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The Fall of Angels in Ethiopian Tradition*

Abstract

Two episodes can be referred to under the rubric of the Fall of Angels, a narrative that was particularly popular in Ethiopic literature. One deals with the descent of the “sons of God”, understood as angels, to earth and their cohabiting with “daughters of men” (*Gen* 6:2-4). This moral “fall”, present in the *Book of Enoch*, was, however, less popular with the Ethiopian public than the other fall of certain angels from heaven as a result of their following Satan who had rebelled against God. The two main texts for this version are the anonymous *Miracles of Jesus* and *Aksimaros* by Pseudo-Epiphanius of Cyprus. Both were translated from Arabic, and both influenced other Ethiopic compositions, to the extent that accounts of the fall of angels can be found in several original Ethiopic texts.

The notion of the Fall of Angels in the religious imagery of both Christianity and Judaism is not of itself univocal. There are two episodes that are referred to under this rubric, and one must therefore specify at the outset which of these is being discussed.

The first episode, which seems to have attracted the most attention on the part of scholars, is the well known, albeit somewhat enigmatic, if not plain garbled, passage in *Genesis* 6:2-4.¹

* Abbreviations used: ABAW – Abhandlungen der Philosophisch-philologischen Classe der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, München; *EAE* – *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. S. Uhlig, Wiesbaden 2003-; EMMML – The Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa (& Collegeville, MN); PO – Patrologia Orientalis, Paris, Turnhout; *RHPR* – *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, Strasbourg.

¹ A. Lods, “La chute des anges: origine et portée de cette spéculation”, *RHPR*, 7 (1927), pp. 295–315; F. Dexinger, *Sturz der Göttersöhne oder Engel vor der Sintflut? Versuch eines Neuverständnisses von Genesis 6, 2-4 unter Berücksichtigung der religionsvergleichenden und exegetischgeschichtlichen Methode*, (Wiener Beiträge

“...(2) the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. ... (4) The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.”²

In this passage we do not find the word “angels”, nor the name of any specific angel, but only the expression “Sons of God” (Hebr. *bāney ha-ʿelôhîm*). These, however, were traditionally most often equated with angels, even in Antiquity, and such understanding can be found in the *Book of Enoch* (see below). It is true, there is another tradition that sees in the “Sons of God” the descendants of Seth, the third, and righteous, son of Adam. This is the case, for instance, in the Ethiopic *Book* (or *Conflict*) of *Adam and Eve*³ (14th century⁴), in which they are referred to as “Children of God” (*Däqiqä ʿĀgziʾabəhēr*; ደቂቀ: አግዚአብሔር). However, this usage is rather rare, while the angelic interpretation was more frequently adopted.

Perhaps the equating of the “Sons of God” who took Cainite women as wives, with “fallen angels”, was prompted by the presence of the word *nəphîlîm* in the text of *Gen* 6:4. It is usually translated as “giants” but in the epoch of the Second Temple it seems to have been understood by the Jews, who at the time were gradually adopting Aramaic, as the passive participle of the Aramaic verb *nəphal* – “to fall”, and thus meaning “the fallen ones” or “rebels, apostates”.⁵

The interpretation of the fall, or sinning, of the angels is almost certainly not the one that was intended by the author of the quoted text. In the epoch when the *Book of Genesis* was composed, not to mention the earlier period when the traditions it contains were transmitted orally, angelology was hardly developed. In general, it is assumed that the early Jewish tradition of the First Temple period did not know of any fallen or evil angels, such as the Devil. The appearance of these in later Jewish (and subsequently Christian) tradition is thought to stem from the influences of the Iranian dualistic concepts,

zur Theologie, 13), Wien 1966; M. Delcor, “Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l’origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l’apocalyptique juive: histoire des traditions”, *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 190 (1976), pp. 3–53.

² *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, London 1982 (= 1978).

³ *Gädlä Addam: Der Kampf Adams (gegen die Versuchungen des Satans), oder: Das christliche Adambuch des Morgenlandes*; aethiopischer Text hrsg. v. E. Trümp, (ABAW, 15:3 = Denkschriften 52), München 1881, p. 102,21; an English transl.: *The Book of Adam and Eve also called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, transl. from the Ethiopic ... by S.C. Malan, London 1882, p. 118.

