

of the animal considered the most sacred in that land; they offered unholy sacrifices, performed impious dances, sang hymns that did not differ from the pagan dirges.¹⁹ Apparently the songs mentioned here are from the cult of Osiris. In view of the high level of Egyptian music, which we have already treated, it is hardly to be contested that despite the diversity of Mosaic and Egyptian forms of worship there remained upon Israel's practice of music a certain considerable Egyptian influence. The timbrel, a hoop of bells over which a white skin was stretched, which Mary used as accompaniment to the dances and songs along the Red Sea (Exodus 15), had its origin in Egypt. The trumpet which was blown at the breaking up of camp, at the gathering of the people and upon different occasions during worship, especially at the sacrifice (II Paralipomenon 30, 21; 35, 15. Numbers 10, 2), was the signal instrument in the Egyptian army.²⁰ The *sistrum*, which, according to 2 Samuel 6, 5, the Israelites used, and which they called *Menaaneim*, is the Egyptian instrument which was used in the worship of Isis. The above mentioned solemnity on the occasion of the transferring of the Ark of the Covenant to Sion, as well as the dances of the daughters of Israel at the yearly solemnity of the Lord at Silo (Judges 21, 21), were very similar in their musical embellishment to Egyptian customs in temple worship and at parades. As Herodotus reports, during the exhibition of likenesses of the gods women sang the praises of Osiris, and at the celebration of the feast of Diana at Bubastis groups of men and women sang and danced to the beating of drums and the playing of flutes.²¹

The magnificent ceremonial of the pagan religions by which Israel was surrounded demanded, in order to avoid the danger of defection to this art of idol-worship which was more pleasing to eye and ear, some concessions to the sensuousness of the Jewish people. Thus the above-mentioned explanation of Theodoret and Chrysostom appear fully justified.

¹⁹Philo, *De specialibus legibus* III §125 (185, 12 Cohn).

²⁰Cf. J. Weiss, *Die musikalischen Instrumente des Alten Testaments* (Graz 1895) 94.

²¹Herodotus, *Historiae* 2, 48 (I, 134, 20 Stein).

THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6, 2

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THE flood story in Genesis (chap. 6-8) opens with the words (6, 1-2): "Now when men began to be multiplied upon the earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; so they took wives of all which they chose."¹ The "sons of God" (בני אלהים) have been a constant *crux interpretum* throughout the history of exegesis. The confusion with regard to the expression showed itself early, for though the LXX translators rendered the Hebrew into the Greek literally (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ), a corrector in the Alexandrine Codex changed the text to read *angels*.² And truly from earliest times the exegetes have shown doubt as to whether the beings signified by the term in question were angels or men. Generally speaking both interpretations have had supporters up to the present day.

Three recent studies have dealt at varying length with the question. Father Gustav Closen, S.J., in a thorough-going study³ comes to the conclusion that *all men* are referred to in our text, the import of the expression *sons of God* being that men are made to the image and likeness of God and were forgetting that image and degrading it by marriages entered into from merely lustful desire. Père Paul Joüon, S.J., in a short study⁴ holds for the more common view among Catholic exegetes: that the sons of God are the Sethites (a just line), and the daughters of men are the descendants of Adam outside the Sethite line (men fallen into corruption). Julian Morgenstern, in the course of a long study⁵ on Psalm 82 (T.M.) discusses

¹The Douai is accurate enough for our purpose here.

²Cf. Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta, Stuttgart*, (1935), textual note. A. E. Brooke and N. McLean, *The Old Testament in Greek*, (vol. I, part I, Genesis, London, 1906, p. 13) put ἄγγελοι in the text against most codices.

³*Die Sünde der Söhne Gottes*, Rome, 1937.

⁴"Les Unions entre les Fils de Dieu et les Filles des Hommes," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 29(1939) 108-114.

⁵"The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 14(1939) 29-126.

our text,⁶ and comes to the conclusion that the sons of God are sinful angels who consorted with human women.

Though the interpretations of Joüon and Morgenstern are not new, they discuss in detail points that are often overlooked. And the interpretation of Closen, while not entirely new,⁷ is the first extended exposition of a possible interpretation of the text that had, up to the time of his publication, received too little attention. In view of the arguments brought forward by these authors for their respective opinions it will not be out of place to reexamine the question.

It will help, perhaps, to clarify the discussion if we consider briefly the possible senses of *elohim* in Old Testament usage. The use of this word to designate the true God or false gods is common enough not to call for discussion here. We may note, however, that, whatever the original sense of the word, the above usage predominates to such an extent that we may say that the primary sense of *elohim*, as used in the Old Testament, was *a divine being*. Hence the possibility of translating this word by *God* or *gods* can not easily be put aside in a passage that is doubtful.

Other meanings, however, attach to the word. In some passages it seems to refer to supernatural beings (angels), who are not God but are under him; and perhaps it refers to superior human beings, such as judges or rulers. For *elohim* in the meaning of judges and rulers several texts are usually brought forward. In Exodus, 21, 6, for instance, we read of the case of the slave who does not want to go free. The procedure prescribed in this case is that "His master shall bring him to the *elohim*," and there the ceremony of boring the ear is performed. Douay, following the Vulgate, translates simply *gods*, thus leaving the expression uninterpreted. Aquila and Symmachus also have πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς. The Authorized Version has "judges," and this is the translation of Onkelos and of the Peshitto. The LXX

⁶*Ibid.* pp. 76-94 principally.

