

# ABSTRACT

This work attempts to broaden our knowledge of the Jewish gnostic phenomenon of the first centuries B.C. and A.D., by re-creating this religious tendency's exegesis of Genesis 6:1-4.

An analysis of the orthodox "counter-traditions" attached to the passage in question allowed conclusions to be drawn as to the content of the original Jewish gnostic exegesis and also assisted in explaining certain anomalies in the orthodox exegetical traditions and the relationship of these same anomalies to the then current socio-political situation.

The orthodox literature consulted includes the MT, the LXX, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphs, the Jewish Apologetic writings, the Targumim, the latter Greek translations, and the Midrashim.

## ABSTRACT

Cet ouvrage tente d'élargir nos connaissances du phénomène juif gnostique des premiers siècles avant et après Jésus-Christ, à travers une recreation de l'exégèse de la Genèse 6:1-4 de cette tendance religieuse.

Cette recreation a été réalisée au moyen d'une analyse des "contre-traditions" orthodoxes rattachées à ce passage, qui nous permet de tirer des conclusions quant à l'exégèse gnostique juive. Cette analyse nous permet aussi d'expliquer certaines anomalies dans les traditions de l'exégèse orthodoxe et de relier ces mêmes anomalies à la situation socio-politique de l'époque.

La littérature orthodoxe consultée inclue le MT, le LXX, les Apocryphes, et les Pseudépigraphes, les Ecrits Apologétiques juifs, les Targumim, les traductions grecques ultérieures et les Midrashim.

THE EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 6 AND GNOSTICISM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of Jewish gnosticism of the first centuries B.C./A.D. has prompted much heated debate over the past century.<sup>1</sup> While it is almost certain that a Jewish gnostic phenomenon did exist, its exact character and currency remain obscure, owing to a paucity of source material. The contemporary sources are almost mute, save the occasional cryptic reference.<sup>2</sup> The later sources do provide much more information.<sup>3</sup> But while this information is useful in broadening our understanding of the systematic gnosticism of a Valentinus or a Basilides, it can hardly be applied without major qualification to the study of the Jewish gnostics of the first century B.C./A.D. The only sure avenue of investigation is the analysis of the literature dated to that period. Although direct evidence is sorely lacking, there is the potential of uncovering useful information from the more indirect evidence. For example, by selecting passages from scripture which may have lent themselves to a Jewish gnostic interpretation, and by investigating the orthodox traditions that have been attached to these passages, it then becomes possible to see the original gnostic exegetical tradition reflected in the nuances of the orthodox counter-traditions. One passage that can be accommodated to such an enterprise is Genesis 6:1-4.

Gen. 6:1-4 is a self-sufficient unit serving to introduce

the events of the Deluge. The illusive character of these four lines, coupled with their provocative subject matter has given rise to many varied traditions over the centuries.<sup>4</sup> The most striking feature of the earliest body of traditions is that they are uniformly polemical; a polemic that this study contends can best be understood as directed against Jewish gnosticism.

The presence here of a sexual intercourse motif would have prompted gnostic interest, since the ancient world perceived the revelation of knowledge and the sexual act as related. For example, the Hebrew for cognitive knowledge, *דָּעָה*, also means knowledge in the carnal sense. It is therefore not surprising that these four lines would have been closely studied by those of a gnostic predisposition.

It is the intention of this thesis to recreate this early Jewish gnostic exegesis through the analysis of its contemporaneous Jewish orthodox traditions. As shall be seen, the Jewish gnostic exegesis to emerge from this investigation bears little resemblance to the well documented systematic gnosticism of the later centuries. Instead, it is better understood as an incipient gnosticism or a sympathy or flirtation with the gnostic ethos of dualism, esoteric revelation and antinomianism. For this reason, it will be necessary to differentiate these enigmatic gnostic exegetes and savants from the latter gnostics. For the purposes of this work, the former will be termed proto-gnostics and their movement or tendency proto-gnosticism or gnosis.

The traditions to be examined fall within two broad cate-

gories. There are first the exegetical traditions of the MT, the LXX, the Targumim, and the later Greek translations (Aquila; Theodotion). The second major body of information is found in the more discursive works, such as the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Jewish Apologetics, and the Midrashim.

