith patterns his after the four-tiered household structure (בית אב) of ancient Israel (Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, esp. 41–66), whereas Handy posits a celestial bureaucracy after the pattern of the ancient Syro-Palestinian political bureaucracy, especially as evidenced at Ugarit (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*).

67. Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 1: Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (LSTS 47; London: T&T Clark, 2004); Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 2: The Coming of the Greeks: The Early Hellenistic Period (335–175BCE)* (LSTS 68; London: T&T Clark, 2008); Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period* (London: Routledge, 2000).

68. Also helpful in this regard are Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Ziony Zevitt, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001); Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament, Volume 1: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (2nd ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (2 vols.; London: SCM, 1974).

69. Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (HSM 45; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988).

70. John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East* (BJS 169; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

society, and the typical modes/formulae used in their delivery of messages. He also examines a sampling of literature from across the ancient Near East (Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Canaanite), as well as the Hebrew Bible, over a considerable span of time (c. 3000–30BCE).[71] Greene concludes that messengers in the ancient Near East served as extensions of the authority of the one who sent them, to the point of virtually "allowing that person to be in two places at once."[72] While Greene's work has been sharply criticized for a number of shortcomings and deficiencies,[73] his description of the close identification of the messenger with the sender is consistent with the portrayal of messengers, both human and divine, in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature.

Whereas Greene's study surveys texts in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the function(s) of messengers in ancient Near Eastern society,[74] Meier focuses on the different stages in the messenger's delivery of the message. While he also considers a wide array of biblical and comparative evidence, Meier's goal is less to define what constituted a "messenger" in the ancient Near East than to describe the behavior of messengers performing their primary function. Thus, Meier follows the activity through five stages: (1) Preparation/Commissioning, (2) Traveling, (3) Arrival, (4) Presentation, and (5) Post-Delivery.[75] Meier's study is particularly relevant because he treats both human and divine messengers (though only very briefly), whereas Greene more or less restricts his study to human messengers.[76]

71. Ibid., 7–76. As noted by Meier, however, Greene's survey of texts is far less extensive than he claims. Only four examples are adduced for the third millennium, none from prior to 2200BCE, and *none* from later than the sixth centuryBCE, thus seriously calling into question his assertion that "the understanding of what a messenger was and did . . . was everywhere the same," all the way down to the first century (see Samuel A. Meier, "Review of *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East*, by John T. Greene," *JAOS* 110.4 [1990]: 752–53). Greene relies entirely upon English translations of the ancient Near Eastern texts, and the translations he cites are generally quite old (usually more than fifty years old). Thus while his presentation of the ancient Near Eastern data is a helpful guide, it is necessary to consult original language sources and more recent translations.

72. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 7.

73. See especially Meier's review of Greene, cited above.

74. Greene identifies five major types/functions of ancient Near Eastern messengers: (1) ambassador, (2) emissary/courier, (3) harbinger, (4) envoy, and (5) herald (*The Role of the Messenger*, xvi–xvii).

75. Greene also identifies a number of components of the "chain of communication" in the ancient Near East. These include (1) Authorization, (2) Stratification, (3) Mnemonization, (4) Sectionalization, (5) Legitimation/Authentication, (6) Rejection, (7) Identification, and (8) Specialization/Diversification (ibid., xviii–xix). Greene's categories, however, are not limited to stages in the act of delivering a message, but also include general characteristics of messengers and possible responses to them.

An important feature of messenger activity in the ancient Near East, according to Meier and Greene, is the use of basic formulae to indicate the delivery of a message. While these formulae varied slightly depending on the historical period and the culture, consistent features include the identification of the recipient, the identification of the sender, instruction to "say/speak" the message, and the content of the message delivered orally, usually verbatim and often from memory.[77]

In addition to such exegetical and historical concerns, I also give attention throughout to the development of the interpreting angel motif in conjunction with the larger phenomenon of the rise of apocalyptic literature and how the former relates to the latter.[78] My goal is to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif within a trajectory connecting early prophetic literature (Ezekiel 40–48; Zechariah 1–6) with late apocalyptic literature (*1 Enoch*; Daniel 7–8). This trajectory represents only one (or perhaps two) strand(s) within Second Temple Judaism, namely the late prophetic–early apocalyptic tradition.[79] Within other traditions, angelic mediation/

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76. See especially Meier, *The Messenger*, 119–29. Greene, on the other hand, states from the outset that his work "studies the messenger as a link in the chain of human communication, and focuses on the human messenger link of the communication chain of the ANE—although sometimes literary figures such as deities or birds are employed in the literature being examined to show the human messenger's influence on contemporaneous literature" (*The Role of the Messenger*, 3). Thus Greene does include a few examples of divine messengers in his examination of ancient Near Eastern texts, but these are included primarily to aid in defining the nature and functions of human messengers.