⁴ I. Guidi, *Storia della letteratura etiopica*, Roma 1932, p. 32. The dates which can be found in M. Stone, *A history of the literature of Adam and Eve*, Atlanta GA 1992, p. 98, and M. de Jonge & J. Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and related literature*, (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha), Sheffield 1997, p. 88, the sixth or the eleventh century, are respectively impossible or hardly probable for a work translated from Arabic. S. Weninger, “Addam: Gädlä Addam”, *EAE*, 1, 2003, p. 74, does not provide any dating.

⁵ *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures...*, transl. by S.P. Tregelles, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982 (= 1949), p. 556.

that began to penetrate Jewish religious thought in the period of the Second Temple, that is, after the return from Babylonian captivity.

The earliest expression of the idea of the fall of angels, understood as sin, is in the *Book of Enoch*, of the second century BC, in which it is an important topic. Chapter 6, part of the so-called *Book of the Watchers*, tells of the lust of angels, the “sons of heaven” (6,2; *wəḥudä sämayat*; ውሐደ፡ ሰማያት፡), for the beautiful daughters of men. Under the leadership of Semyaza, and 16 other angel chiefs, 200 angels descended on Mount Hermon and took the daughters of men as wives. Children born of these mixed marriages became giants (*rāʾäyt*; ረዕዮት፡). Angel Azaz’el taught people things that were previously unknown to them, such as making swords, knives and breastplates, or the art of beautifying the eyelids, and other “abominable” skills, as well as astrology. All these developments apparently led to a general decline in morality and even bloodshed (ch. 8 & 9). Eventually, Michael, Surafel and Gabriel, who had observed the depravity growing on earth, brought the matter to God who decided to put an end to the depraved human race. An exception was made for the righteous Noah, who was warned by archangel Uriel and was thus saved from the Flood. Raphael, on the other hand, was commanded to bind Azaz’el’s hand and foot, and to cast him in a place of darkness in the desert, where he was to stay until the day of the Last Judgement. A similar punishment was meted out to Semyaza by Michael (ch. 10).⁶

In Ethiopic literature, in addition to the *Book of Enoch*, the fall of angels understood as sin is mentioned in the *Glory of the Kings* (ክብረ፡ ነገሥት፡), chapter 100, where it is said that angels committed fornication with the daughters of Cain, for which they were sentenced to the terror of Sheol until the day of redemption.⁷

It is, however, not this sinful fall of angels that is the main theme of the present paper, but another, which, as it appears, was more rarely explored in Jewish and Christian literature. This theme has a scriptural background too (to which we shall return), but not one that corresponds with the chronology of Biblical history. Our main concern is the story of the mutiny of some angels, led by Satan, and their subsequent fall as a result of God’s punishment. Since according to certain traditions this episode occurred during the week of creation, it might fit into the Creation account in the first two chapters of the *Book of Genesis*. Obviously, however, it is not present there: the story is apocryphal in Catholic terminology, or pseudepigraphical, in the Protestant equivalent.

One may say that the difference between the two versions of the Fall of Angels is that the former is moral, while the latter is more physical, if this term can be applied to the world of angels.

⁶ See too E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, its Origin and Development*, London 1949, pp. 107–108.

⁷ *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek...*, a complete transl. of the *Kebra Nagast* with intr. by E.A. Wallis Budge, London 1922, p. 187.

If, in general, this “physical” fall of angels was rarely a topic in Jewish and Christian literatures, the opposite is true of the Ethiopic literature, where the motive became quite popular.

