Preface and Acknowledgements

I fell into this project quite by accident. While consulting a Syriac manuscript of John's Gospel in the British Library for reasons that had nothing to do with divination, I encountered the strange statements that are the subject of this book. They fascinated but puzzled me, and once it became obvious they had nothing to do with what I was working on at the time, I took a few notes and promptly filed the notes away. I knew next to nothing about *hermêneiai*, save what I had gleaned from sparing references in some manuals on New Testament textual criticism. I did not recognize the true nature of the manuscript on first look.

Some years later I was editing a volume of collected essays that included an article on Greek *hermêneia* manuscripts of John. That article was concerned solely with the New Testament text, not oracular statements or lot divination. But while editing the article something prompted a recollection of the Syriac material I had seen a few years before. It occurred to me to pull out my old notes on the manuscript (London, British Library, Add. 17,119) so that I could compare what I had seen in it with the assorted Greek and Greco-Coptic fragments that had been published in scattered journals. What I found drew me to study the manuscript and other lot divination texts more closely. This book, like many works of scholarship, is the outgrowth of a series of tangential journeys, reporting what I have found while looking for something else.

Preliminary versions of portions of this material have been presented in different conferences and symposia. I am appreciative of the valuable conversations and helpful feedback those opportunities occasioned as I was developing aspects of this research. Some of those essays have appeared in print and are cited in the notes and the bibliography.

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their own work but by their collegial investment in others' success.

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Like every scholar working on ancient manuscripts, I am indebted to the libraries that preserve them and to their staffs who so ably support the work of those who research them. The various libraries that have <code>hermêneia</code> manuscripts used in this study are credited in Chapter Three and elsewhere in the book, accordingly. I appreciate the assistance those libraries have rendered me, in answering queries, supplying digital images, and granting permission to publish the materials. In particular, I am grateful to the British Library in London and the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, where I spent very pleasant days examining some of the key manuscripts directly. I have appreciated their continued assistance and the permission they granted to publish images and other material from the manuscripts in this book.

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