

CHAPTER I.

THE FILII-MAGNATUM, OR JEWISH INTERPRETATION.

§ III. -BNE-ELOHIM = MEN OF RANK. BNOTH-ADAM = POOR WOMEN. IMPROBABILITIES INVOLVED IN THIS VIEW.

OF the several interpretations enumerated in last section, only the first three appear to have met with any sort of general acceptance, and, of these, two at least are still maintained. The interpretation of the rabbins, which we have placed first in order, and which maybe termed the *fili magnatum* interpretation, is summarily disposed of by some of the commentators. Professor Kurtz merely remarks (*Hist. Old Cov.* I., p. 96) that it is at present generally abandoned. Another, that it may be dismissed at once, as not warranted by the usages of the language, and as altogether unscriptural (Keil, *Pent.* 128); while a third (*Nägelsbach.* § 125) writes that, to translate Bne-ha-Elohim, *sons of the great*, as does Onkelos, or *fili-illustrum*, with Saadiah, is a proceeding utterly injudicious and arbitrary. This may be true, although, indeed, Delitzsch admits that, "having regard to Ps. lxxxii. 6, *s.q.*, this interpretation of Bne-ha-Elohim commends itself to us more than that which makes it mean children of God in the spiritual sense." At all events, an interpretation which has the sanction of such names as Aben-Ezra and Raschi, as well as of the Targums and several versions, deserves a somewhat more extended notice than modern writers have bestowed upon it.

It is maintained by the advocates of this interpretation that, by the expression *Bne-ha-Elohim*, we should understand persons of greatest eminency for place and power, princes, judges, rulers, chiefs, *magnates*, or *fili magnatum* - whether of the family of Cain

or Seth: while, by *Bnoth-ha-Adam*, Moses is supposed to have meant women of the humbler classes, belonging, as in the other case, to both families: and that, from the marriages of these, sprang the *gibborim*, the *mighty men* of ver. 4, who are supposed to be giants, in the common acceptation of the word.

Dr. Adam Clarke (*Holy Bible, with Commentary and Notes, &c. London: 1836*), in his observations on Gen. vi. 1, having noticed the Sethite and Cainite explanation, and rejected that for which we contend, says, “Dr. Wall supposes the first verses of this chapter should be paraphrased thus - “When men began to multiply on the earth, the *chief* men took wives of all the handsome *poor women* they chose. There were tyrants in the earth in those days: also, after the antediluvian days, *powerful* men had unlawful connexions with the inferior women, and the children which sprang from this illicit commerce, were the renowned heroes of antiquity, of whom the heathens made their gods.”

The Jewish interpreters, with whom this explanation of the passage appears to have originated, were evidently in no degree influenced by a regard, either to the improbabilities which it involves, or to the fact that it fails to discover any cause for the judgment of the deluge. They merely sought, it would seem, in the genius and idiom of the Hebrew language, an explanation of the expressions *Bne-Elohim* and *Bnoth-Adam*, and believed that they found it in this - that some things peculiarly distinguished or excellent in their kind, or things or persons of beautiful, august, or striking appearance, were regarded by the Hebrews as being in a special manner from God This conception the Hebrew expressed by joining the name Elohim to the name of the distinguished object - פֶּלֶג אֱלֹהִים *river of God*, i.e., mighty river, Ps. Ixv. 10; נָסִיא אֱלֹהִים *prince of God*, i.e., mighty prince, Gen. xxiii. 6; נִתְחַלֵּי אֱלֹהִים *wrestling's of God*, i.e., great wrestlings, Gen. xxx. 8 - as in Greek, *tw/qew/* is sometimes joined to adjectives, for a like purpose (Acts vii. 20). But, the ground on which, especially, the interpretation appears to have been founded, is, that Elohim in some places in the Old Testament, was supposed to denote *judges* or *princes*; and a like signification being affixed to it in our passage, it was concluded that

the Bne-ha-Elohim were *sons of princes*, or of *Judges*, or else these exulted personages themselves – “*filii magnatum aut principum, vel magnates*” - (Mercerus) - the expression *Bne-ha-Elohim* being regarded as analogous to that of *filii Israel = viri Israelitae*, or to that of *filii hominum = homines*. (Poole's *Synopsis*).

For the meaning which these interpreters attach to the other term, Bnoth-ha-Adam - poor women, or women of humble rank in life - sufficient authority is thought to be furnished in the occasional use of the word אָדָם to denote one whose station or condition in the world is lowly or poor.

The sole support for the Jewish view being thus derived from the use, in the significations alleged, of the terms אֱלֹהִים and אָדָם, we need only inquire whether, and in what connexion, these terms are so used, and whether such usage may be deemed sufficient to warrant us in adopting this interpretation of the passage.