77. Greene examines letters from Mari, Babylonia, Assyria, Hatti, Ugarit, Palestine, and Egypt, and finds a high level of consistency in the standard formulae used by messengers (ibid., 45–76). See also Meier, *The Messenger*, 191–201.

78. Of particular significance on this point is the way in which interpreting angels highlight the increasingly cryptic nature of divine revelation. Hanson's influential hypothesis on the prophetic origins of apocalyptic, while its characterization of apocalyptic in terms of conflict between powerful hierocrats and disenfranchised visionaries is largely outdated, remains informative insofar as Hanson points to discernable shifts in late prophetic texts that anticipate apocalyptic (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*). The most important of these shifts, as it relates to this study, is the return to mythological symbolism of God's activities vis-à-vis the world. Similarly, Stephen L. Cook, following Gunkel, associates apocalyptic with the eschatologization of traditional mythology ("Mythological Discourse in Ezekiel and Daniel and the Rise of Apocalypticism in Israel," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic, and Their Relationships*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and James H. Charlesworth [JSPSup 46; London: T&T Clark, 2003], 85–106; cf. Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12,* trans. K. William Whitney Jr. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006]). Also important to this study is Bauckham's definition of apocalyptic as interpretation of prophecy, since the chief "interpreters" in these texts are the *interpreting* angels (see Bauckham, *The Jewish World*, 54–55).

interpretation did not become normative and, in some cases, may have been the object of polemic.

In order to accomplish the primary goal of this study, the tracing of the development of the interpreting angel motif, my analysis of the primary texts will focus on the level of identification/differentiation between the angelic interpreter and its sender (Yahweh), the apparent role of Yahweh in the process of revelation, the different activities of the angelic interpreter in the process of revelation, the actions of the human visionary, and the continuities/discontinuities between the significant elements in these passages and other biblical and nonbiblical texts.

<center>DEFINITIONS</center>

Angel. Generally speaking, "angels" are messengers. They are chiefly associated with the Hebrew term מלאך, which may refer to either human or divine messengers, although a majority of instances in the Hebrew Bible refer to human messengers.[80] Grammatically, מלאך is a *mem*-prefixed noun of the *maqtāl* pattern—which usually signifies an object or person through which an action is carried out—based on the Semitic root *L'K,* "to send a messenger with a message."[81] Thus, a מלאך is one who delivers a message from one

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79. The separation of apocalyptic literature into two basic types, "historical" apocalypses (e.g., Dan. 7–12) and "otherworldly journey" apocalypses (e.g., *1 En.* 1–36; 72–82), is common in scholarly literature (see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination,* 6–7). Within the texts under consideration in this study, Ezekiel 40–48 and *1 En.* 17–36; 72–82 stand in basic continuity, while Zechariah 1–6 and Daniel 7–8 correspond more closely. In the former, the role of the angel as guide stands alongside and at times overshadows his role as interpreter, while in the later the angel is primarily an interpreter of visions.

80. Samuel A. Meier, "Angel I," *DDD* 46. However, the distribution of divine versus human messengers is not even across the Hebrew Bible. The majority of *mal'ākim* in Genesis and Exodus, for example, are divine, while the majority in the Deuteronomistic History are human.