The structure of the investigation is admittedly awkward, but no other tenable alternative presents itself. It was expected that an analysis of given themes or terms within this passage would be adequate. However, this method proved much too disjointed for an integrated assessment of the passage as a whole. A general overview, while the most desirable approach, again posed difficulties, in that it involved interminable cross-referencing that would serve to confuse rather than elucidate the discussion. Instead, the exegetical traditions will be traced in a chronological text-by-text manner, beginning with the MT and concluding with Bereshith Rabbah. The advantages of this approach are that it involves minimal cross-referencing in comparison to a general overview, while reading as a more integrated whole than the thematic approach. Also, being chronological allows conclusions to be drawn as to the evolution of both the gnosis exegesis and the orthodox counter-exegesis as well as the relationship of this same evolution to the religio-political currents of the day.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>A discussion of this debate can be found in Gnostic Studies I, ed. G. Quispel (Istanbul: 1974), pp. 214 ff., as well as G. G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), pp. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup>The most common word used to describe Jewish Heretics in Rabbinic literature is minim. According to M. Friedlander, Der vorchristliche judische Gnostizismus (Gottingen: 1898), these heretics are gnostic. R. T. Herford attacked this view in Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), affirming that the minim were Jewish Christians. Scholarship in general accepts Herford's position as the more likely, although Scholem, p. 3, would seem more in favor of Friedlander.

<sup>3</sup>This latter material includes the writings of the Church Fathers and the recently discovered gnostic library of Nag Hammadi.

<sup>4</sup>These traditions are conveniently assembled by L. Jung, "Fallen Angels," Jewish Quarterly Review n.s. 15 (1924-25): 467-502; 16 (1925-26): 45-88, 171-205, 287-336, as well as B. J. Bamberger, Fallen Angels (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952).



## II. THE MT

Genesis 6:1-4 occupies an important position as a component of the Deluge myth. These four lines serve to explain why the earth became corrupt (6:5-8; 11-12) and why, as a consequence, God felt obliged to destroy His creation. A second feature of this passage is its unity. It is a self-sufficient myth that gives the impression of having been forced into the texts of Chapters 5 and 6. "In all probability, we should be right in regarding these four verses as a fragment from some quite independent source of early Hebrew tradition, most certainly distinct from the regular materials represented in J and P."<sup>1</sup>

It can be assumed that these qualities of the text stimulated the curiosity of the ancients, an assumption that is in fact born out by the disproportionate number of traditions that have been attached to it. But in attempting to interpret this text, these early scholars would have met with the same difficulties that once confounded their modern counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

Gen. 6:1-4 is illusive and disjointed, as well as containing many basic linguistic difficulties. The first such major difficulty is the appellation of the myth's major actors, the בני האלהים (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) or בני אלהים (Ps. 29:1; 89:7(6); comp. Dan. 3:25), never בני

is the name given in the Old Testament to the angels . . . ."<sup>3</sup>  
It is not hard to imagine the problem this posed for the early exegetes, in that the subsequent narrative reports that these angels had intercourse with women and sired children.

Verse 3 in its entirety is problematic. The intent of the verse is as follows. God passes judgement on mankind, resulting in the shortening of lifetimes to 120 years. But this explanation suffers logically. The narratives that follow indicate that the post-deluvians lived much longer than 120 years. Furthermore, the judgement passed on mankind appears excessive since it is the angels who initiate the crime (v. 2) but it is mankind who is punished. If the verse's intent is unclear, the exact meaning of much of its vocabulary is even more so.

יָבִי is variously taken as "abide"; "remain"; "rule in"; "be abased"; "strive"; none of which are without objection.<sup>4</sup> יָבִי is found nowhere else in scripture. It has been taken "as a compound of three words, בָּעֵנֹר אִשָּׁר גַּם = ב-א-ש-ר-גם,"<sup>5</sup> or as a derivative of יָבִי;<sup>6</sup> neither of which is wholly satisfactory.