The word *Elohim* is, in the Hebrew Scriptures, applied for the most part to the One True God, the God of Israel. It is employed, though less frequently, to denote the gods of the heathen, and also the holy angels: while in a few instances (Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28; 1 Sam. ii. 25; Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6) : it is supposed to be applied to men who filled judicial offices in Israel. Of the passages just mentioned, two (Ex. xxii. 28; 1 Sam. ii. 25) may be dismissed from the account, as, in them, the word may mean either God or human Judges, while in the remaining five, *Elohim* undoubtedly appears to be applied to the latter. It is the opinion, indeed, of Bishop Horsley (*Biblical Criticism*, ed 1844, vol. i. p. 16) that “not a single unquestionable instance is to be found in the whole Bible, of the supposed application of the word to princes, rulers, magistrates, or judges;” and, in confirmation of this opinion, he refers to Parkhurst, who, in his *Heb. Lexicon*, has examined the passages referred to, and rejects the idea of the term *Elohim* being ever so applied. But reading Ex. xxi. 6, or xxii. 8, 9, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the word is applied directly to *men* – only, however, as they are representatives, by virtue of their office, of the true *Elohim*, whose vicegerents for the time they are, in whose name they act, and with

whose authority they are in some degree intrusted. The sacred writer, while applying the name to the human judge, evidently regarded the cause as really referred to the judgment of God, through the medium of His minister. This appears from such passages as Deut. i. 16, 17; xix. 17; 2 Chr. xix. 6; and it may also be remarked that the LXX. have rendered *Elohim* by $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ in the passages in Exodus. Accordingly, this view appears to be taken by most commentators, by Onkelos, Raschi, Ainsworth, Whitby (John x. 34), Patrick, Stuart (*Comm. on Hebrews*), Bloomfield, Robinson (*Lexicon*), Delitzsch, Kurtz, Keil, Archdeacon Lee (*Inspiration*, p. 375) who also refers to Hengstenberg and Olshausen, and by Dr. Nägelsbach (§ 52).

Admitting, then, that *Elohim* is applied in the Old Testament, though only in a few instances, to the Israelitish magistrates, as representatives, in their official capacity, of Jehovah, and accordingly, that it does thus sometimes designate distinguished persons, there is yet little to be gained from this admission in favour of the Jewish interpretation; inasmuch, as, firstly, there is no sort of resemblance between any of the passages in which it is so used, and our passage, which might afford ground for a like application of the term in the latter: and, secondly, because the title in Gen. vi. is not *Elohim*, but *Bne-ha-Elohim*, a very different expression. To take *Bne* in *Bne-ha-Elohim* as equivalent to *vir* is a purely arbitrary act, and one not authorised by such cases as *fili* *Israel* = *vir* *Israelitae*, *fili* *hominum* = *homines*. The term *Bne-ha-Elohim*, in the other passages of Scripture in which it occurs, is admitted to denote beings higher in the scale of creation, than the great ones of the earth: and had Moses, in Gen. vi. 2, intended to speak of the latter, he would, no doubt, have designated them, not by *Elohim*, or *Bne-ha-Elohim*, but by some such term as *shophetim* (judges), *sarim* (princes), or *haggedolim* (the great).

But we are further required, by the Jewish interpreters and those who adopt the *fili-magnatum* explanation, to believe, not only that the *Bne-ha-Elohim* were the great men of their day, but also that by *Bnoth-ha-Adam*, “daughters of men,” are intended women of lowly station, in contradistinction to their supposed admirers, “Viderunt filii illustrium filias plebis pulchras.” -

Arab. Saad. “Those great persons” says Bp. Patrick, who, in his commentary, mentions this interpretation, although preferring another, “were taken with the beauty of the daughters of men, i.e. of the meaner sort (for so sometimes *men* signifies, Ps. xlix. 2, &c.) and took, by force and violence, as many as they pleased, being so potent, as to be able to do anything with impunity.” It is certain that **אדם** is, in, some places, used in this sense, as in the passage referred to, and in Ps. lxii 10 **בְּנֵי אָדָם—בְּנֵי אִישׁ**, “men of low degree - men of high degree.” But this is not a proof that *Bnoth-ha-Adam* must mean *women of low degree*, as **אדם** appears to have this signification, only when in contrast with **איש**. When not in this connection, *Adam* and *Bne-Adam* denote, respectively, the man *Adam*, or a man, anyman, (Gen. iv. 1; Lev. i. 2; Prov. xviii. 16) and *mankind*, *men* in general, (Ps. xxxi 2 : *Heb.* Eccl. ix. 12, &c.) - in both cases, without distinction of class or condition in life. The expression *Bnoth-ha-Adam*, does not, so far as we know, occur in the Old Testament, except in our passage: hence, no argument can be founded on usage. It is an expression, however, analogous to **בְּנוֹתֵיהֶן**, Gen. xxvii. 46, and **בְּנוֹת־יִשְׂרָאֵל**, Deut. xxiii. 18; and as these denote the female members of the races of Seth, and of Israel, without reference to station, character. or circumstances in life, so does *Bnoth-ha-Adam* denote the female portion of Adam's race, the women, generally, then in the world, irrespective of quality or station.