As a template for this story we take the version told in the Ethiopic apocryphal composition entitled *The Miracles of Jesus*.⁸

Having created the world, God, by uttering a word by mouth, brought into being hosts of angels, which were divided into various groups: the Four Angels of the throne, the Cherubs and the Seraphs, as well as the ten ranks (*mā'arag*; መዓርግ፡) of other angels, the first of these being Archangels, of whom there were ten in number. Now, the chief of the ten was an angel by the name of Satana'el (Eth. *Sat(ə)na'el*, ሳጥናኤል፡), whose duty was to bring the praises of the other angels to God. Soon he realised that he was created of spirit and light, and asked himself: “Why do I pay homage to somebody else? Why am I not glorified myself?” Then he, Sabelyanos (Eth. *Säbälyanos* or *Säbläyanos*; ሰብልያኖስ፡; here his second name is introduced) talked to other angels, suggesting that they now should themselves create new angels without God's help, and blaspheming: “If we have a creator, as you say, let him degrade me and cast me down from this position (of mine).” As his *hubris* grew, he presented himself as the creator, and demanded that the angels worship him. Immediately he was cast down from his position of glory and honour, and many other angels fell (ወድቁ፡) along with him.

Then Gabriel, the Angel of Peace, shouted: “Let us remain in our rule, in love, and let us be strong in (our) faith, (in) fear of God and in purity!” He thus appealed to the angels to the effect that those who hearkened to him would remain in their positions, while those who did not would be thrown down and fall together with Diablos (here the third name for Satan is used). Farther on, we learn that the fallen angels became impure spirits (*mānafəst rəkusan*; መናፍስት፡ ርኩሳን፡) of various kinds. Some of them fell in the air, some on to the earth, others fell down as low as to ʾEnṭortos (አንጦርጦስ፡), the lowest region. They remained where they had fallen forever. Their fall took place on the third hour of the sixth day.⁹

The story, together with the whole apocryphon *The Miracles of Jesus*, is not an original Ethiopic composition but was translated from Arabic in the 14th century. The Arabic original is known as the *Apocryphal Gospel of John*.¹⁰ Although the *Miracles* is a *New Testament* apocryphon, it nevertheless includes some introductory chapters with *Old Testament* protological content.

⁸ *Les Miracles de Jésus*, texte éthiopien publié et traduit par S. Grébaut, (PO, 12:4 = 60), Turnhout 1985 (= Paris 1917); see too W. Witakowski, “The Miracles of Jesus: an Ethiopian Apocryphal Gospel”, *Apocrypha: Revue Internationale des Littératures Apocryphes*, 6 (1995), pp. 279–298.

⁹ *Les Miracles*, pp. 564–566.

¹⁰ *Iohannis Evangelium apocryphum arabice*, ... ed., latine convertit ... I. [= Giovanni] Galbati, (Antiquitatis Christianae ex Oriente monumenta), Mediolani 1957; a Swedish translation: *Det apokryfiska Johannesevangeliet*, i översättning från den enda kända arabiska handskriften i Ambrosiana, med inledning och anmärkningar av Oscar Löfgren, Stockholm 1967.

The name of the lowest region, *Ἅντορος* (አንቦሮስ) is, of course, a derivate of the Greek “Tartaros”, the name of the lowest part of Hades. According to Greek mythology, it was here that the likes of Tantalus or Sisyphus dwelled, namely those condemned of the most hideous crimes, at least in the eyes of the gods. The word *tartaros* is used in the *New Testament* in the *Second Epistle of Peter* 2:4, and in one way or another it found its way into the *Apocryphal Gospel of John*¹¹. Interestingly, the Ethiopian translator in his account of the fall of angels did not use the word that is found in 2 *Peter* 2:4 in the Ethiopic version of the *New Testament*, which is *ṣaʿarä dāyn* (ጸዕረ፡ ደይን) – lit. “condemnation torment”, but simply copied the word he found in the Arabic text.

Almost the same story appears in the *Homily on the Fall of Satan* attributed to John the Evangelist, which is part of the *Homiliary of Gabriel* (ድርሳኑ፡ ገብርኤል), translated from Arabic perhaps in the 15th century (if not earlier).¹² This alleged authorship makes sense when we recall that the Arabic original of the *Miracles of Jesus* is named the *Apocryphal Gospel of John*. It would thus appear that the transmission of the material on the fall of angels between the latter and the *Homily* took place in Arabic.