The נַפְלִיִּים of v. 4 is usually translated as "giants" with reference to the term's appearance in Num. 13:33. It is also possible to derive נַפְלִיִּים from the radical נָפַל, which would tend to relate the נַפְלִיִּים to the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים.<sup>7</sup> But as Ryle puts it, ". . . these are merely guesses; and we must be content to leave the etymology of 'the Nephilim', like that of 'the Rephaim', and 'the Anakim', unexplained."<sup>8</sup>

וְגַם אַחֲרַי כֵּן is likely a gloss "in order to shew that the Nephilim existed not only in primitive ages, but also at the

time of the Exodus from Egypt, as would be implied by Num. 13: 33."<sup>9</sup> But this gloss does not fit the narrative that is to follow, where the results of the flood are that "all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm upon the earth and every man;"<sup>10</sup> (Gen. 7: 21).. It would then appear that the Nephilim were somehow outside this definition of living things.

These then are the major problems of this passage and some scholarly attempts to solve these problems.<sup>11</sup> As shall be seen as this investigation develops, the early exegetes often drew far different conclusions in attempting to handle these same textual difficulties. These conclusions not only invested the terms treated above with deeper significance, but also did the same to the text's less problematic terminology.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>H. E. Ryle, The Book of Genesis (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>"Modern" is used with qualification. Although modern Ugaritic studies are useful in understanding what specific terms may have meant to the originators of the Biblical narratives, they are of little use in learning how these same terms were perceived by the exegetes of the first century B.C./A.D. Therefore, only scholars of the turn of the century have been consulted, as their approach to the text would have been much the same as that of their earlier confrères; that is, an approach without access to Ugaritic research tools.

<sup>3</sup>A. Dillman, Genesis, Vol. I, trans. W. B. Stevenson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897), p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>G. J. Spurrell, Book of Genesis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 70-71.

<sup>5</sup>W. H. Wright, The Book of Genesis in Hebrew (London: Williams & Norgate, 1859), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>See Section LXX, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Ryle, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical translation will be taken from the RSV.

<sup>11</sup>See n. 2.

### III. THE SEPTUAGINT

In Genesis 6 of the LXX, בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים is translated quite literally as υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ in verses 2 and 4. The only variant occurs in the Codex Alexandrinus with ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, in verse 2 and υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ in verse 4. P. S. Alexander seems correct in asserting that the LXX "originally read υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ in both places. It was later altered, but inconsistently."<sup>1</sup> This alteration must have occurred at a relatively early date since Philo Judaeos was aware of it.<sup>2</sup> The Alexandrian version may have been influenced by a desire for conformity with the book of Job (1:6; 2:1) where the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים is unquestionably an expression for the angels of God.<sup>3</sup> But this does not account for the majority of the texts translating בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים literally in both verses.

This is even more curious if one considers the care with which the LXX removed other anthropomorphisms.<sup>4</sup> Yet for no obvious reason they allowed this anthropomorphism to stand as a literal translation of the Hebrew. It can be suggested that this feature serves to indicate the problematic position this text enjoyed in the minds of the LXX translators.

There are a number of other curiosities in the LXX of Gen. 6 that invite comment. The term עֲלֵי is translated οἱ γίγαντες. A simple explanation comes to mind. This identification is the result of an exegesis of Num. 13:33. The MT's

description of the נפלים as בני ענק מן הנפילים, coupled with the entire context of Num. 13:22ff., suggests that the נפלים were in fact giants. However, as seems the case with any text connected with Gen. 6:1ff., Num. 13 is not without its own unique difficulties.

An equivalent for בני ענק מן הנפילים is absent from the LXX.<sup>5</sup> The question arises as to whether in this case the LXX actually represents an earlier stratum of the Hebrew text, or whether the translators chose to omit this section.

Morgenstern supports the former position: "this harmonistic gloss merely draws the logical conclusion from the mention of hanefilim in v. 33a and of bene haanak in vv. 22 and 28."<sup>6</sup> But it would seem that there was probably a more profound intent behind this interpolation than a simple desire to achieve a more harmonious text.