The signification which the Jewish interpreters have assigned to *Bnoth-ha-Adam*, was, no doubt, chosen with a view to providing a suitable antithesis to the *great men* supposed to be meant by *Bne-ha-Elohim*. It will not be denied by any that **אדם**, in , verses 1 and 3, and it may be added, in verse 5, designates the race of mankind, generally: and no reason can be shown, sufficient to warrant the limitation of its meaning, in verse 2, and make it denote a class or portion of the race, when the only term, **איש**, in connection with which it has a limited application, is wanting. Even though the rendering of *Bne-ha-Elohim*, *magnates*, or *sons of the great*, were the proper one, it would not

follow that Bnoth-ha-Adam must mean *poor women*, for *Bne-ha-Elohim* and *Bne-Ish* are different expressions. Dr. J. C. K. Hofmann rightly says (I. 85), “The antithesis of Bne-Adam and Bne-Ish has nothing to do with that of Bnoth-ha-Adam and Bne-ha-Elohim” - and he adds the weighty remark, that “הָאָדָם, in Bnoth-ha-Adam, must designate the whole race, not less in verse 2, than in verses 1 and 3, especially as it is said in verse 1, that daughters were *born to them* (לָהֶם), that is, to men *generally*.” In short, women of high station, as well as of low, are Bnoth-ha-Adam, and the title can have no other signification than that, which any impartial and unprejudiced reader of the passage would attach to it – Adam’s daughters - his female descendants – womankind - just as Bne-Adam, when not in contrast with Bne-Ish, means simply *mankind*, men in general, without distinction. (See Deut. xxxii. 8.) Nor will this be questioned, unless by those who are resolved, at all hazards, to uphold a favourite interpretation of a passage in the Bible. (See § x.)

It is somewhat difficult to understand how this explanation of the passage found favour and acceptance to the extent that it appears to have done. Even though we should grant that the terms Bne-ha-Elohim and Bnoth-ha-Adam, may have the significations assigned to them, who can fail to see the extreme improbability of such an occurrence as that which the interpreters suppose? How utterly unlikely it is, or rather, how absurd the supposition, that all the great men of the day, or even a large proportion of them - persons occupying high places in the antediluvian world-should, with one consent, as it were, and about the same time, have been led to form such alliances, although these might not be contrary to the Divine ordination, as those of Gen. vi. 2 undoubtedly were. How remarkable, too, the circumstance, that female beauty should then have appeared, only or chiefly, as is implied, in women of the lower ranks of life: and not less strange, that it should have possessed such strongly attractive power, in the case of *all* these Bne-Elohim.

But stranger still were the results which followed these alliances. How shall we explain the fact, that “when the sons of God - *judges and princes of the primeval age* - came in to the daughters of men - *women of low condition in life* - and they bare children

to them, the same became *mighty men which were of old, men of renown*” - an heroic race, of gigantic size, celebrated for their exploits through all succeeding time? - a result, not less unaccountable then, than now: but, indeed, an impossible result, if these gigantic heroes were, as there is reason for believing, identical with the Nephilim (called giants in our authorized version) who, we have no doubt, were something more than human beings, and derived their origin, in part, from a superhuman source.

Interpreting the passage in accordance with the usage of the Hebrew language, we find that all such difficulties disappear. It seems hardly possible to believe that the “*fili illustrium*,” or the “**υιοι των δυναστευοντων**” of those times should, *generally*, have been so captivated by the beauty of the “*fili plebis*,” the women “of the meaner sort,” as to “take them wives of all which they chose.” But it does not appear to us so inconceivable, that beings of a high order in creation should admire the beauty, peculiar to them, of creatures of another order in the great family of God

“Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
Not spirits, yet to heavenly spirits bright
Little inferiour” -

creatures made originally “but a little lower” than themselves - capable, like them, of interchanging thought with other rational beings - and further, possessed of the attribute of fleshly corporeal beauty - an attribute not belonging to their own, although the higher nature. “The angels,” says Nägelsbach (§ 125), “saw corporeality display itself in beauty and fulness in humankind, and in loveliest form in woman, who represents pre-eminently the corporeal element in the dualism of the sexes.”* They thus

*When Adam converses with Raphael (*Par. Lost.*, B. VIII.), and speaks of his meeting with Eve, and of himself as – “I only weak against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance,” he adds :

“Or Nature failed in me, and left some part
Not proof enough such object to sustain :
Or, from my side subducting, took perhaps
More than enough: at least on her bestowed

beheld a loveliness, which did not appertain to their own ethereal corporeality (see Note E) : and that they should regard it with feelings of pleasure or admiration,* is not more wonderful, than

Too much of ornament, in outward show
 Elaborate, of inward less exact.
 For well I understand in the prime end
 Of nature her the inferiour, in the mind
 And inward faculties, which most excel :
 In outward also her resembling less
 His image who made both, and less expressing
 The character of that dominion given
 O'er other creatures: yet when I approach
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
 And in herself complete, so well to know
 Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
 Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.”

*The poets have given expression to this idea. Moore, in his “Loves of the Angels,” represents one as recalling to the recollection of his companions the effect which the sight of the newly-created woman had produced upon them –

“When, 'mid the worship and surprise
 Of circling angels, woman's eyes.
 First open'd upon heaven and earth :
 And from their lids a thrill was sent,
 That through each living spirit went,
 Like first light through the firmament:

Can you forget how gradual stole
 The fresh awaken'd breath of soul
 Throughout her perfect form - which seem'd
 To grow transparent, as there beam'd
 That dawn of mind within-?”

