

*Anthony Alcock*

The Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts of this verse read “When the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, ...”.

The Bohairic text of the same verse, as printed in Lagarde and Peters<sup>1</sup>, reads

ΕΤΑΥΗΔΥ ΗΧΕΗΙΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΗΤΕΦΗΟΥ† ΕΗΩΕΡΙ ΗΤΕΗΡΩΗΙ ΧΕΗΔΗΕΥ ...

For ΗΙΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Peeters gives the variant reading ΗΖΑΗΩΗΡΙ (Ms A<sup>mg</sup> [pr m]) in the critical apparatus.

The indefinite article of this reading cannot be based on the Septuagint text, where the definite article is used, but it may conceivably be due to a misunderstanding of the structure of the Hebrew בני האלהים.

There are three ways of understanding the phrase “sons of God”:

1. that they were fallen angels, a view common in the 1st cent AD;
2. that they were the line of Seth, a view promoted by Augustine to counter the earlier interpretation;
3. that they were antediluvian magistrates and rulers.

The Bohairic version disrupts the linguistic symmetry of the other versions and is, as far as I know, the only one to align itself explicitly with the first of the interpretations given above. It apparently does so in line with a pre-Augustinian tradition, according to which the phrase meant “angels of God”. This is the clear but implicit meaning of the phrase in Job 2,1, where Satan joins the “sons of God” when they present themselves to the Lord. The same interpretation can also be found in the intertestamental pseudepigrapha (e.g. Enoch 6,1, where the leaders of the angelic rapists are specified by name) and writers such as Josephus and Philo.

### Bibliographie

Lagarde, de P., *Der Pentateuch: Koptisch*, Osnabrück 1967.

Peeters, M., *A Critical Edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch*, Atlanta 1985.

Anthony Alcock  
Zobelmühlenweg 28  
34123 Kassel  
Deutschland  
E-Mail: anthony.alcock@arcor.de

<sup>1</sup> Lagarde, *Pentateuch*, and Peeters, *Edition* (the latter kindly scanned for me by Mark Smith).