There is no problem of harmony that would compel the emending of the text, since the entire context of the narrative argues that the use of נפלים alone without the editorial gloss would have been in accordance with the literary intent of the original authors.<sup>7</sup>

During their mission, the spies do see the בני ענק (v. 22). In their report to the assembled people, they exhibit the gargantuan cluster of grapes with the accompanying explanation: "Yet the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large: and besides we saw the descendants of Anak there" (v. 28). After the initial negative response, Caleb is able to calm the people by assuring them that

in fact they will be capable of subduing the area. The spies, obviously, intent on preventing this attack, are then forced to enlarge on their principal recollection: "so they brought to the people of Israel an evil report of the land . . ." (v. 32). "The land through which we have gone to spy out is a land which devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature" (v. 32). They then deliver the final coup: "And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who came from the Nephilim); and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them" (v. 33). In short, if the presence of the ילדי ענק (v. 28) was not sufficient to dissuade the Israelites from entering the Promised Land, perhaps the presence of the נפלים, obviously a group more terrifying still, might prove a more effective deterrent. It is therefore likely that the interpolation was motivated by an intent other than a desire to harmonize the text.

This motivation might relate to the LXX translation. An anticipated translation of נפלים would be one stimulated by the radical נפל, suggesting that the נפלים were angelic "fallen ones". Instead, the LXX attempted to dissolve any possible relationship between the נפלים and the בני האלהים. This was achieved by turning to Num. 13 for assistance. Either from ילדי הענק (v. 28) and/or אנשי-מזות (v. 32), the LXX produced οἱ γίγαντες. It is possible that to further support this position, the MT editors added the phrase בני ענק מן הנפלים to the נפלים of v. 33, even though this interpolation was counter to the general intent of the narrative.

X

In examining the constituents of this interpolation, another element of the editors' motivation emerges. The phrase *בני ענק מן הנפילים* is manifestly awkward in construction. If the editors had had in mind only an equation of *בני הענק* with *נפלים* (so Morgenstern), a somewhat less cumbersome interpolation would have been possible. This would have been accomplished by simply setting these phrases in apposition; that is, *נפלים בני מן הנפילים הענק*, minus the prepositional phrase.

The significance of the prepositional phrase might be as follows. Assuming an identification of the *נפלים* with the angels, one may suggest that those responsible for the interpolation could not envisage angels, imagined or otherwise, being associated with a land "that devours its inhabitants". They were therefore attempting to demonstrate that the *נפילים* of Num. 13 were not in fact the true angelic *נפלים* of Gen. 6, but rather the "sons of Anak, who came from the Nephilim". It is also possible that the editors were combating the view that the *נפלים* were continuing their activity on earth (Gen. 6:4), an opinion that was common in many circles.<sup>8</sup>

This interpolation was known to Origen, which would provide a terminus ad quem somewhere in the second century A.D. and an equally vague terminus a quo in the second century B.C.<sup>9</sup> One conclusion then seems sure. Regardless of the precise intent behind this interpolation, as early as the second century B.C., the term *נפלים* was viewed as being of such sensitivity, that it demanded special editorial treatment.

Returning to the LXX of Gen. 6, *בני נור* is also translated



as  $\text{o}\dot{\iota} \gamma\dot{\iota}\gamma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ . At least a partial motive can be established here. גבור can mean "one who magnifies himself; behaves proudly; a tyrant; who is bold; audacious."<sup>10</sup> It can also mean "strong; valiant man"<sup>11</sup> which would have more positive connotations. The results of their titanic activity were anything but positive: "the wickedness of men" increased (Gen. 6:15). By employing  $\text{o}\dot{\iota} \gamma\dot{\iota}\gamma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ , the positive connotations of גבורים were eliminated, thus harmonizing verses 4 and 5 and the subsequent Deluge narrative.

More important for this discussion is the subsuming of נפלים and גבורים as  $\text{o}\dot{\iota} \gamma\dot{\iota}\gamma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ . Although the Hebrew is confused, it seems unlikely, as Morgenstern has shown, that the נפלים and the גבורים are identical:

By practically all scholars the term (נפלים) is identified with הגבורים of v. 4b, on the ground that הנפלים must be the antecedent of the pronoun הנה. . . . Far more probably the antecedent of hemah is the understood object of וילדו; in other words, v. 4b seems to say that it was the children who were born from the union of the האלהים בני with the human women who became the גבורים, the giants of old.<sup>12</sup>

Besides the linguistic questions, the LXX translators were likely moved by theological considerations that precipitated their translation. By making the גבורים and the נפלים one and the same, the possibility of relating the נפלים to the angelic בני האלהים was eliminated.

In summary, the most persistent feature that has emerged is that the LXX was addressing specific problems which coloured its handling of the text. If we assume that at the time of the translation there was a good deal of speculation about the role of the angels in Gen. 6, a speculation that was perceived as

potentially dangerous by the LXX circle, their handling of the text begins to assume a certain logic.