And then he describes one in whom there was

“A union, which the hand
 Of Nature kept for her alone,
 Of everything most playful, bland,
 Voluptuous, spiritual, grand,
 In angel-natures and her own –
 Oh I this it was that drew me nigh
 One who seem'd kin to heaven as I,
 My bright twin-sister of the sky-”

that we should contemplate, with feelings of a like kind, the beauty, the gracefulness, or other excellence of creatures, between whom and ourselves the disparity is greater, than that which exists between human beings and angels.

“That the rational inhabitants of one world,” says Dr. Dwight (*System of Theology* - Sermon 20), “should be interested in the concerns of another, and, if allowed by God thus to act, interfere in them, in a manner suited to their respective dispositions, is in a high degree probable. We, certainly, if we were able, and were permitted to visit the planetary worlds, should take such a part in the important concerns of their inhabitants as suited our dispositions. If we were governed by benevolent motives, we should save or relieve them, so far as was in our power, from dangers and sufferings: if by malevolent ones, we should promote their distress and ruin. We do, in reality, thus act in this world, not in our own affairs only, but in those of others - in the

Another angel

“One morn, on earthly mission sent,
 And midway choosing where to light,
 I saw from the blue element
 Oh beautiful but fatal sight ! -
 One of earth's fairest womankind,
 Half veil'd from view, or rather shrined
 In the clear crystal of a brook:
 Which, while it hid no single gleam
 Of her young beauties, made them look
 More spirit-like, as they might seem
 Though the dim shadowing of a dream.
 Pausing in wonder, I look'd on,
 While, playfully around her breaking
 The waters, that like diamonds shone,
 She moved in light of her own making.”

In a note on this passage, the poet says, “This is given on the authority, or rather according to the fancy, of some of the Fathers, who suppose that the women of earth were first seen by the angels in this situation; and St. Basil has even made it the serious foundation of rather a rigorous rule for the toilet of his fair disciples.” But what, if St. Paul has said that “because of the angels ought the woman to have a covering on her head”? - See below, § XVIII.

affairs of strangers, as well as of our friends, and of those of distant nations and countries, as well as our own. But there is nothing more unnatural or improbable in our interference, if it were permitted, In the concerns of distant worlds, than in those of distant nations.”

This view is quite reasonable, and not less so in the case of angelic, than of human beings. “hat degree of communication might have existed between the human race, and the inhabitants of the other world, had our first parents kept the commands of the Creator, can only,” to use the words of Sir W. Scott “be subject of unavailing speculation.” “We do not perhaps presume too much,” he continues, “when we suppose with Milton, that one necessary consequence of eating the ‘fruit of that forbidden tree’ was, removing to a wider distance from celestial essences, the beings who, although originally but a little lower than the angels, had by their own crime forfeited the gift of immortality, and

In Lord Byron's “Heaven and Earth,” the archangel Raphael warns the sinning angels, and, reminding them of the fall of Satan, he says –

“Yet undestroy'd, be warn'd! eternity
 With him, or with his God, is in your choice :
 He hath not tempted you : be Cannot tempt
 The angels, from his further snares exempt:
 But man bath listen'd to his voice.
 And ye to woman's - beautiful she is,
 The serpent's voice less subtle than her kiss.
 The snake but vanquish'd dust: but she will draw
 A second host from heaven, to break heaven's law.”

We only add words (partly quoted in the text) to which Milton makes the fallen archangel give utterance, when he fiat beheld the human pair in the garden -

“What do mine eyes with grief behold!
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanced,
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps
 Not spirits, yet to heavenly spirits bright'
 Little inferiour: whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love; so lively shines
 In them divine resemblance, and such grace
 The hand that form'd them on their shape hath pour'd.”
Par. Lost., B. IV.

degraded themselves into an inferior rank of creation.” - *Letters on Demonology*. London, 1830, p. 50.

That communication between the inhabitants of the two worlds would have been of a more intimate character than it is, had mankind continued in their original state, cannot admit of a doubt. Angels and human beings are still, however, members of the great rational and morally-accountable family of God: and on this ground alone we claim with them a relationship not remote. That angels occupy the highest place in the scale of created intelligences, is reasonably inferred from the titles bestowed upon them in the Bible - Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers - from the intimate communion with God. (Matt. xviii. 10; Luke i. 19; Rev. vii. 11) to which they are admitted and from the circumstances of splendour and glory in which they have occasionally appeared in the world. Man occupies a station in the same series of rational and accountable* beings - a lower one, indeed, than that occupied by the lowest order of angels - for we prefer the view of those who think there are more than one - “but to that circle of spirits he unquestionably belongs. He is one of them not as a proscribed and degraded race, to be cut off from all fellowship with the heavenly hosts, and with the