⁷Closen, (*op. cit.*, pp. 149-150) quotes A. Bea (*De Pentateuco*,² p. 168; though Bea qualifies his statement with *potissimum posteriori Seth*); Gustav Schumann (*Genesis*, Lipsiae, 1829, p. 121); and M. M. Kalisch (*Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Genesis, London, 1858, p. 175) as favoring his thesis.

has πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ which conflates the ideas of "judges" and of "gods." Heinisch says that the meaning *authorities* or *judges* for *elohim* in this place is "*sehr zweifelhaft*."⁸ What is meant according to Heinisch is not an idol but the sanctuary. McNeile also rejects the meaning "judges" and takes the word to be a vague and comprehensive reference to the sanctuary.⁹ Cyrus Gordon in a recent article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*¹⁰ gives examples of expressions like the one found here, taken from the Nuzi court records, and shows that the meaning favors the idea of taking an oath before the gods. Similar examples are found in the Code of Hammurabi. But Gordon's attempt to prove that *elohim* in our text means *teraphim* is less convincing. However, the weight of the evidence given by Gordon does go against the meaning *judges* in our passage. Whatever is our conclusion for Exodus 21, 6 must also be our conclusion for 22, 8-9 (the legal procedure in cases of theft and fraud), for the witnesses and the arguments only duplicate what we have seen with regard to 21, 6.

Another text where the meaning *judges* or *rulers* is sometimes given for *elohim* is 1 Sam. 2, 25, where Eli says to his sinning sons: "If one man sin against another, *elohim* may be appeased in his behalf." Here the Douay has *God*, the Authorized Version has "the judge shall judge." Recent commentators, of whom P. Dhorme¹¹ is a good representative, favor the meaning *God* here; and such an interpretation makes good sense.¹²

Gordon¹³ gives Exodus 22, 27 as the starting point of the occasional identification of *elohim* with *judges*. In that place we have the prohibition: "Thou shalt not revile *elohim*, nor curse a ruler (אֱלֹהִים) of thy people." The Vulgate and Douay

⁸P. Heinisch, *Das Buch Exodus*, Bonn, 1934, pp. 164 ff.

⁹A. H. McNeile, *The Book of Exodus*,² London, 1917, p. 127.

¹⁰"אלהים" in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 54, (1935) 139-144.

¹¹P. Dhorme, *Les Livres de Samuel*, Paris, 1910, p. 39; cf. also Karl Leimbach, *Die Bücher Samuel*, Bonn, 1936, p. 29; Wilhelm Caspari, *Die Samuelbücher*, Leipzig, 1926, among the most recent. But Samuel R. Driver, *Notes on the Books of Samuel*,² (Oxford, 1913, p. 35) holds for this text, as for Exodus 21, 6 and 22, 7 that *elohim* signifies judge, not as such "but the judge as the mouthpiece of a Divine sentence."

¹²Cf. Gordon, *art. cit.* p. 143.

¹³*Art. cit.*, p. 143 f.

as well as the LXX have *gods* here; but due to the parallelism Onkelos translated the word as *judges*, and was followed in this by Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Again, *God* would make sense in this passage, but the meaning *judges* or *rulers* is not absolutely excluded, especially in view of the parallel *prince*.

Judges 5, 28 is altogether too doubtful to throw any light on our question, as is also the use of *elohim* in Psalm 137, 1. For the context in the Psalm is too vague to allow us to conclude to the precise significance of the word in the context.¹⁴

Thus we may conclude that the usage of *elohim* alone to designate human beings is possible but not proven, at least from the texts that are usually brought forth as witnesses for that meaning. We might note here, however, that the frequent use of the synonymous *el* to designate human beings could easily have influenced such a usage in the case of *elohim*. Whatever the original meaning of *el* and whatever probability (or lack of it) there is that it is cognate with *elohim*, *El* is used most frequently of the God of Israel. But it is used also for false gods,¹⁵ and for men of might or rank.¹⁶ This usage gives a little weight at least to the argument in favor of the meaning *rulers* or *judges* for *elohim*, and for saying that *elohim* might be used in certain contexts and combinations to refer to men.

But there are cases where *elohim* alone is said to designate angels. The examples generally alleged are in Psalms 8, 6 and 96, 7. Psalm 8, 6, however, is far from being a certain example, since St. Jerome (from Hebrew: *paulo minus a Deo*), Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion go against Targ., Syriac, LXX, Vulg., Douay, and the Authorized Version, which have *angels*.¹⁷ The same doubt may be cast on the equation of *elohim* with angels

¹⁴Syriac has *kings*; Targum: *judges*; LXX-Vulg. *angels*.

¹⁵E.g. Ex. 34, 14; Ps. 43, 20.

¹⁶E.g. Job 41, 16 (T.M. 41,17, practically certain); Ezech. 31, 11; 32, 21; 17, 13.

¹⁷For the interpretation *God* cf. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, Cambridge, 1933, p. 40; F. Zorell, *Psalterium ex Hebraeo Latinum*, Rome, 1928, p. 10; M. Bittenwieser, *The Psalms*, Chicago, 1938, pp. 178-9; these in addition to Baethgen, Duhm, Vaccari, König, as listed by Cloesen, (*op. cit.* p. 168). J. Calès (*Le Livre des Psaumes*, I, Paris, 1936, pp. 144 f.) prefers *angels*. There is a difficulty in Paul's use of the LXX *angels* in Hebr. 2, 6-9. But as Calès says (*loc. cit.*), the citation in Hebrews is not in the strictly literal sense, but that "on utilise les mots plutôt que la pensée."

in Psalm 96, 7. For "Adore Him (the Lord), all you *elohim*," might be addressed to angels or gods or to men for that matter. In fact the commentators differ¹⁸ on this point. Thus for *elohim* alone the meaning *angels* is not too certain.

And similarly the use of *el* alone to designate *angels* is not well testified to. Psalm 58, 2 ("Do you really speak justice, *elem*?") is sometimes advanced as an example of such usage, but there is not a very solid foundation for such a view in the text. In fact a study of the text will show that it probably refers to men.¹⁹ However both the reading and the interpretation are doubtful.

It would result from the above discussion, then, that the question is still open as to whether the expression *benei elohim* might mean either sons (figurative, adoptive) of the true God, or sons of pagan gods, or sons of men of might and rank; or again whether (according to the Hebrew idiom) it might mean a *class* of supernatural beings or of men unusual in some way. None of the above meanings is *finally* and *decisively* excluded as impossible.