By translating the בְּנוֹי הָאֱלֹהִים as ἀγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, the LXX would only have served to encourage interest in "fallen angels" by providing tacit approval for the identification of the בְּנוֹי הָאֱלֹהִים with the angels. One possible recourse would have been to demonstrate by exegetical means that בְּנוֹי הָאֱלֹהִים was in fact a human appellation. This was to be the methodology employed in the Targumim.<sup>13</sup> But the two texts that might have been accommodated in this enterprise, Ex. 21:6 and Ex. 22:8-9, seem to have been neglected.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the translators adopted a literalistic anthropomorphism; one which they must have found distasteful considering the spirit in which their translation was accomplished. In a sense, the LXX was simply "washing its hands" of the difficulty by allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions.

Regarding the handling of נְפִלִים, the LXX seems to have achieved more positive results. By using the text of Num. 13, the translators were able to employ the אֲנָשֵׁי מִדֹּת and/or the לְדִי עֹק leading to οἱ γίγαντες. Also by subsuming נְפִלִים and גִּבּוֹרִים as οἱ γίγαντες, the translators were able to dissolve the possible relationship between the נְפִלִים and the בְּנוֹי הָאֱלֹהִים.

There is a further text related to Gen. 6 that provides useful information. In Deut. 32:8, the LXX reads:

When the Most High gave to the  
nations their inheritance,  
when he separated the sons of men,  
He fixed the bounds of the peoples  
according to the number of the  
sons of God (υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ).

In place of  $\nu\iota\omicron\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\omicron\upsilon$ , the MT reads בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. In this case, the bulk of the evidence is in favor of the view that here the LXX represents an earlier stratum of the tradition which was later changed by the MT editors.

The later Greek translations of Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus all agree with the MT employing  $\nu\iota\omicron\iota\ \iota\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ . It would then seem that the Hebrew texts already had a בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל reading at the end of the first century A.D.<sup>15</sup>

Implicit in the LXX of Deut. 32:8 is the concept of the national guardianship of the angels. This concept is found in the book of Daniel (10:13-15), as well as being explicitly stated in Sirach:

He appointed a ruler for every nation,  
but Israel is the Lord's own portion. (17:17)

The most logical origin for this early tradition of angelic guardianship is the LXX of Deut. 32:8. It is indeed of interest that Pseudo-Jonathan mentions angels (מלאכיָא) as well as the children of Israel in his treatment of the passage.

It would then seem that the MT editors also evidenced some degree of sensitivity to two important terms in Gen. 6:1-4; נְפִלִים (Num. 13:32) and בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (Deut. 32:8).

There is nothing thus far in this investigation that would point conclusively to a sensitivity to a proto-gnostic exegesis on the part of the LXX. As shall be seen in examining I Enoch, a work roughly contemporaneous with the LXX, proto-gnostic speculation was common enough as to have left a large mark on this apocalyptic work.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>P. S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6," Journal of Jewish Studies 24 (1973), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>On the Giants, II:6 ff.; On the Unchangeability of God, I:1-4; Questions on Genesis, I:92.

<sup>3</sup>The LXX reads here  $\delta\iota\ \alphaγγελου\ του\ θεου$  (1:6; 2:1) and  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \alphaγγελο\iota\ μου$  (38:7).

<sup>4</sup>Such as Gen. 5:22-24; Ex. 24:10 ff.

<sup>5</sup>The Dead Sea material provides no help here, while the Samaritan text agrees with the MT.

<sup>6</sup>J. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," Hebrew Union College Annual 14 (1939): 84, n. 3.

<sup>7</sup>In verse 33,  $\text{נְפִילִים}$  is found in the MT as  $\text{נְפִילִים}$  as well as  $\text{נְפִילִים}$ . To avoid confusion, only  $\text{נְפִילִים}$  will be used.

<sup>8</sup>See section on I Enoch, p. 19. Here, Enoch makes a point of the continued existence of the  $\text{נְפִילִים}$  /  $\text{גִּבּוֹרִים}$ , due in part to Gen. 6:4. See also Gen. Apoc. IQapGen col. II.