*We employ these terms, not perhaps the best that might be found: but the best that present themselves, to define that great class or circle of beings, in which we regard angels and men as included. The term intelligent, often used for the purpose, appears to us unsuitable, as we think it must be held to be comprehensive of other beings besides these. We reject, with abhorrence, all theories which connect the human species, as to its origin, with pre-existing and inferior forms of animal existence, whether on the principle of progressive development, or any other: and we recognize at once the vast difference, *in degree*, between human and animal intelligence: but we doubt whether a distinction in kind between these can properly be made, and whether, therefore, we are right in excluding “the beast of the field” from the order of intelligent beings, and maintaining that the lowest in the series is man. That there exists “a great gulf” between him and the most highly endowed of what are usually termed the irrational creatures, is evident - he was made “in the image of God,” and ordained to have dominion over them. That his future destination is different from theirs (for we are not disposed to deny the immortality of the brutes) is also to be maintained. But who will show that reason is the property, exclusively, of man? Are all the actions of the lower animals directed by instinct? Or, are there not instances on record of an intelligence displayed

bare claim of immortality to sanction his admission into their order; but he is offered the means of *restoration* to what he was in that golden age, when he conversed even with the Highest Intelligence, and was the companion of angels. This restoration will place him again in direct communion with those beings, to whom, by his immortality, he is legitimately connected.”* Angels and men are thus but different members of a family; and “as in the members of a family on earth, there is a family likeness apparent in the midst of peculiar and individualizing traits, of features, complexion, and form; so is there a family likeness existing among all the members of the family of God, both in heaven and on earth.” The angel is an immaterial being, clothed, we believe, with a subtile, ethereal, corporeal form: man is, likewise, an immaterial being, clothed indeed, now, with a gross, earthly body, akin to that of the beast, but hereafter to be clothed with a spiritual, celestial one, akin to that of the angel - “half-beast, half-angel,” the description we have somewhere met with, might thus, not altogether inappropriately, be applied to the human being. He forms, in fact, the connecting link between, perhaps, the lowest of the angelic orders and the order of terrestrial beings inferior to himself. And “as we have borne the

by some of them, in no respect, apparently, differing from what we term reason - at least so closely resembling reason, as not “to be distinguished from it, but by the microscopical powers of metaphysics, or through the partial medium of human pride”?

To those for whom the subjects of Animal Intelligence and Animal Futurity possess an interest - who think it possible that other ends, besides that of ministering, for the present, to the wants or the pleasures of mankind, were intended in the creation of the inferior creatures - and who, in view of the treatment to which they are sometimes subjected, compassionate those inoffensive beings, who have not the power or disposition to defend themselves - we heartily recommend the perusal of “Animal Futurity: a Plea for the Immortality of the Brutes,” by J. Hamilton, 1877 - a little volume, ably written in a thoroughly Christian spirit, and with fullest reverence for the authority of the Word of God, - one that will yield gratification to those with whom the hypothesis of a future life being in reserve for those beings is not a subject for ridicule.

*Swainson's *Natural History* (in Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*). See section on the Station of Man in the Creation, p. 11.

image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,” for we shall be “as the angels which are in heaven.” If there is thus, in the nature and constitution of man, the capability of becoming like unto the angels - if the body of flesh and blood can be so changed, as to become spiritual and incorruptible, while yet the identity of the glorified body with that which was entombed in corruption remains - then It may be thought, perhaps, that these classes of beings cannot, even now, be so completely dissimilar in their natures _as some people evidently imagine. That affections and dispositions which belong to human nature do likewise exist in the angelic, must be evident to the reader of the Bible. Of the interest which holy angels feel in the well-being of mankind, as well as of the part which they take in promoting it, we have ample assurance; and not less clearly is there indicated there the disposition, alas, of wicked spirits towards our race. From the same infallible source we learn that, however unlike to ours the angelic constitution may be, it has not been a bar to intercourse with human beings, nor has it prevented them from acting upon, or in conjunction with, mankind in a variety of ways; and yet their capability of performing some of the acts attributed to them is as far beyond our power to explain, as is their capability of having the connexion with human beings, which the true interpretation of our passage implies.

Having regard to these considerations, and to the fact that, notwithstanding the Fall, visible intercourse still subsisted, to some extent, between the angelic world and ours, and that the general character of the antediluvian period was a strange and preternatural one - we cannot think it incredible, or ,even unlikely, that the regard of angels could be attracted by the beauty or the comeliness of creatures, different indeed from themselves, and inferior in the scale of creation, yet not so far inferior, or so wholly different, as to render impossible, or even incompatible with their own higher nature and properties, the existence of an intimate companionship. We cannot hold it to be an absurd supposition that “angels,” to adopt the words of the ablest writer on this subject, “who, *in their state of holiness*, desire to look into the deepest mystery of grace on earth (1 Pet. i. 12), should,

in their apostasy from that holiness, have desired to look into the deepest mystery of *nature on earth*” - and, transgressing the limits of their nature and destination, not merely to look into that mystery, but also, if it were possible for them, to participate in It themselves. (Kurtz, 98, and *Hist. Old Cov.* 1. 100.)

§ IV.-SUPPORTERS OF THIS INTERPRETATION.