Yet another composition that practically repeats the passage of the *Miracles*, is the *Vienna Protology*,¹³ probably dating from the mid-18th century. This is an anonymous and untitled text, which retraces the primordial history of mankind up to Seth. It is based on two main sources, one of them being the *Miracles*, and the other the so far unpublished text, called the *Beginning of the Faith* (ፒንቲ፡ ሃይማኖት), probably from the 17th century. This latter work is an apocryphon (pseudepigraph) belonging to the genre of “rewritten Bible”.

In the story of the fall of angels in these three compositions, darkness plays an important role. Without explicitly saying so, the author employs it to explain why some of the angels were practically cheated to follow Satana’el. Until the moment of their mutiny, they simply had not been able to recognise their creator, because light was not yet created. Once it was, the angels rejoiced at now being able to see their true creator. We may note that the author did not have in his mind the Biblical account of creation, where light is said to be created right after the heaven and earth, but rather the composition that we turn to next.

A different account of the fall of angels is presented in the *Aksimaros* (አክሲማሮስ), i.e. *Hexaëmeron*, attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus (d. 403).¹⁴ This too is a composition translated

¹¹ But not via the Arabic translation of the New Testament, in which another word is used.

¹² Samuel Yalew, “Dərsanä Gäbräʾel”, *EAe*, 2, 2005, p. 138, says that the oldest ms. is from the 18th century, which is hardly correct. C. Conti Rossini (“Manoscritti ed opere abissine in Europa”, *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei: Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 5, vol. 8, 1899, p. 611) lists among the manuscripts known in the 19th century, at least one from the 14th or 15th century, and several from the 17th century.

¹³ W. Witakowski, “On Adam and Satana’el, or *The Vienna Protology*”, [in:] *Miscellanea Patristica Reverendissimo Domino Marco Starowieyski septuagenario, Professori illustrissimo, viro amplissimo ac doctissimo oblata*, Warszawa 2007 = *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 20:2 (2007), pp. 329–342.

¹⁴ *Das Hexaëmeron des Pseudo-Epiphanius: Aethiopischer Text verglichen mit dem arabischen Originaltext und deutscher Übers.* v. E. Trumpp, (ABAW, 16:2), München 1882, pp. 167–254.

from Arabic, most probably in the epoch of the Emperor Zār'a Ya'qob (1434–1468).¹⁵ The order of creation is different from that in the Bible: it is narrated not day by day, but element by element,¹⁶ and is much fuller, as might be expected in a composition of hexaemeral character. Pseudo-Epiphanius begins with the creation of fire, of which not only heaven was made, but also angels, called “burning spirits” (*mānafəstā nədudan*; መናፍስተ: ንፋስን።).¹⁷ According to the anonymous author, the angels were created on the first day.¹⁸ The first of them was called “Beautiful Angel” (*mäl'äk šännay*; መልአክ: ሠናይ), to whom ten hosts of angels were subordinated. The fall itself is narrated in a separate part, ascribed to one Gregory (possibly the Theologian, if the attribution is at all real¹⁹). The latter says that the angels had free will. The Beautiful Angel, who had been granted the highest rank, for three days served God as he was expected to, that is by bringing the praises to the Trinity. However, on the fourth day he decided to discontinue his service. God was patient and did not punish the Beautiful Angel immediately. The latter, however, together with his hosts, just out of his hatred for God eventually started a war against the army of heaven. Then God removed from the mutinous angels their “nature of light, splendour and beauty” (*bərhanawitā wä-šädalä wä-šənä*; ብርሃናዊተ: ወጸጸለ: ወሥነ:),²⁰ and changed their names to “Satans” (*Säyṭanat*; ሰይጣናት). Then heaven, which did not want to host Satans, opened its floor and all of them fell down, some under the firmament, some on earth, and others under the earth. This happened on the evening on the fourth day. After the fall of Satan, Michael was put in the former's previous place and dignity.²¹