81. J.-L. Cunchillos, "La'ika, mal'āk et Melā'kāh en sémitique nord-occidental," *RSF* 10 (1982): 153–60. While the verb *l'k* is not attested in Hebrew, it does appear in Ugaritic texts with this meaning in reference to both divine (*KTU* 1.2.1.11) and human (*KTU* 2.33.36) messengers, who are likewise denoted by the noun *mlak.* The noun *ml'k* in reference to a messenger appears twice in the eighth-century BCE Aramaic Sefire inscriptions (*KAI* 224.8), and four times in Judean Aramaic inscriptions (see *DNWSI* 2:629). A *ml'k* appears in a third-century BCE Phoenician inscription from Ma'ṣūb as a "messenger of *ml'k 'štrt*" (*KAI* 19.2–3). There is also one debatable instance of Akkadian *mālaku* as "messenger" in an Old Babylonian text (*CT* XXIX, 21.19). This one possible Akkadian *mālaku* notwishstanding, West Semitic *ml'k* generally falls into the same semantic domain as the Akkadian *mār šipri* (Sumerian SUKKAL; KIN.GI4.A), which could likewise apply to both human and divine messengers (Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (HSM 45; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 1–12).

party to another. The challenge of defining "angel," however, is complicated by the fact that there are numerous examples of מלאכים in the Hebrew Bible who engage in official tasks other than carrying messages.[82] This observation extends to both human and divine "messengers," who engage in such actions as guarding (1 Sam. 19:11), saving (Gen. 19:1-22), and killing (2 Kgs. 19:35). As Greene notes, however, messengers commonly engaged in tasks that went well beyond the delivery of messages.[83] Their primary function was the extension of the authority and presence of the one who sent them, and this extension of authority could include various deeds in addition to the oral delivery of a message. He cites as examples the sending of messengers to find the contraband booty from Jericho in the tent of Achan (Josh. 7:22-23), the sending of messengers by Joab to seize Abner so that he could murder him (2 Sam. 3:26), Hezekiah's sending of a messenger to deliver tribute and do obeisance before Sennacherib,[84] Sheshonq I's sending of a statue of Osiris with his messenger to erect it in Abydos,[85] and Re's sending of Hathor to destroy humanity.[86] One could also perhaps add Abraham's sending of his "servant" (עבד) to find and bring back a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24), since Greene shows that עבד could also be used to describe messengers.[87]

Further clouding the matter is the translation of Hebrew מלאך as Greek ἄγγελος in the LXX and other Jewish and Christian texts. The semantic domain of ἄγγελος is roughly the same as that of מלאך, but the LXX uses ἄγγελος to translate a number of other terms for divine beings in the Hebrew Bible that in all likelihood were not originally understood as "angels" but as gods or protective spirits. Thus in several instances the LXX translates ἄγγελος for Hebrew בני אלהים (lit: "sons of God"; Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1), which is a well-attested epithet for the assembly of the gods in Ugaritic texts. It does not refer specifically to divine messengers or even to lesser/subservient deities per se, but actually designates the group of deities who exercised authority on heaven and earth and had the power to grant kingship of the gods. Similarly, the divine guardians/protective spirits known as כרובים and שרפים in the Hebrew Bible eventually came to be understood as classes of angels in Jewish

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82. Cunchillos, "La'ika," 153

83. John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East* (BJS 169; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 134; see also Meier, *The Messenger*, 3–4.

84. *COS* 2.119B: 303.

85. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 30–31.

86. One could question Greene's identification of Hathor as a messenger here, since he does so solely on the basis of the use of the word "sent" to describe Re's actions toward her (ibid., 38–39).

87. Ibid., 122.

and Christian traditions, and although they belong to the same "class" of low-level divine beings as the divine מלאכים, they originally were a distinct type of divine being from messenger deities.[88] Following the models for the ancient Israelite pantheon put forth by Smith and Handy and the analyses of the roles of messengers in the ancient Near East provided by Greene and Meier, for the purpose of this study I define "angel" as any subservient divine being that acts as an intermediary between two or more parties or acts as an emissary of a high god (for example, Yahweh) in some other mediating or representative fashion.[89] In truth, the line between minor god and angel is often blurred, especially when the word מלאך or ἄγγελος is applied to a being that does not act in any sort of intermediary fashion.[90] But for the purpose of studying the interpreting angel motif, a restriction of the term to divine intermediaries is appropriate.