The Jewish interpretation of our passage appears for the first time, as Professor Kurtz thinks, in the first century of our era, in the Targum of Onkelos, in which *Bne-ha-Elohim* is rendered **בְּנֵי רַבְרַבִּיָּא**, “sons of the great.” It is believed, indeed, by some, that the Targum called by the name of Onkelos cannot lay claim, at least in its present shape, to a higher antiquity than the end of the third, or beginning of the fourth, century, having been finally redacted about that time in the Babylonian schools. Dean Prideaux, on the contrary, supposes it to have been published before the birth of Christ; but Hävernick seems to agree with those who place its publication in the first century. HI represents Onkelos, in accordance with the Jewish tradition, ~ having been the disciple of Gamaliel (Acts v. 34 and xxii. 3) St. Paul’s teacher, who died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem:

Rabbi Simeon Ben Jochai (2nd cent.), a disciple of Akibha may be named as a supporter of this interpretation. Delitzsch says, on the authority of *Bereschitz Rabba*, that he translated *Bne-ha-Elohim*, **בְּנֵי רַבְרַבִּיָּא** the term, it may be remarked, which Onkelos employs, Deut. xix. 1.7, as the rendering of the Hebrew *shophetim*, judges. About the same time flourished, also the two Hellenistic Jews, Aquila and Symmachus, of whom at least the latter adopts the *fili-magnatum* interpretation. Aquila, if we may Judge from what remains of his version (published A.D. 128), adhered closely to the letter of the Hebrew, so much so that he is sometimes unintelligible, (Häv. 307.) Hence, it is impossible to determine what meaning he may have attached to *Bne-ha-Elohim*, or to the **υἱος του Θεου**, by which he has translated it. Delitzsch reckons him (on the insufficient ground of, as it appears, Jerome’s remark, quoted below) amongst the supporters of the

angel-explanation. Drs. Kurtz and Keil regard him, perhaps rightly, as a supporter of the *fili-magnatum* view. “The **υἱορ των Θεων**, ot Aquila,” says the latter (Zeit. 222). “denotes not sons of gods or angels, but sons of princes or judges of the earth, because we dare not impute to this strict Jew, that he entertained the pagan notion of sons of the gods,” “although,” he adds in a note, “Jerome has already understood it so - *Aquila plurali numero filios Deorum ausus est dicere, Deos intelligens angelos sive sanctos.*” Dr. Keil is wrong, however, in attributing to paganism exclusively the notion of “sons of gods,” *i.e.*, of beings whose origin is partly human, partly superhuman, as this idea has been entertained by Jews and Christians: we are also, perhaps, hardly warranted in concluding that Aquila was quite uninfluenced by pagan opinions, inasmuch as he was originally a pagan: and having, from motives of a corrupt kind, professed Christianity, he was, after some time, excommunicated, on account of the practice of magical arts, whereupon he became a Jewish proselyte. (Prideaux, *Conn.*, Part II. - Townley's *Illustrations*, vol. i.) Of Symmachus, who flourished in the reigns of Severus and Caracalla, Dean Prideaux says that he sought to express the meaning of the writer without following his words too closely, thus making his work rather a paraphrase than a translation. He renders, accordingly, **υἱορ των δυναστευοντων**, sons of the rulers.” (*Hexapla* of Origen, ed. C. F. Bahrtdt, 1769.)

The Jewish interpretation is found in the Samaritan version - a translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch into the Samaritan dialect, made, like the Targums, for popular use, when the original language had ceased to be understood. Its age has not been determined: but Hävernick supposes it to have been mainly dependent on a Greek translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch, mentioned by some of the Fathers, and made probably not earlier than the second century. *Bne-ha-Elohim* is represented, in the Samaritan version, by a term equivalent to *fili Sultanorum*, or *Dominatorum* : but the Latin of Morinus, which serves for both the Samaritan version and Samaritan Text, in the Paris Polyglot, is *fili Dei*.

Next in point of time may be mentioned the Targum on the Pentateuch, wrongly ascribed to Jonathan Ben Uzziel, which

from “the mention in it of the Talmud, and the use which it makes of the latter - the expressions indicative of a later age - and the barbarous style, abounding in foreign words” - is believe to have originated in the second half of the seventh century. (Häv. 337.) The rendering here is the same as that of Onkelos - *Bne-ha-Ravrevaya*, “sons of the great.” It may be observed, however, that the author, like Raschi, as will appear hereafter, while assigning this meaning to *Bne-ha-Elohim*, evidently believed that the passage contained also a record of the abode on earth of fallen angels.

In some writings of a later date, a like interpretation of *Bne-ha-Elohim* appears, as in the Arabic translation of the Pentateuch made by R Saadiah Gaon (10th cent.), President of the Jewish school at Sura in Babylonia: and in another, known to Biblical interpreters as *Arabs Erpenii*, from the name of its editor, Thomas Van Erpen (Latinized Erpenius), a native of Holland and one of the earliest of European orientalists. The version Saadiah is printed in the London and Paris Polyglots. It is worth remarking that, while in v. 2 the author has “*viderunt filii illustrium filias plebis pulchras*” - in v. 4 he renders “*filii Elohim ingressi sunt ad filias Cain.*” (*Lat. interp. Paris Polyglot.*) The Pentateuch, edited by Erpenius (*Pentateuchus Mosis, Arabice, Lugduni Batavor. ex typographia Erpeniana linguarum orientalium. 1622. 4to.*), was the work, according to Hävernick, of an African Jew of the 13th century: and is mentioned by Delitzsch as supporting the Jewish view.