Let us see, then, the cases where the expression *sons of God* is actually used in the Old Testament. The phrase *benei (ba) elohim* is used three times in the book of Job. In 1, 6 where the author is picturing God enthroned in Heaven holding court, the text says, "Now on a certain day when the *benei ba elohim* came to stand before the Lord, Satan also was among them." The least that can be said here is that the *benei (ba) elohim* are heavenly beings. And 2, 1 describe a similar occasion with the same words. In Job 38, 7 the case is not so certain. For the Lord speaking to Job asks him where he was when the world was created, and when "the morning stars praised (me) together, and all the *benei elohim* shouted for joy." It is the common practice to translate here by *gods* or *sons of god*. But Father Clousen well notes²⁰ that the parallelism here may make the per-

¹⁸Perhaps the idea of Calès (*op. cit.*, II, p. 211): "Tous les êtres surnaturels, les élohim, anges ou démons" . . . is the most apt in the text; though Kirkpatrick (*op. cit.*, p. 581) prefers *false gods*.

¹⁹Calès (*op. cit.* I, p. 559 and 562) reads (as do most) *elim* and makes it refer to the wicked leaders of Israel.

sonified stars the sons of God. Hence it would be wrong to conclude from the testimony of the Book of Job that *benei elohim* necessarily and always means angels. Out of only three examples one is doubtful. And for the similar combination *benei elim*, which occurs twice in the Psalms, an equally dubious conclusion must be reached.

In Psalm 28, 1 we read: "Give to the Lord, O you *benei elim*,"²¹ give to the Lord glory and honor." The context of the Psalm gives us no means of settling the meaning of the phrase *benei elim* with finality. It is variously rendered as *children of God*, *mighty*, *sons of gods*. Closen²² leaves it an open question whether "the children of the one God of creation, Elohim," are meant, or whether "members of a class of Elim" (= *spirits*) are meant. He even allows for the possibility of Hoberg's²³ *pious, god-fearing men*. To which I would add that Psalm 95, 7-9 which is almost exactly parallel (except that for *benei elim* it has *tribes of the peoples*) would seem to suggest an exegesis favoring Hoberg's idea.

In Psalm 88, 7 praising God the Psalmist asks: "Who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord, And who among the *benei elim* is like the Lord?" In this place again no unanimity exists as to the meaning. But the parallelism would suggest *heavenly beings* (gods or angels).²⁴ And the continuation in verse 8: "God who is to be glorified in the assembly of the saints, great and terrible above *all that surround Him*," and in verse 9 the reference to the Lord God of hosts would perhaps further strengthen the opinion that heavenly beings are meant by *benei elim* in this Psalm.

The net result, therefore, of the texts seen thus far is that none of them gives us a decisive interpretation for *benei ha*

²⁰*Op. cit.*, pp. 75 ff. It is not uncommon in Hebrew poetical books to speak of personified nature praising God; Cf. Ps. 148; Dan. 3, 57-90.

²¹This is according to the accepted reading. The Vulgate reading is a conflation of a true and a false reading of *elim*, (*elim*=rams; and *elim*=gods).

²²*Op. cit.* p. 76.

²³*Die Genesis*, Freiburg, 1908, p. 75.

²⁴Both Buttenwieser (*gods* in Yahweh's court), *op. cit.*, p. 255, and Calès, *op. cit.* II, p. 137 (*angels*) are representative of recent interpretation. Buttenwieser aptly refers to the concept of Yahweh's court in 1 Kings 22, 19-23 and the prologue of Job.

elohim in Genesis 6, 2. Neither the translation *angels* nor *sons of God* (= men) can be excluded *a priori*, though the clearer texts favor "angels."²⁵

But before we go further in our discussion we must underline the fact that the *idea* that men could be and were sons of God runs throughout the whole Old Testament. God calls *Israel* "my son, my first born" in Exodus (4, 22); and in the next verse He repeats the appellation "my son." Deuteronomy 32, 5 represents Moses as reproving the Israelites, saying that they are not the Lord's sons.²⁶ In Psalm 72, 15 the Psalmist, after narrating his temptation to doubt God on seeing the prosperity of the wicked, says: "If I said, 'I will speak thus,' behold I should condemn (betray) the generation of thy children." Again in Isaias 1, 2 God reproaches the children of Israel: "I have brought up children (sons) and exalted them." And in Jeremias (3, 14) God calls the Israelites His "rebellious children." In the same Prophet also (3, 19) God asks: "How shall I count thee among the sons, and give thee a lovely land and the goodly inheritance of the hosts of the nations? and I said, 'Thou shalt call me father' " etc. Again, speaking of the conversion of the Israelites God says (Jeremias 31, 9): "They shall come with weeping, and I will bring them mercy, and I will bring them through the torrents of waters in a right way. And they shall not stumble in it; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." This idea is repeated in 31, 20: "Surely Ephraim is a dear son to me, surely he is a darling child." Osee also has the same idea in 1, 10 (T. M. 2, 1): "Although before it was said to Israel, 'You are not my people, It shall be said to them '(you are) the sons of the living God.'" בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים. Also it is of Israel that God says in Os. 11, 1: "Out of Egypt I called my son."²⁷

²⁵This against P. F. Ceuppens, O.P., *De Historia Primaeva*, Rome, 1934, p. 230: "unde si usum loquendi S. Scripturae sequamur, etiam nostro loco c. 6, v. 2, *filios Dei esse Angelos* nobis concludendum esset."

²⁶Though the text is otherwise dubious, the idea of sons of God is here.

²⁷There is hardly reason for bringing forward the large number of texts where the idea of the divine sonship of men is mentioned, and space will not allow us to develop this idea further.

Thus the *idea* that men are the sons of God is commonplace in the Old Testament. An examination of the texts where this idea exists shows that this sonship in every place that it occurs implies that the sons are in God's special friendship or that they should be. This fact is of great importance with regard to the interpretation of Genesis 6, 2. For even here we shall see that a special relationship to God is understood in the term *sons of God*.

