

PAGAN ANGELS  
IN GREEK INSCRIPTIONS:  
A RECONSIDERATION OF THE EVIDENCE

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the MA (Hons) by Research in Greek

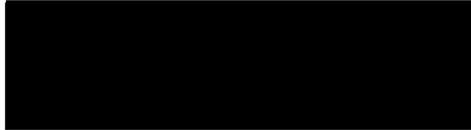
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## Statement of authorship

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.



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11 February, 2012

# Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to test whether references to an *angelos* in a number of Greek inscriptions from Roman Asia Minor and elsewhere are influenced by early Hebrew and Jewish notions of the divine messenger, early Christian writings and thought, Classical Greek ideas, a combination of these, or none of them. An article by A.A.R. Sheppard a generation ago was the initial stimulus for this investigation.

In Part A the three survey chapters deal first with the *angelos* appearances in Hebrew and Jewish literature, where its divine status and primary role of messenger are established. Pluralities of angels occur occasionally. Their role expands to that of guide, protector, interpreter, and revealer. The *angelos* continues to act as messenger in the NT and early Christian writings. It functions also as deliverer and instructor. The idea of evil spiritual powers is introduced. Christ is represented as an angel in some texts. In Classical Greek literature two gods are identified as messengers, Iris and Hermes. Of these, Hermes has greater profile, having other functions beside that of messenger; and he is seen as a cunning and inventive god.

Part B is the heart of the thesis, where the relevant *angelos* inscriptions are introduced. Ten inscriptions (or related groups of them) are examined. The result of this investigation is that some inscriptions showed no external influence, the *angelos* who is acting as a divine messenger being indigenous. They showed no evidence of borrowing, with the possible exception of one which speaks of the 'angels of fire.' One group of texts appears to be Christian, but incorporates some pagan elements. One text may incorporate some non-standard Jewish ideas. Several of the inscriptions are decisively pagan.

The result of our investigation is that there is indeed some attestation of angelic figures which reflect no influence of Christian or Jewish ideas; and because they are found generally in rural parts of Asia Minor, they cannot be claimed to reflect Classical Greek notions, except at most very indirectly. Accordingly, the thesis concludes that these epigraphic texts should definitely be classed as indigenous. Their small numbers, restricted in time and to and mostly to non-urban localities mainly in Western Asia Minor, all point to these 'pagan angels' being a

phenomenon in the consciousness of villagers during the Roman Imperial period. Sheppard's thesis of Jewish influence on these epigraphic texts is to be dismissed.

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## Abbreviations

Ancient Greek literary sources and Biblical and related texts are generally abbreviated according to standard styles, as in LSJ, BDAG, etc. Abbreviations of journals generally follow those used in *L'Année Philologique* or *Elenchus Biblicus Bibliographicus*.

*ANF* - A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (rev. C. Coke), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The writings of the Fathers down to 325 CE*, vol 1, (repr. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1981)

*BE* – *Bulletin Epigraphique*

*IBurdurMus* - G.H.R. Horsley, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Burdur Archaeological Museum (BIAA Monograph 34; London, 2007)*

*I.Stratonikeia* - M.C. Sahin, *Die Inschriften von Stratonikeia* (2 vols; *IK* 21, 22.1, 22.2; Bonn, Habelt, 1981-1982)

*LSJ* – Liddell/Scott/Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon* (9<sup>th</sup> edn with Rev. Suppl., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996)

*NBC* – D.A. Carson et al. (edd.), *New Bible Commentary* (Leicester, Intervarsity Press, new edn, 1994)

*New Docs* – G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents illustrating early Christianity*, vols. 1-5 (Sydney, Macquarie University, 1980-89)

*NT* – New Testament (UBS 4<sup>th</sup> edition)

*OCB* - B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan (edd.), *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York, OxfordUP, 1993)

*OCD* – S. Hornblower/A. Spawforth (edd.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Oxford, OUP, 1996, revised 2003)

*OT/LXX* – Old testament/Septuaginta (Rahlfs' edition)

*OTP* - J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphica* (New York, Doubleday, 1983, 1985)

*Peake* - M.Black/H.H. Rowley (edd.), *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (1919; rev. edn Walton-on-Thames, Nelson, 1962, repr. 1980)

*PGM* – K. Preisendanz (ed.), *Papyri Graeci Magici* (3 vols; Leipzig, 1928, 1931, 1941)

Strong - J. Strong, *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, in *Comprehensive Concordance of the Bible* (1890, repr. Iowa Falls, World Bible Publishers, n.d.)

*TDNT* – G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (edd.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (E.T. ed. G.W. Bromiley, 10 vols; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964, repr. 1985)