In the period which intervened between the making of these Arabic versions, flourished the two celebrated rabbins, Solomon Ben Isaac (11th cent.), known as Raschi, and also, though erroneously, as Jarchi: and Aben Ezra (12th cent.) These rabbins make mention, in their commentaries, of other explanations of our passage (see § xix.), but give the preference to that of the *filii magnatum*. Raschi explains *Bne-ha-Elohim*, Gen. vi. 2 **בני השופטים והשופטים** “sons of princes and judges:”* Aben Ezra, **בני השופטים**, sons of the judges.” Kimchi also, is

* Pentateuchus, cum Targg. et comm. Raschi, Aben Ezra, etc.- Berolini, 1705.

mentioned in the *Speaker's Commentary*, as supporting this interpretation.

Not justly, in view of its history, has Dr. Keil said (p. 222) that this explanation of the passage may be regarded as the traditional one of the Jewish schools in Palestine and Babylon. He also observes that it has never found much favour with Christian expositors, while Kurtz adds that the Sethite-explanation has had few supporters amongst the Jews. Of Christian writers, who adopt the former, Keil names only three - Molina, Varenius, and Mercerus - the last-named (Jean Le Mercier) a Frenchman, author of a comment on Genesis, editor of the Hebrew Lexicon of Pagninus, and one of the greatest masters of that language in the 16th century. Selden and Vorstius, also, are mentioned in the *Speaker's Commentary*: but by far the greater number of Christian writers, who comment on this portion of Genesis, have preferred either the Sethite, or the angel-interpretation.

The occurrence related in our passage has been represented by Schiller, Herder, and Ph. Buttmann, in accordance with the Jewish interpretation. (Delitzsch.) The poet Moore, likewise, notwithstanding his treatment of the subject in his poem of "The Loves of the Angels," appears to have regarded this as the true explanation. He did not believe, as we learn from the short preface to the poem, that the subject of his story could properly be termed a Scriptural one: or, that any other origin could be assigned to the notion on which it is founded - that of the love of angels for women - than an erroneous translation (as he supposed it to be) by the LXX. of Gen. vi. 2. The reasons which may have induced the Seventy to adopt the rendering, **αγγελοι του Θεου** (if this be, indeed, the genuine reading), or the ample grounds on which it may be supported, the poet does not seem to have taken into consideration. He adds, that he has sought to communicate to the story a *moral* interest, using the subject as "an allegorical medium, through which might be shadowed out the fall of the soul from its original purity- the loss of light and happiness which it suffers, in the pursuit of this world's perishable pleasures - and the punishments, both from conscience and from Divine justice, with which impurity, pride, and presumptuous inquiry into the awful secrets of God, are sure to be visited."

Such an application of the subject may be made, with propriety and advantage. For ourselves, however, believing, as we do, that the notion, on which the poet founded his story, has a real foundation in Holy Scripture, "The Loves of the Angels," and Byron's grander piece of "Heaven and Earth," possess a charm beyond what they could have, did we look upon them as nothing more than creations of poetic fancy. In the scenes which they present to our view - in the sentiments of love, of pity, or of terror, which they portray - in the words of endearment, or of regret, to which they give expression - in the "impassioned picture of the strong and devoted attachment inspired into the daughters of men by angel forms" - and in the representation of the human passions that "drew angels down to earth" - we feel that we have before us something not quite unlike to that which, we are convinced, had real existence in the days preceding the Deluge.

We conclude this notice of the Jewish explanation of our passage, by observing, that previously to the time, about which appears to have been first propounded, the correct view of the meaning of *Bne-Elohim* and of the passage, generally, had been taken by Jewish, and, not improbably, by some Christian writers also. Apart from the fact, that the Septuagint translators may, with much reason, be regarded as supporting our view (see § xviii) the angel-story was set forth, but with mythic embellishments, by the author of the Book of Enoch, as early, according to some, 110 B.C., and, at all events, not later than some thirty years before the birth of Christ. Indeed, this appears to have been the view entertained by the ancient Jewish Synagogue (see § xviii), no other, perhaps, having been advanced, or at least having met with any general acceptance, until about the commencement of the Christian era. It is also possible that the opinions of the two Hellenistic Jews, Josephus and Philo, were made known to the world, previously to the completion of the Targum of Onkelos as well as those of SS. Peter and Jude - assuming, for the present that the passages in their epistles, hereafter to be noticed, refer to the sin of the Bne-ha-Elohim, and were so intended by these apostles. What may have been the motives which prompted Jewish writers to devise a new and very different explanation of