Yet another account of the fall is that contained in the *Homily on the Trinity* (*Dərsanä Šəllasē*; ድርሳነ: ሥላሴ), also known as *The Story of the Secrets of the Heavens* (*Nägärä məstīrā sāmay*; ነገረ: ምስጢረ: ሰማይ), dated by Gianfrancesco Lusini to the 15th century.²² As in other texts entitled *dərsan* – “homily; homiliary”, this is also a collection of various homilies or chapters including one devoted to the eight works of creation performed on the first day, or Sunday (ጁ ፍጥረታተ: በዕለተ: እኩድ።). However, only seven are named: light and darkness, water and earth, the angels, wind, and fire. Moreover, this account is based not on the Biblical account, but on the one known from *Aksimaros*. Other parts of the story depend, however, on the *Miracles of Jesus*. We learn that ten tribes (*nägäd*; ነገድ) of angels were created and that their chief was Säbnałəyos²³ (in the

¹⁵ S. Weninger, “Aksimaros”, *EAE* 1, 2003, p. 173.

¹⁶ Instead of the biblical “Let there be light” God says here: “Let there be elements” (*həllawəyat*; ህለውያት); p. 216.

¹⁷ *Hexaëmeron*, p. 172,2 from bottom.

¹⁸ Not said directly, but cf. the chapter on the adornment of the beautiful Angel which took place at the 4th hour of the first day; Eth. text p. 183,11; German transl., p. 227.

¹⁹ “Gregory” is also mentioned in *Aksimaros*, p. 232,1, as an author of a *Treatise on Baptism*.

²⁰ Eth. text, p. 202, 12; transl. 245.

²¹ Eth. text, p. 173,10-11; transl. 218–219.

²² G. Lusini, “Dərsanä Šəllasē”, *EAE*, 2, 2005, p. 143. Lusini notes a variety of titles for this text, such as ዜና: ሥላሴ: or መጽሐፈ: ሥላሴ: – *The Story /Book of the Trinity*.

²³ Ms. EMMML 2846 (of the 18th century), f 17ra, 2-3.

Miracles his name was ‘Säbalyanos’ or ‘Säbləyanos’, although ‘Säbnałəyos’ occurs too, at least in one manuscript).²⁴ When the angels in this account began to ask each other “Who created us? And who is our Lord?” Säbnałəyos looked around and seeing nobody as huge as himself, answered: “I am your maker, I am your creator, I am your god!” Apparently some angels were willing to follow him, but, as in the *Miracles*, Gabriel stood up and convinced the majority of them not to do so.²⁵ Then the Trinity revealed its splendour (literarily: light), and uttered the words: “May Diyablos’s power be destroyed and may his legs and hands be put in chains of fire! (here perhaps the influence of the *Book of Enoch* can be detected²⁶). He was then cursed and had to descend into an abyss.²⁷

Still another account is provided in *The Beauty of Creation* (Ṣānā fəṭrät; ሥነ፡ ፍጥረት), quite a popular text as both the number of manuscripts and versions testify. In fact, there are even more manuscripts of the text in Amharic (actually Old Amharic) than in Ge‘ez, and there is at least one known in Tigrinya.²⁸ The text shows substantial variation from one manuscript to another. One version was published by Getatchew Haile and Mesraq Amare, in 1991.²⁹ Roger Cowley regarded *The Beauty of Creation* as belonging to hexaemic literature.³⁰ It was probably composed in the 17th century.³¹

The fragment of interest to us here depends on the *Miracles of Jesus*. The author says that “when the angels were created they asked (each other), ‘Who created us? Were we created by each other or do we have another creator?’ Then Satana’el said: ‘... I was created just like that, without a creator, and I created these angels.’ Then God created light and the angels receiving it as grace began to praise God by singing the *Trishagion* hymn. Only the Devil refused to sing, and then God wrapped him in the “darkness of the previous day and made him descend (ʿäwrädä; አውረደ) into the abyss (ልዑፍ).”³² When the Devil, nevertheless, continued to behave in an arrogant way, God decided to create another creature in his own image and likeness.

²⁴ *Les Miracles de Jésus*, (see above, n.8), p. 564, note to line 10.

²⁵ Ms. EMMML 2846, f 17ra.