This prevalence of the idea of divine sonship in the Old Testament should prepare us for finding the expression *sons of God* used of men, and should warn us against a too hasty rejection of the possibility of such a usage in texts that might be doubtful.

Now there are several texts that are almost the exact counterparts of the expression *benei ha elohim* of Genesis 6, 2, and which refer to the sonship of men to God. We have left the discussion of these texts to this point in our development for various reasons. The texts from Wisdom, for example, while they have the exact expression *sons of God* used of men, are in Greek and from the Hellenistic period. And the text from Deuteronomy is *nearly*, but not exactly the counterpart of the *benei ha elohim* in Genesis 6, 2. Finally, the usage in Psalm 81 is disputed and subject to much discussion.

As we have said, the texts from Wisdom are naturally in Greek and reflect the mentality of the Greek period. Hence it may be objected that they were influenced by Greek thought. But Closen²⁸ well says that there is no reason to turn to Greek thought to explain these texts since, as we have seen, the *idea* of divine sonship contained in the texts is found throughout all the Old Testament Literature.

In Wisdom 2, 13-18 the wicked, plotting against the just, say of him: "He boasts that he has knowledge of God, and he calls himself the son of God." (παῖδα Κυρίου.) That παῖδα here means son and not (as sometimes) servant is clear from what follows in verse 16: "He glories that he has God for his father." (ἀλαζονεύεται πατέρα Θεόν.) And verse 18 tells us that the reason for his boast is that he is *just*: εἰ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ

²⁸Op. cit., p. 81.

δικαιος υἱὸς Θεοῦ. "For if the just be the son of God (N.B. *here* the Greek has υἱός) He will defend him." Again in Wisdom 5, 5 the just man is called the son of God: "Behold how they are numbered among the sons of God." There is then no doubt about the meaning of Wisdom, nor can there be doubt but that the Hebrew here would have been *ben elohim*.

As to the text of Deuteronomy (14, 1), the Hebrew reads: בניכם אתם ליהוה אלהיכם "You are sons (hardly the "Be ye sons" of the Vulgate-Douai) of Yahweh, your God." The order could have been . . . אתם בניכם and the expression would have been almost the exact equivalent of the expression of Genesis 6, 2. In fact, the reason for placing *banim* (sons) first is to emphasize the idea of sonship. Now, in view of our discussion above, this expression in Deuteronomy does not indicate a new nor solitary departure in Hebrew thought; rather it is an explicit testimony to the existence and the acceptance of the idea of special adoption of men into God's sonship throughout Old Testament times.

And Psalm 81 (T. M. 82) is a further proof of the continued existence of such a concept. In this Psalm (verse 6) we meet the expression בני עלין *sons of the most high*. The precise signification of the expression depends on the interpretation of the whole Psalm. For the *benei Elyon* in the verse itself are placed parallel to *elohim*, and they are obviously the *elohim* mentioned in verse 1. The most recent discussion of this Psalm is that of Julian Morgenstern referred to above. He holds that the *benei elyon* are divine beings (angels). His very complete discussion, however, is weakened by the fact that the thread of his argument becomes tenuous to the point of unsubstantiality in places;²⁹ and also by the fact that out of a Psalm of eight verses his interpretation leads him to delete all but three and a fraction verses. The last stichos of verse five ("All the foundations of the earth shall be moved") is retained; this is frequently considered to be out of harmony with the rest of the Psalm.

²⁹E.g. his contention that this Psalm represents a New Year's day court of Yahweh is inconclusive, as is his equation *nephilim*=fallen=fallen angels.

But before proceeding further let us see what may be taken as certain in the Psalm. First, there is quite general agreement that the first *elohim* in the first verse ("Elohim has stood") and the last *elohim* (in verse eight) stand for Yahweh.³⁰ Secondly, verses 2-6 certainly refer to human beings who discharge judicial functions, as Morgenstern himself asserts.³¹ In fact, the verses are but a repetition of what might be called the "stock charges" of prophets and psalmists against the unfaithful *rulers of Israel*.³² And it is to be noted that the charges are usually presented (as here) in the form of a solemn judgment of Yahweh upon the evil rulers of Israel, and in a *mise en scène* similar to the one of this Psalm.³³

This being so, who are they who are present in the "congregation of the gods," and "in the midst of the gods" (v. 1) to hear God's judgment? And who are the *elohim*, the *benei elyon* who hear that judgment in verse 6? In answering these questions exegetes disagree. Morgenstern³⁴ gives the statistics of the various interpretations. The opinions advanced are as follows. They are *judges* according to Targum, Midrash Tehillim to the passage, and Rashi, "followed only by Kittel among the moderns."³⁵ A large number of exegetes stand for the meaning *foreign kings*, influenced in great part by verse eight where the nations are to be judged. A fairly large number of moderns hold for the interpretation *gods* (of foreign nations). Some few would interpret the expressions in question as meaning *angels*.³⁶

The chief reason for interpreting the expressions in question as referring to divine beings is that this is the ordinary meaning of *elohim*. However, *elohim*, as we have seen, is not limited to such a meaning; at least not with any degree of certainty.

³⁰Note that we are here in an elohistic section of the Psalter.

³¹*Op. cit.* pp. 32-33.

³²Cf. for example, Is. 5, 3-7 and 22-24; 10, 1-4; Jer. 22, 1-9; etc.

³³Cf. the texts from Isaiah above.

³⁴*Op. cit.* pp. 30-32.

³⁵So Morgenstern (*loc. cit.*) but H. Herkenne, *Das Buch der Psalmen*, Bonn, 1936 is at least one modern besides Kittel who favors the interpretation *judges*.

³⁶W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, London, 1939, II, p. 374, is perhaps the most recent commentator favoring this theory.

And our discussion of *benei elobim* above leaves the probability that *benei elyon* and its parallel expressions may refer to human beings. Morgenstern, it is true, states³⁷ that the *benei elyon* "can designate only divine beings and naught else;" but as this particular expression occurs only in this one place in the Old Testament, such a statement can hardly be proved, and must be checked by the usage of similar expressions and by the context. As to the context, Morgenstern admits that verses 2-5 can not refer to foreign rulers but must refer to oppressors within Israel itself, hence his reason for deleting these verses.