<sup>9</sup>Origenis Hexaplorum, Vol. 1, ed. F. Field (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), p. 240.

<sup>10</sup>F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 150.

<sup>11</sup>Jung, pp. 191-2, n. 157.

<sup>12</sup>Morgenstern, p. 85, contra: Spurrell, pp. 73-74; Dillman, pp. 240-1.

<sup>13</sup>See Sections Targum Neofiti I and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

<sup>14</sup>Ex. 21:6  $\kappa\rho\iota\tau\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  ; Ex. 22:8-9  $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  on three occasions.

<sup>15</sup>See Section Theodotion.

## IV. I ENOCH

Ethiopic Enoch, or I Enoch, as it is more commonly called, is an apocalyptic work whose contents could span as many as three centuries. Its earliest elements are dated as pre-Maccabæan, that is, prior to 167 B.C., while the latest portions may have been composed just prior to the advent of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The importance of this particular work is well known:

The Apocalyptic Literature, as distinct from the Apocalyptic Movement owing to which it took its rise, began to come into existence about the period 200-150 B.C.; at any rate, the earliest extant example of this Literature--the earliest portions of the Book of Enoch--belongs to this period.<sup>2</sup>

I Enoch provides evidence of a highly developed mythology surrounding the כְּנִי הָאֱלֹהִים of Gen. 6. This mythology is very relevant for the purposes of this investigation in that the bulk of it is located in the so-called Noachite section of the Apocalypse, which R. H. Charles dates as "pre-Maccabæan at the latest".<sup>3</sup> Thus it seems safe to assume that in dealing with these sections of Enoch, one will be dealing with traditions about "fallen angels" that go back to at least the second century B.C.

These narratives are complex and often contradictory, and dealing with these textual inconsistencies would take us far afield. Instead, an attempt will be made merely to portray the narrative in its most basic form.

In Enoch, any doubt as to the identity of the בני האלהים is removed:

And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw and lusted after them . . . .<sup>4</sup> (VI:1-5)

There can be little doubt that the text of Gen. 6:1-2 is plainly in the mind of the author. The "angels" is a straightforward exegesis of בני האלהים. As Bamberger puts it: "'heaven' is a substitute for the name of God; the phrase [children of heaven] is equivalent to 'sons of God', Gen. 6:2."<sup>5</sup> Following roughly the MT and the LXX, these angelic beings quit their abode as a result of the allure of the "daughters of men".<sup>6</sup> 1

At this point, Enoch leaves the conventional narrative and supplies more abundant detail. The author can actually specify the time and the locale of the descent: they "descended (in the days) of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon" (VI:6).

The angels, led by Semjâzâ (שמְיָזָא), take an oath and descend to earth, their number being two hundred (although the text lists only nineteen leaders of ten). Once on earth, the celestials inexplicably take it upon themselves to teach their consorts numerous secrets, such as: "charms, enchantments . . . the cutting of roots . . . plants (VII:2); all manner of metal-work (VIII:1); beautification (VII:2); astrology (VIII:3-4); knowledge of the clouds and the signs of the earth (VIII:3)"; as well as other areas of what the author feels to be malignant knowledge.

Enoch then returns to a more recognizable Biblical tradi-

tion in attempting to explain the cause of the ensuing divine wrath. The "great ones", the product of the illicit union, "devoured mankind, sinned against all living things; and drank blood" (VII:5-6). This is certainly based on a reminiscence of Num. 13:33, where the sons of Anak/Nephilim "lived in a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature."

These Rabelaisian offspring are to engage in a civil war in which they destroy each other (X:12). But that is not to be the absolute end of these creatures. Being a product of spirit and matter (cf. Gen. 6:3), their physical bodies alone will perish, while their celestial component will continue on earth in the form of evil spirits until the day of judgement (XV:8 ff.; cf. Gen. 6:5).<sup>7</sup>

At first glance, there is little in this narrative that relates to gnosis. A close study of the text shows otherwise. To facilitate this study, a proto-gnostic tradition will be postulated.