²⁶ Cf. *1 Enoch*, 10:4.

²⁷ Ms. EMMML 2846, f 17va.

²⁸ R.W. Cowley, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics*, (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications; 38), Cambridge 1988, p. 125.

²⁹ *Beauty of the Creation* ሥነ፡ ፍጥረት (Ṣānā fəṭrät), [ed. & tr.] by Getatchew Haile and Misraq Amare, (Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph, 16), Manchester 1991.

³⁰ Cowley, op. cit., pp. 125–128.

³¹ No scholar has provided the date, but Getatchew Haile writes that the Amharic translation comes from that epoch. Although it is not certain that the succession (otherwise normal in the literature of the country) from Ge‘ez original to Amharic translation, is true in this case, the two may date from approximately the same epoch.

³² *Beauty*, p. 61,1-2, transl., p. 82.

The last text to be presented is *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*³³ (*Mäṣḥäfä məṣṭirä sämay wä-mədr*; መጽሐፈ፡ ምሥጢረ፡ ሰማይ፡ ወምድር፡) by Bā-Haylā Mīkāʾel, also known as Zosimos. This is an apocalyptic composition dating probably from the middle of the 15th century. It provides a somewhat different account of the creation of the angels: ten classes or ranks of them were created, during ten successive hours of the sixth day.³⁴ The last (sic!) rank was that of Satanaʾel (*Səṭnaʾel*; ስፕናኤል፡). When the latter “perceived the splendour of the sun, and moon”, he decided to put his throne above the stars thus making himself similar to God. This happened on Friday of the second week. Satanaʾel’s ambition led him to attack God, and a fierce battle ensued, the command of the army of heaven being given by God to the Archangel Michael. Three times they attacked Satanaʾel, and twice he managed to repulse them, but before the third attack God gave his army “a cross of light” (*mäsqälä bərhan*; መስቀለ፡ ብርሃን)³⁵ with the inscription “In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” This sign, like Constantine’s *labarum*, helped the attacking forces to defeat Satanaʾel, whereupon Michael cast him down (*ḥw-ḥḥ*),³⁶ while his hosts were put to flight.

The above list of Ethiopic literary witnesses to the story of the fall of angels is probably not exhaustive, and further study of unpublished pieces of Ethiopic literature may bring other testimonies to light. One more may be added now, although it is not as explicit as the stories above. The fall of Satan is mentioned in the *Qälemāntos* (13th–14th century), a composition of an apocalyptic character, in which God answers various questions of Peter about, *inter alia*, the creation of angels. Peter learns that Satan was created first: during the first hour of the first day of the first month, *Nisan*, which is the seventh month in the Syriac calendar (April), interpreted as Ethiopian *Miyazya* (April). Satan received many favours from God, for instance his throne was set above those of all the other angels. Yet he revolted, and consequently was brought to his fall during the first hour of (the first) Friday.³⁷

³³ *Le Livre des mystères du ciel et de la terre*, texte éthiopien publié et traduit par J. Perruchon avec le concours de I. Guidi, (PO 1:1), Paris 1903; *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth*, and other works of Bakhayla Mīkāʾel (Zōsīmās): the Ethiopic texts ed. ... with English translations by E.A.W. Budge, Oxford 1935.

³⁴ Perruchon’s ed., PO 1:1, p. 7; Budge’s transl., pp. 11–12.

³⁵ PO 1:1, p. 11,12–14; Budge’s transl. 17.

³⁶ PO 1:1, p. 11,14.

³⁷ The Ethiopic text of the *Qälemāntos* remains unpublished but is known from translations into French and Italian. The present section can be found in the French translation by Sylvain Grébaud, “Littérature éthiopienne pseudo-clémentine, III: Traduction du Qalementos”, *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, 17 (1912), pp. 338–339. See too: J.-M. Rosenstiehl, “La chute de l’ange: origines et développement d’une légende, ses attestations dans la littérature copte”, [in:] *Écritures et traditions dans la littérature copte: Journée d’études coptes, Strasbourg 28 mai 1982*, (Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte, 1), Louvain, 1983, p. 42 (37–60).

