



HUMSAM PRISEN

Divine Intermediaries in Coptic Apocrypha

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Coptic Apocrypha are full of supernatural beings who serve as mediators between human beings and God. Angels, archangels, cherubs, and seraphs, as well as more or less divinized human beings, such as Enoch or Melchizedek, get increasingly important roles, both as God's agents and as intercessors on behalf of humanity. Over the centuries in which Coptic was in use as a living literary language, apocryphal texts were produced, copied, and read in which biblical characters and events are elaborated upon by extending existing biblically based narratives or by creating new ones set in the same storyworld. The various divine intermediaries, and especially angels and archangels, are among the characters that are elaborated upon the most in Coptic apocrypha, and this paper will explore their role in this literature, and among those who read it, using perspectives from the history of religions, literary theory, media studies, and the cognitive sciences.