It seems to me, therefore, that we may safely conclude:

1) That the Psalm represents the God of Israel meeting the unjust rulers of Israel in solemn judgment.

2) That these rulers are called *elobim* because they shared the prerogatives of the God of Israel, ruling and judging the nation.

3) That, whether verses six and seven are the words of God's judgment or of the Psalmist's conclusions from God's judgment, they contain the warning often given in the Psalms to the wicked. The wicked may seem strong and prosperous, but they are mortal, they will die, and (by implication at least) their death will be earlier and more unpleasant than they expect.³⁸

4) That verse eight which causes difficulty (and leads some to interpret *elobim* as being foreign gods or kings) because it represents a universal judgment of the nations, while the rest of the Psalm represents a present and particular judgment, should be retained as part of the Psalm. That many Psalms and many prophetic passages begin with the present and swing into the future is a well-known fact. And the same may be said for the change from a particular to a general judgment.³⁹

In view of verse eight, therefore, the judgment here is to be taken as one imposed on earthly beings, and in view of verses 2-5 the earthly beings who are judged in the first part of the

³⁷*Op. cit.* p. 33.

³⁸Morgenstern's contention (*op. cit.*, pp. 33-34) that the expression "you shall die" supposes the loss of a gift of immortality is not founded in the light of the way the Psalms speak of the death of wicked *men*. That man must die is one of the most repeated warnings to the wicked in the Old Testament.

³⁹*Cf.* Ps. 21; 64; 71; 1 Sam. 2, 1 ff.

Psalm are the authorities in Israel. It is worthwhile to point out again that here the divine sonship is a matter of God's special choice and solicitude. The beings designated as sons of God belong to God's family or court. This explains the particular bitterness of the condemnation here and elsewhere (including Genesis 6,2) when these sons are unfaithful.

So in this Psalm the obvious and most natural interpretation of *elobim* and *benei elyon* is that which makes them men. Other interpretations lead to difficulties that can be avoided only by mutilating the Psalm.

To return to Genesis, 6, 2. There is no argument from Hebrew *usage* that would oblige us to take the expression *benei ha elobim* as referring to any but human beings.⁴⁰ Does Hebrew *tradition* favor the interpretation *angels*? Many would see here the sin and fall of the angels, for which fall there was a Hebrew tradition.⁴¹ But the Biblical tradition on the fall of the angels is not clear enough on the nature of the sin to warrant any attempt to use it in interpreting our text. The Old Testament, even where it refers to the fall of the angels, gives us no hint that their sin was of a sexual nature.⁴²

True, the apocryphal books accept the idea that the sinning sons of God were angels who consorted with women,⁴³ but precisely because these books repeat this idea so often, it is significant that it never found its way in any form into the *canonical* books, which spoke often enough of the sinful angels. And note also that in 2 Enoch 29, 4-5 Satanail and his followers are said to be thrown out of Heaven because Satanail endeavored to place his throne equal to God's; this seems to have been written under the influence of Isaias 24, 1 and Isaias 14, 12-14. Again in the Books of Adam and Eve 13, 1-16, 1, the devil is represented as having been cast out of Heaven because he would not worship Adam after his creation. Closen⁴⁴ gives a further dis-

⁴⁰Closen (*op. cit.*, p. 83) gives an excellent summary of the arguments on this point.

⁴¹Cf. Is. 24,21; Eph. 6,12; 2 Pet. 2,4; Jude v. 6; and Apoc. 12, 7-9.

⁴²For a discussion of this point we refer to Closen, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-106.

⁴³Thus Jubilees 4, 15; 5,1 ff.; 1 Enoch ch. 6-8 and 64-69; The Testament of Reuben 5, 6-7; Testament of Naphtali 3,5.

⁴⁴*Op. cit.*, pp. 84-100.

cussion of this aspect of the question. R. Patai⁴⁵ also gives references to Jewish tradition that the flood was caused by the unchastity of *men*. So we must say that the simplest explanation of the varying non-biblical stories is that the human imagination was trying to make up for the silence of the canonical texts on this matter, and that they can not be taken as representative of authentic Hebrew tradition.

To those who would carry us into the New Testament to find a sexual interpretation for the sin of the angels,⁴⁶ we must say that there is no such sin attributed to the bad angels in any text.⁴⁷ Many of the references make the characteristic sin of the devil lying and deception,⁴⁸ and in such a way that the sin of Satan and his kind seems to hark back to the original great deception of Genesis 3. Surely nowhere is the sin of the evil spirits represented as being a satisfaction of carnal lust. Even in the texts that speak of possession by Satan,⁴⁹ or by the impure spirits⁵⁰ the authors refer only to non-sexual physical effects, or to moral actions (almost universally non-sexual), that are instigated by the evil spirit but not practised by him. In Luke 20, 36 Christ clearly denies that the angels indulge in sexual acts, and supposes that His Jewish hearers agree with Him. True, this refers directly only to the good angels. But as the only text in the New Testament that makes reference to the question of sexual activity on the part of the angels it is not without significance. The canonical Scriptures, therefore, give no support to the *angel*-interpretation of Genesis 6, 2.

⁴⁵"The Control of Rain in Ancient Palestine," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 14 (1939) p. 267, n. 83.

⁴⁶Some would see a reference to Gen. 6,1-4 in I Cor. 11,10 for example, as also in some of the texts given under the following note.

⁴⁷I Cor. 11,10; Eph. 6,12; II Pet. 2,4; and Jude v. 6 are the chief texts usually alleged. As to the first two texts we may say that *angels* in the N.T. without further qualification stands for good angels. The last two show some signs of dependence on 1 Enoch; but if this dependence is a fact, it is a rather strong argument against the angel theory that the authors refused to make any reference to Enoch's stories of angels consorting with women.