It begins with existence of the Good God who is beyond the material world. A Demiurge was produced who creates the material world. In his ignorance, the Demiurge thinks himself the only true God and demands the absolute worship of his creatures.<sup>8</sup> The Good God, or an angelic host from his presence, takes pity on this lamentable state which results in the descent of the angels to reveal the Good God's existence. Once these spiritual beings enter the material, their wholly spiritual nature becomes contaminated, thereby becoming subject to the

power of the Demiurge; but not before they have accomplished their mission of revealing the existence of the Good God. The now exposed Oz-like Demiurge attempts to redress this threat to his absolute authority by destroying all those who have become privy to the knowledge of the primacy of the Good God.

Returning to the Enoch narrative, the first new detail supplied is that the angels "descended (in the days) of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon" (VI:6). Charles has drawn attention to the two paronomasiae in this text; Jared, from יָרֵד, and Hermon from הֶרְמוֹן.<sup>9</sup>

The first paronomasia can be explained in two ways. As has already been noted, the problematic נִפְלִיִּם can be interpreted as a construct of the radical נִפְלֵל. It is therefore possible that the author wished to combat the view that the angels were involved in a "fall". This would be consistent with the second paronomasia. The angels, while in heaven, did orchestrate a premeditated rebellion, as the preceeding narrative (VI:2-5) indicates. In short, the angels took an oath to descend to earth.

But this concept of a descent rather than a "fall" would be in general agreement with the hypothetical proto-gnostic myth presented earlier, and as shall be seen presently, Enoch is far from sympathetic to the proto-gnostic position. It is of course possible that here Enoch is evidence of the popularity enjoyed by this myth and the author's consequent subjectivity to it.

There is a possible second explanation. Enoch may have been confronting a difficulty inherent in the term נִפְלִיִּם itself.



A zeruf or "letter mysticism" was a common exegetical practice of the day.<sup>10</sup> Applying the rule of temurah to נַפְלִיִּים, could be derived, which means "those in the presence of", which was often used in terms of the Holy of Holies.<sup>11</sup> By equating the נַפְלִיִּים with נְבִיֵּי הָאֱלֹהִים, they could well have been seen as angels from the divine presence. This would prove significant for the proto-gnostic. The נַפְלִיִּים were not angels from a low order, whose proximity to earth prompted their entry into the material, but rather the לַפְנִיִּים, the very ministering angels of the Good God.<sup>12</sup>

The most telling feature of the Enoch narrative relates to the angels' role as disseminators of wisdom. As noted earlier, Enoch enumerates the areas of once divine knowledge that have been revealed to mankind. This revelation is viewed as intimately related to the sins that occur on earth which provoke the divine wrath..

The Archangels Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel "looked down from Heaven and saw much blood being shed upon the earth and all lawlessness being wrought upon the earth" (IX:1; cf. Gen. 6:5). These angels then took their report to the Most High.

It is here that the narrative takes a significant turn. Their initial charge is not, as might be expected, that lawlessness has increased, but rather that the angel Azazel (now protagonist) "both taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were (preserved) in Heaven which men were striving to learn" (IX:7). The following charge of forni-

cation with the "daughters of men" also contains the theme of the revelation of secrets: "And they have gone into the daughters of men upon the earth and slept with the women, and defiled themselves, and revealed to them all kinds of sin" (IX:9; cf. LXVIII:2).

Furthermore, in the verdict passed on Azazel, the revelation of secret information again emerges as of major significance:

And heal the earth which the angels have corrupted and proclaim the healing of the earth, that they may heal the plague, and that all the children of men may not perish through the secret things that the watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons. And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin. (X:6-8)

It can be justly argued that the theme of the revelation of knowledge need not relate to the text of Gen. 6. Indeed, the revelation of mysteries as the price for a woman's favors is a common mythic motif in the ancient world.<sup>13</sup> But it should be remembered that the proto-gnostics under study are "Biblicentric" in outlook; that is, an ancient myth extraneous to the Bible, must invariably be hung on a scriptural "peg", often of the most tenuous nature, as a means of integrating this attractive foreign element into the tradition. Is there anything in Gen. 6:1-ff. that would provide such a "peg"?