Some comments are called for. First it should be noted that angelology in Ethiopia is perhaps more developed than in any other Eastern or Western church. This fact, as far as I can determine, derives from the presence of an Ethiopic version of the *Book of Enoch*. Indeed, this book is preserved in full only in Ethiopic, and contains references to dozens of angels, whose names are provided. This material seems to have stimulated the Ethiopians to fill their religious imagery with numerous creatures of this kind, to an extent not seen in any other Christian community. Furthermore numerous feasts were dedicated to angels, which, in turn, gave rise to a whole genre of angelic literature, *darsanat*, i.e., homilies. Although there is a collection of homilies for Mary, *Darsanä Maryam*, and the Trinity, as we have already seen, most of the homilies are devoted to archangels. These works include *Darsanä Mikaʾel*, *D. Gäbrʾel* (already mentioned), *D. Raguʾel*, *D. ʾUraʾel*, etc. The number of the episodes in a *darsan* is typically 12, since they are read on particular days of each month, namely the feast of the given archangel. For Michael, for instance, the feast day is the 12th day of every month.

The need for separate texts for reading on each of those feast days was probably an additional factor in the multiplication of accounts connected with angels, including the stories of their fall.

The idea of the fall of angels is of course not originally Ethiopic. In one or other form it is known both in Jewish, Muslim, and in other (non-Ethiopic) Christian traditions.³⁸

One may wonder about the sources of the Ethiopic accounts. While much material is the product of the Ethiopian imagination, the two paradigmatic texts, the *Miracles of Jesus* and *Aksimaros*, were translated from Arabic. As is well known, much of the translated literature in Ethiopic came from the Coptic Egypt, owing to the Ethiopian Church's long ecclesiastical allegiance to the Patriarchate of Alexandria. While we will have to wait for a study of the spread of the topic of the fall of angels in Christian Arabic tradition, there is still a question of farther sources, beyond the Arabic.

It will be perhaps no surprise that there are scriptural affinities with the story. The main *locus* in question is neo-testamental, the *Gospel of Luke* 10:18. The context here is Jesus' giving missionary instructions to the 72 disciples, who (10:17) "returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.'" Then Jesus replied: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." The reply does not seem to be proportionate to the disciples' remark, and is, in fact, quite enigmatic, thus creating an exegetical *crux*.

There is also a sentence in the *Epistle of Jude* 6 about angels who abandoned their position of authority, and whom God would keep in darkness until the Day of Judgement. The passage in *2 Epistle of Peter* 2:4, where Tartaros occurs, was mentioned earlier. Then the role of Michael in our texts is most probably patterned on the *Book of Revelation* 12:7-9, where it is told that he fought with the great Dragon, called Devil and Satan, as a result of which the latter was thrown down to earth, together with his angels. These

³⁸ Cf. L. Jung, *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature*, Philadelphia, 1926; B.J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, Philadelphia, 1952.

references, in turn, have *Old Testament* roots, namely in *Isaiah* 14:12-15, even though nothing is there said about the fall of angels, only of the morning star, which wanted to raise its throne above the stars of God and make itself like the Most High, but was cast down from heaven to earth.

Modern exegetes try to find the remoter roots of the story of the fall of Satan, whom Jesus saw (*Lk* 10:18). Some, like Alfred Marx,³⁹ see the ultimate source in the Sumerian myth of the victory of the goddess Inanna over the rebellious country of Ebih. Others, like Anders Hultgård, see it in the Iranian myth of Angra Mainyu, a demon, who fell from heaven.⁴⁰ This discussion must, however, be left to other specialists.

³⁹ Alfred Marx, "La chute de 'Lucifer' (Esaïe 14, 12-15: Luc 10, 18), préhistoire d'un mythe", *RHPR*, 80 (2000), pp. 171-185.

⁴⁰ Anders Hultgård, "La chute de Satan: l'arrière-plan iranien d'un logion de Jésus (Luc 10,18)", *RHPR*, 80 (2000), pp. 69-77.