⁴⁸Jo. 8,44; Apoc. 12,9; Acts 13,10; 2 Cor. 11, 13-14. Eph. 6,11; (In 1 Tim. 6,9 the snare of the devil is riches; In 1 Tim. 3, 6-7 pride is the snare).

⁴⁹Luke 13,16 and 2 Cor. 12,7 (?); Mk. 16,9; Lk. 8,2, for example.

⁵⁰As in Mk. 1,26 ff., so in the numerous examples of possession by impure spirits it is physical control that the devil seems to exercise, cf. J. Smit, *De Daemoniachis*, Rome, 1913—*passim* but especially pp. 54-73.

But the defenders of the *angel*-theory have other arguments. They see in the story of Genesis reflections of ancient mythology. Now verse four of our chapter has given a foundation through the ages for this idea. In this verse we read: "In those days, and also afterwards, there were giants on the earth, when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men and these bore to them; these were the mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

These giants or mighty men who were born of the unions of the sons of God with the daughters of men have been a cause of much conjecture. Ancient myths of gods consorting with humans and begetting demigods and heroes were bound to influence those who tried to explain this passage.

But who were these giants and what was the reason for their introduction into this passage? If we search for the Scriptural concept of what the *giants* (*nephilim*) were, we find the word used in Numbers 13, 33-34. The spies whom Moses had sent ahead to reconnoitre in Palestine returned saying, "We saw giants (*nephilim*) there, *the sons of Anak, of the race of the giants*; we were as grasshoppers compared to them, and so we appeared to them."⁵¹ The text would give us the impression that these men were monstrously large. But Deuteronomy (2, 10.21) throws further light on the question of what is meant in this passage when it refers to the sons of Anak as "a people large, numerous, and tall." There is nothing supernatural or preternatural hinted at here. Also Deuteronomy 9, 1 and 1, 28 show that in these expressions there is a question of *comparative* size and strength of *men*, and that the *nephilim* are not to be taken in any mythological sense. In fact, other expressions in the context of the descriptions of the sons of Anak show that there is present literary exaggeration, as is shown by the affirmations that the walls of their cities "reach to the sky." Joshua and Caleb in the text of Numbers (13, 34; 34, 9) deny the exaggerations of their fellow spies, and insist that the Israelites have nothing to fear from the sons of Anak. Joshua more-

⁵¹The LXX omits the italicised words. Some say they are a later gloss. A settlement of this question would not make any difference in our conclusions.

over records (Jos. 14, 12) the strength of the sons of Anak and of their cities, but clearly does not consider them something superhuman, let alone semi-divine. Baruch (3, 26) gives us the idea of later generations on these giants of tradition, when he refers to them as the "renowned, huge, men of antiquity, skilled in war."⁵² The fact that the Hebrew translators of the LXX rendered the word *nephilim* by the Greek γίγαντες (giants) is not surprising when we recall that they also translate the word *gibbor* (*bero, warrior*) by the same word. All this shows a rather consistent Hebrew tradition as to the nature of the giants. They were extraordinary men, but men none the less. In fact, Clousen points out that the author of Genesis himself goes out of his way to define what he means by *nephilim* precisely in Genesis 6, 4.⁵³ He sets down a series of words that sum up the nature of the *nephilim*: they were mighty ones (who were) of old, men of renown. Thus there is no warrant in the Scriptures for taking *giants* as anything but *unusual* human beings. The presence of the *nephilim* is hardly an argument for making the sons of God demigods or angels.

But the modern school of comparative religion is not satisfied with this explanation. Starting with the assumption that our passage must be explained by mythology, its followers proceed to supply or explain the deficiency of mythological color in our passage. In a text that is "abbreviated to the point of unintelligibility,"⁵⁴ and where, for the mythological explanation, a much fuller original must be postulated,⁵⁵ which original has been "mutilated" precisely to remove "the strongly mythological content of the tradition which scandalized the narrator,"⁵⁶ who is recognized as being decidedly "anti-mythological,"⁵⁷ the moderns are capable of reconstructing the whole story. Beginning from two expressions, *the sons of God* and *the giants*, they can build up for us a complete mythological original. This

⁵²It is the unusual strength of the giants that is insisted upon in Eccles. 16,7 f. and Wisd. 14,6.

⁵³*Op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁵⁴So A. Lods, "La chute des anges," *Rev. d'hist. et phil. relig.* 7 (1927) 304.

⁵⁵A. S. Yahuda, *The Language of the Pentateuch*, I, London, 1933, p. 279 f.

⁵⁶H. Gunkel, *Die Genesis*³, Göttingen, 1910, p. 59.

⁵⁷E. König, *Die Genesis*³, Gütersloh, 1925, p. 344.

“original” is a complete parallel to the ancient myths. But the fact of the matter is that there is no real parallel. The only evidence for such a thing is brought in from sources outside our text and outside the canonical scriptures. In other words the mythologists *postulate* as a basis of the Genesis story the very myths that they then proceed to invoke as parallels to the Genesis story. We may note here that the general pattern of the myths of gods descending to consort with human beings never includes a widespread descent of the gods to the earth. The consorting is done by individual gods, including the supreme gods themselves. It is not in the nature of a rebellion. It is not even considered a great fault. Moreover, there is no *general* punishment of *mankind* as a result of such unions. Thus not only must we distort Genesis if we wish to provide a parallel for mythology, but mythology itself must be distorted to fit even a distorted Genesis story.⁵⁸ Further, the whole tenor of the Genesis story does not allow for a Hebrew tradition of warring gods. The God of Genesis is supreme and unquestioned master of His creation from beginning to end.

Finally the author of Genesis ch. 6-9,⁵⁹ as we have said above, shows us clearly that *man* was being punished for the sins of *man*, not for anything that supernatural beings might have done. Nowhere does he indicate any culprit but man. If he believed that supernatural beings entered into the story he would have felt bound to reveal their culpability and punishment, as is done in the story of the fall in Genesis 3. In fact the whole mentality of the whole Old Testament tradition reveals itself as being highly sensitive on the question of God’s justice. The authors are always careful to avoid leaving God open to any charge of injustice.