the passage - or, whether, in doing so, they were influenced solely by dogmatic considerations respecting the nature of angels, or by that sort of reluctance to receive whatever is supernatural or extraordinary, which influences the views of some theologians and philosophers of our times - we have not the information which might assist us in forming an opinion. That Pseudo-Jonathan and Raschi, at least, were not led, by any such considerations, to prefer the traditional explanation of the Jewish schools, is manifest from the commentary of the latter on Num. xiii 33, and from the Targum of Jonathan, Gen. vi. 4 (see § xix.) It is quite conceivable, however, that the originators of the Jewish view may have been induced, by some notion of the impossibility of the angelic intercourse in question, to seek a substitute for the interpretation which implied it. - R. Simeon Ben Jochai, in the second century is said to have pronounced anathema on those who held the Bne-ha-Elohim to be angels-and observing that the usage of the Hebrew language sometimes connects, with the terms *Elohim* and *Adam*, the significations, respectively, of persons "of high and low degree," the idea of interpreting the principal terms in the passage, in accordance with this usage, may have suggested itself to their minds.

§ V.-MENDELSSOHN'S VIEW.

Before we proceed to examine the interpretation of Gen. vi. 1-4, according to which the *Bne-ha-Elohim* are pious descendants of Seth, an explanation of the passage, proposed by the eminent Jewish writer, Mendelssohn, already referred to in our enumeration at page 10, may with propriety be noticed in this place, as it may be said to combine, to some extent, the peculiar features or the *fili magnatum* and Sethite-interpretations. We must premise indeed, that our acquaintance with it is derived not directly from the works of the author, but from the "*Bible Illustrations*" of Dr. Kitto, by whom it is referred to, with approval. The circumstance. of its being commended by one whose writings have had such wide circulation, and whose opinion on any Biblical topic must be regarded as a weighty one, forms a sufficient reason for specially noticing it here. Having commented on some other

interpretations or our passage, Dr. Kitto introduces this of Mendelssohn with the remark, that it nearly meets that which Christian expositors usually give, but differs in some particulars from He presents it thus :-

“Mankind appear at that time to have been divided into two classes. The one, those first in descent from Adam and Eve at their children, who were possessed of physical and mental Perfections, and acknowledged the Lord, according to the instruction their first parents, and are therefore called, sons or children of God. And the second class, the remoter descendants of the first parents, who were inferior to their progenitors in physical at mental powers, knew not the Lord, and therefore are called, sons or children of men.” Dr. Kitto remarks, “This is a very noticeable view of the passage, and seems to meet more perfectly than any other the physical as well as the spiritual conditions of the case. It seems to us, that nothing can be clearer than that the sacred text means to state, that the class called ‘sons of God’ were of a race not only spiritually but physically superior to that from which they took wives. This explanation assumes that there was a gradual degeneracy in the physical qualities of man after the Fall, as well as in his spiritual state. In this period, when, from the length of man's life, many generations were contemporary with each other, it is quite probable that men of the older and mightier generations might be won over to contract alliances with women of the later and feebler generations. The physical degeneracy of strength and stature, which they might lament or scorn in the men, might seem to form an attraction and a beauty in the women, and might indeed constitute their seducing power. It is admitted that the were surpassingly fair in the sight of these ‘sons or God;’ and this implies some difference between these women and those to whom they were accustomed, which it is otherwise difficult to account for. A life of nearly a thousand years’ duration allowed of intermarriages between different generations, without the same objections from great discrepancy of age as the shortness of man’s present life occasions. The explanation here given has the further advantage of supplying an answer to the difficulty which has been felt from the apparent intimation in the sacred text, that a mightier race of men grew out of these unions than those of the generation

immediately preceding: for if the fact of physical degeneracy be assumed, it follows that the immediate progeny of these elder generations would, according to the common analogies of life, be more powerful men than would arise from intermarriages between persons on both sides of the best generation.”

“We have thus wrought out,” he adds, “the view suggested in the extract we have given, because it appears in some respects to meet the difficulties which, on the one hand disincline us to suppose the ‘sons of God’ were merely men of the same generation; and which, on the other, make one afraid to say that they were angels.” - *Daily Bib. Illustr. Antediluvians, &c.*, pp. 138-140. Against this explanation the same objections lie, as against all others which exclude the superhuman. It must be rejected as resting on assumptions and suppositions, for which there is no foundation in the Sacred Record. It is, for example, assuming what should be proved, when it is said that the first descendants of Adam and Eve were known as *sons of God*, and the remoter as *sons or children of men*: nor does there appear to be reason for supposing that the latter, in the antediluvian times, were inferior physically or intellectually to the former. We cannot but think, too, that an objection to this theory, more serious than Dr. Kitto seems to regard it, arises from the fact of the great disparity, in point of age, of the supposed parties. It is not probable that such alliances would have been contracted to so great an extent as that implied. Finally against this, and all other explanations of our passage, which regard the *Bne-Elohim* as human beings, one grand objection may be urged, namely, that they do not suggest any adequate cause for the enormous wickedness which, it is admitted by all interpreters resulted from the union of the *sons of God* with *daughters of men*, and that they fail to account for the necessity of a judgment so tremendous, and so universally destructive of the race, as was that of the Deluge.