Interpreting angel. Because there has been so little scholarly writing on the interpreting angel motif, the resources available for constructing a working definition are not nearly as plentiful as for angels in general. The term "interpreting angel," or as it is often called, *angelus interpres*, is somewhat misleading, for although these angels are chiefly defined by their role as interpreters of visions, they often engage in non-interpretive actions as well. The most common of these other roles is that of guide. Martha Himmelfarb has written the definitive works on the motif of the guided tour of hell and of heaven in apocalyptic literature. [91] Although her focus is on the cosmology

88. See E. Theodore Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Chico, CA.: Scholars, 1980), 118–19; 175–86.

89. Greene points out that messengers were not necessarily of low social status, but could include very high-ranking bureaucrats (*The Role of the Messenger*, 41). The same is true in mythological texts, where one occasionally finds major deities acting as messengers for other gods or goddesses, as Anu does in *Enuma Elish* II.95–105 (*Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature,* trans. Benjamin R. Foster [3rd ed.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2006], 449). Likewise, Rofé argues that some major Canaanite deities function as angels in the Hebrew Bible, such as Resheph as an angel of pestilence in Hab. 3:5; Deut. 32:24 (*The Belief in Angels*, 1:128–54). Nevertheless, within the postexilic texts under consideration here, monotheism or something very close to it seems to be presumed, and all of the divine beings other than Yahweh belong to a lower level of divinity. This is true as well of the named angels/archangels in *1 Enoch* and Daniel 7–12, which, although often occupying the highest levels of the angelic hierarchy, are still far inferior to Yahweh and are defined by their service to Yahweh.

90. One thinks especially of the portrayal of angels as priests in the heavenly temple at Qumran in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q403) (see Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1985]).

91. Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

indicated in the descriptions of hell, heaven, and the cosmos in apocalyptic literature, she traces the motif of the angel-guided tour back to Ezekiel 40–48, which is also where I seek the origins of the interpreting angel motif.[92]

The defining characteristic of the interpreting angel is that of providing further explanation of unclear, confusing, or overwhelming revelations, usually visions, to a human recipient. Thus, Heidt prefers to use the term "exegete angel" in order to underscore the role of the angel in uncovering the true meanings of symbolic revelations.[93] For the purpose of this study, I define an "interpreting angel" as any angel that interprets, explains, elaborates, or further clarifies a vision or dream for a human recipient. What distinguishes an interpreting angel from other angels is the interplay between seer, vision/dream, and angel/interpreter. An interpreting angel engages in conversation with the seer, in which the angel communicates the meaning of a vision/dream or some specific feature of the vision/dream. Often this interpretation/explanation occurs in the form of a vision question-and-answer dialogue between the angel and the seer, but it need not necessarily take this form.

STRUCTURE

This study consists of five chapters. *Chapter One* is the present introduction, which provides an overview of the interpreting angel motif and the textual evidence for it, the history of scholarship on the interpreting angel, a review of the history of scholarship on the origins of apocalyptic literature, and a statement of the goals, methodology, and definitions of this study. *Chapter Two* consists of detailed analysis of the interpreting angel motif as it first appears in Ezekiel 40–48,[94] in dialogue with comparative texts and against the background of the sociopolitical history of the Neo-Babylonian period. *Chapter Three* does the same for the interpreting angel motif in Zechariah 1–6,[95] in which the transition from prophetic to apocalyptic literature appears to have begun. *Chapter Four* examines the maturation of the interpreting angel motif

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92. In Ezekiel 40–48 the interpreting angel motif and the angel-guided tour motif are really one and the same. One could speak of the angel-guided tour as a sub-motif of the interpreting angel motif, since such tours generally involve the interpretation of various sights by the angelic guide, while there are instances of angelic interpretation that do not involve guided tours (e.g., Zech. 1:7—2:5; 4:1-6a, 10b-14; 5:5—6:8; Dan. 7:16-27; 8:15-26).

93. See William George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology Second Series 24; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 59–62.

94. Specifically, Ezek. 40:1-37, 43-49; 41:1—43:6; 44:1-4; 46:19—47:12.

95. Zech. 1:7—2:5; 4:1-6a, 10b-14; 5:1—6:8.

in the early Hellenistic period texts *1 Enoch* 17–36; 72–82; and Daniel 7–8.[96] *Chapter Five* concludes the study by summarizing its findings and presenting a reconstruction of the development of the interpreting angel motif.

96. Dan. 7:15-27; 8:15-26. Due to the pervasiveness of angelic interpretation throughout the Enochic texts, treatment of this material will be of a more general nature than with the biblical material. The Enochic material generally attests to the development which took place between the time of Zechariah 1–6 and that of Daniel 7–8, and therefore it is important for shedding light on this important period of development.