⁵⁸I am not forgetting that the Enoch stories have the mythological explanation of the fall of the angels; but the author of Genesis 6, 1-4, did not have the apocryphal books before him, whereas the author of Enoch (and the other apocryphal stories) did have Genesis and the Greek myths before him.

⁵⁹I have prescinded throughout from the question of documents that might make up the Genesis story as we now have it. At least we have a final redactor for the story as it now stands, and he can be understood by our term *author* by those who might wish to quarrel about the use of the word.

Why, then, are the giants introduced? Closen⁶⁰ well says that they were introduced to show that even the mighty and proud warriors were doomed; as sinners they could not escape the flood. Their strength and might could not save them from God's wrathful judgment. And this explanation is borne out in later Biblical tradition.⁶¹

It is safe to conclude, therefore, that the *sons of God* in our text are neither demigods nor angels.⁶² In the authentic Israelite tradition the gods as distinct from Yahweh are so far from being capable of marriage that they are "nothing."⁶³ As for angels we have seen that there is no authentic Biblical tradition that couples their fall with sexual sin. The impossibility of sexual sin on the part of angels is implied in the only clear text that could be brought forward. Moreover, the whole intent of the author of our pericope is to emphasize the sin and punishment of *mankind*.⁶⁴

If, then, the sons of God in our passage are men, what men are they? Father Closen⁶⁵ would make the *sons of God* all men, but under a particular aspect. He endeavors to prove that the author of our narration uses the expression to emphasize the fact that man was made to the image and likeness of God. In his actions (especially with regard to marriage) man was to be mindful of the fact that the image of God was his to be kept and handed on to his offspring. Men had forgotten the

⁶⁰*Op. cit.* pp. 208-216, especially p. 210.

⁶¹This is the sense of Baruch, 3, 26-28; Ecclus. 16,7 f.; Wisd. 14,6.

⁶²Those Fathers who held for the angel theory were influenced: (1) by the fact that where the LXX attempts to give a synonym for $\nu\lambda\omicron\lambda\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, it is usually $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\iota$; (2) by the belief in some quarters that the Book of Enoch was inspired; (3) by a clouded concept of the nature of angels; (4) by the idea that though strict sexual intercourse was impossible for angels, still evil spirits could somehow cause conception. A study of each of these points, and their influence on the exegesis of our text would clearly be too lengthy here. Cf. P. F. Ceuppens, *De Historia Primaeva*, Rome, 1934, p. 264 ff., and G. Closen, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-97; 109-119.

⁶³On Israelitic "polytheism" cf. W. F. Albright's excellent article "The Ancient Near East and the Religion of Israel" in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59 (1940) 85-112.

⁶⁴Gen. 6,3 5 11 13 17; 7,23; 8,21. Morgenstern (*art cit.* p. 78 f.) admits the force of this argument but postulates an original for our story which told of the punishment of the angels.

⁶⁵*Op. cit.* pp. 157-184.

dignity of this image and the duty it imposed, and were showing their sinful carelessness by marrying for mere lust. Hence the decision and the decree that the sinful race should be wiped out.

But there are difficulties against this theory. First, the author of the text introduces a contrast between the sons of God and the daughters of men that is hardly brought out by the exegesis that makes the sons of God all men, and the daughters of men women in general. All women were, in Closen's sense, daughters of men and all men were sons of God. Was not woman made to the image and likeness of God? Why, then, does the author introduce a contrast between *men marrying* and the *women married* by calling the men *sons of God* and the women *daughters of men*? Was not woman bound to be conscious of her part in handing on the image and likeness of God? And if she was, why is she left without the qualification that is given to man, for she also is in a special sense the child of God? True, the texts that Closen gives prove that the Israelite tradition made much of the dignity of man's nature; but nowhere else in the Old Testament is such a dignity designated by the use of the expression *sons of God*. On the contrary, we know that elsewhere in the Old Testament the idea of sonship is connected with a *special* group of men, singled out from mankind in general.⁶⁶

We are left then with the necessity of accepting the sons of God as a class or a group of men. From our discussion of the idea of divine sonship above we may assert that the sons of God would imply a group that was especially close to God, either for their justice and holiness, or for the fact that they were chosen out by God with particular predilection for some divine purpose. These two ideas supplement one another in Biblical tradition. For the just were objects of God's predilection, and those who were the objects of God's special choice (and hence called sons) were in every case expected to live in justice serving God. So, to say the least, the *sons of God* were considered by the author of Genesis to be a group of men who

⁶⁶Cf. our discussion *supra*.

up until the days of Noah had been just, and had been the objects of the divine complaisance. In their marriages, or as a result of them, these men somehow lost God's friendship, and by losing it they were a cause of the divine decree of punishment. Our discussion, then, should have this conclusion: the sons of God here are a last remnant of a group of just and faithful worshippers of God on a sinful earth; when they fell away into sin (especially due to their intermarrying with the sinful group) divine justice could say that all men were given to sin; and thus God decreed to wipe out the generation that was now generally corrupt.

But the implication of the usage of *sons of God* seems to justify us in going even further and accepting an exegesis that was sufficiently common among the Fathers⁶⁷ and the Catholic exegetes of the past. Père Joüon points out⁶⁸ that this opinion that held that the Sethites were the sons of God has good foundation, and is rejected largely due to a false assumption connected with the theory. That false assumption is that if the *sons of God* are the Sethites then the *daughters of men* are the Cainite women. In such a supposition the men (*'adham* in the Hebrew) who fathered these women are Cainites only. But the *'adham* of the first verse on the face of it refers to *man in general*, not merely to Cainites. Hence there would be a violent change in the use of the word in the space of only two verses. This violates the fundamental canons of interpretation. Moreover the descendants of Cain and Seth must have constituted a small minority among all the descendants of Adam.⁶⁹ Again, the word *'adham* would have to be restricted to a small section of mankind, contrary to the usage in the first chapters of Genesis. And, more difficult still, this small minority would

⁶⁷We must admit with Closen (*op. cit.* p. 147) that the patristic and theological testimony for this theory is far from sufficient to make it *de fide*, or to assign it any certain dogmatic note.

⁶⁸*Art. cit.*, p. 109; Ceuppens, *op. cit.*, p. 266, takes *daughters of men* as being Cainites.

⁶⁹Other sons and daughters were born to Adam besides Cain and Seth; cf. Gen 5,4. Presumably they "multiplied." Joüon (*art. cit.* p. 109) say they probably constituted the bulk of the human race.

be responsible for the flood which destroyed mankind in general.⁷⁰ This version of the Sethite theory, then, seems untenable, and Closen's strictures on the Sethite theory⁷¹ from this aspect are perfectly justified. But since this point is fundamental in the refutation of the Sethite theory in Closen's treatment of the question, we may say that if the acceptation of the *daughters of men* in the sense of Cainite women is not necessary for the establishing of the truth of the Sethite theory, then the Sethite theory can stand. And it is not necessary so to limit the term *daughters of men*. The *sons of God* can be the Sethites and the *daughters of men* can be taken as *women in general*, or at least those who are outside the Sethite line. And, in view of what we have already said, we may give our reason for this briefly: the reason for taking the sons of God in a limited sense is Biblical usage; and the reason for taking the *daughters of men* in the broader sense is the usage in the immediate context.

We must, however, admit that if the author of our passage meant to designate the *Sethites* as sons of God he could have made his designation clearer. Still, there are grounds in the Genesis story for believing that the author intended such a designation. First, there is the emphasis that is put upon the Sethite line in the long genealogy in Gen. 5, 6-32. In the Old Testament it is the common practice to give the important lines (the lines which are described as having a special place in God's plan) the greater space, dismissing the other lines briefly. Secondly, our pericope is introduced immediately after the Sethite line is brought down to Noah (whom the author significantly characterizes as *just*). Thirdly, in the story of Cain and Abel⁷² there are clear indications that Abel (and perhaps his line) were to be favored by God. And after Cain murders Abel (and is rejected from God's special favor), we are told explicitly⁷³ that Seth is born in Abel's place.

⁷⁰Space does not allow for a discussion of the universality of the flood. However the story in Genesis conceives it as working general destruction among the men referred to in preceding chapters.

⁷¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 140 ff.

⁷²Gen. 4, 3-16.

⁷³Gen. 4, 25.

Since we are told that Adam and Eve bore many other children⁷⁴ there is again a special significance in the fact that Seth receives this designation. There are further hints at this idea, that the Sethite line was the favored line of God. In Genesis 5, 1, *at the beginning of the Sethite line*, we have the repetition of the phrase "image and likeness," as if to point out that the line of Seth was in a special way the recipient of the gift that was given to man in the original creation.⁷⁵ We notice that in the New Testament⁷⁶ Luke traces the "line of the promises" back through Seth. Father Closen⁷⁷ says, "The foundation of a line possessing the promises is first announced in Gen. 12, 3," (the promise to Abraham). Rather we should say that it is there recorded for the first time *explicitly* that God is going to work *in a very special way* with Abraham's descendants. The idea of accepting and rejecting (and implicitly the idea of a line of promises) is found from Cain and Abel, through Noah to Sem⁷⁸ even before Abraham.

Other indications of the choice of the Sethite line are found also in the early Genesis story. There is the insistence on the longevity of the members of the Sethite line, whereas the age of the members of the other lines is less imposing. It is also in the Sethite line that the "calling on the name of Yahweh" begins.⁷⁹ Again Henoch who was not only a "just man" but one who was clearly favored of God is counted as a member of the Sethite line (Gen. 5, 24). And, as we have said, the last of the line before the flood was Noah, who is pictured as living in a special familiarity with God.

⁷⁴Gen. 5,4.

⁷⁵For the force of this phrase in the context cf. H. Junker, "Zur Erklärung von Gen. 6, 1-4," *Biblica* 16 (1935) pp. 209 f.

⁷⁶Luke, 3, 38.

⁷⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁷⁸Gen. 9, 25-27; N.B. the phrase "God of Sem."

⁷⁹Gen. 4,26. The expression seems to point to a special relationship with God, though there is doubt as to the exact way in which this relationship was established by means of the use of the divine name.

This favor of God and its corresponding fidelity that is reflected briefly throughout the history of early mankind was forfeited when the Sethite line *as a group* became sinful. It was the final corruption of this faithful line which made the whole human race sinful to the extent that it must be wiped out. The implication of such an acceptance of the flood story is not that the Sethite line was one hundred per cent just or that the non-Sethites were one hundred per cent sinful; but the indications of the text of Genesis that precede the flood story seem to lead to the conclusion that the lines outside the Sethite line had early become corrupt and the objects of the divine disfavor (this is especially true of the Cainite line) while the Sethite line had kept a tradition of its close and devoted relationship to God. The marriages of the Sethites brought about their corruption,⁸⁰ at least their final and general corruption. These marriages, then, which are at least a partial and a final cause of the flood, find mention in our pericope.

All admit⁸¹, as they must admit, that the abruptness and the unsatisfying brevity of the introduction to the flood story will not permit a final certain solution of the question of the meaning of the phrase *sons of God*; the Sethite theory, however, seems the most probable when everything is considered. Father Closen's theory (which is neither impossible nor improbable) is the only worthwhile alternative so far proposed. But while we must admit that his study is deep, we feel that the Genesis story does not give sufficient foundation for that depth. However, his work is deserving of more attention than it has so far received. If this article does no more than to call attention to his worthwhile study it will have served a good purpose.

⁸⁰Jouon (*art. cit.* pp. 111 f.), believes that God had forbidden marriages between the Sethites and the other lines; Closen (*op. cit.*, p. 139) denies this. In any case the marriages were sinful as appears from the context; and being such, through them man offended God and lost his friendship. To that extent they were at least implicitly forbidden by God.

⁸¹So Jouon, *art. cit.*, p. 112; Junker, *art. cit.*, p. 205, among others.