The progeny of the בני האלהים are called the נבירים (v. 4). The LXX translates this phrase as οἱ ἀνθρώποι οἱ ὀνομαστοί: "the men of renown". This is clearly the intent of the Hebrew. But one predisposed towards a proto-gnostic view

might have found a much more profound significance in this passage.  $\text{השם}$  was often understood as the ineffable name of God.<sup>14</sup> Thus a proto-gnostic exegete might have found here an indication that the entry of the angels into the material world, and their consorting with the "daughters of men" was at the price of revealing the Divine Name; that is, the revelation of the existence of the Good God. The product of the physical union and consequent revelation, the  $\text{גבורים}$ , would have been introduced to this mystery of "the eternal secrets . . . which men were striving to know," hence their name "the men of the Holy Name".

There is further evidence that this proto-gnostic exegesis is not as incredible as it might seem. The two angels who emerge as the protagonists are  $\text{שמחזאי}$  and  $\text{אזל}$ . According to Ginzburg,  $\text{שמחזאי}$  is not this leading angel's true name. Instead, as with all angelic names,  $\text{שמחזאי}$  should be theophorous. The  $\text{ש}$  of  $\text{שמחזאי}$  is seen as a substitute for  $\text{יה}$  or  $\text{יהו}$  which was deemed inappropriate to be attached to the name of a "fallen angel". "Hence the name Shemhazzai which differs only slightly from Jehouzai ( $\text{y}$  and  $\text{n}$  are often interchanged), goes back to  $\text{שמחזאי} = \text{יהוצאי}$ ."<sup>15</sup> This could well have been the origin of the leader's name. However, it is probable that a later exegete would not necessarily have taken this into account in attempting to derive a hidden meaning from it, particularly if this name had already become commonplace. Assuming that the  $\text{ש}$  of  $\text{שמחזאי}$  was understood in much the same way as the  $\text{ש}$  of  $\text{אנשי השם}$ , what significance could the  $\text{חזאי}$  have had?  $\text{חזאי}$  can mean "revealed".  $\text{שמחזאי}$  could then be taken to mean "the Holy Name is revealed".<sup>16</sup>

Also a gematria of שמחיה yields twenty-six which is equivalent to the numerical value of the tetragrammaton.<sup>17</sup> It might then be suggested that שמחיה was seen as bearing the Divine Name. It is impossible to know what role the tetragrammaton played in the proto-gnostic "system". Suffice it to say that the relation of שמחיה as well as אשׁי השם to the Holy Name is certainly striking in the context of a theme of revelation of knowledge.

It is possible that this revelation can be as easily explained in terms of Wisdom speculation. This question proves difficult, since Jewish proto-gnosticism most probably had its roots in Wisdom. There are, however, a number of significant points that argue against this criticism.

It should be remembered that the Holy Name was supposedly revealed to Moses for the first time (Ex. 6:3). Therefore, the name revealed by the angels is much better understood as being different from that of the creator God of Israel; that is, as the name of the Good God of gnosis.

Also, for Enoch, the knowledge is injurious rather than beneficial to mankind. It is this same knowledge that brings about the Deluge. Furthermore, the tone of Enoch is polemical, and it is a polemic that is directed against revealed wisdom as distinct, it would seem, from the wisdom acquired through the proper study and contemplation of the Bible.

One such polemical text is found in Chapter XVI. Enoch here announces to בני האלהים:

You have been in heaven, but (all) the mysteries had not been revealed to you, and you knew worthless ones, and these in the hardness of

your hearts you have made known to the women  
and through these mysteries women and men  
work much evil on earth. (v. 3)

This passage would seem to be a direct attack on the  
proto-gnostic position that the knowledge communicated by the  
angels was essential.<sup>18</sup>

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 170-171.

<sup>2</sup>R. H. Charles, The Book of Enoch (London: S.P.C.K., 1921), p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup>Charles, The Book of Enoch, p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>All quotations from I Enoch are taken from Charles, Apocrypha.

<sup>5</sup>Bamberger, p. 264, n. 3; also, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I, ed. J. A. Fitzmyer (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>This lust motif is found throughout the "fallen angels" tradition: Test. of Reuben 5:6; II Enoch 18:3-8; II Baruch 56:10.

<sup>7</sup>It would then appear that for Enoch the נפלים = גבורים.

<sup>8</sup>The Demiurge was often characterized as the "fool" saklas. See Quispel, p. 218 ff. and J. Doresse, The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics, trans. P. Mairat (London: Hollis & Carter, 1960), p. 162 ff. and elsewhere. A Biblical proof text often used as illustration is Isa. 45:5-6 or 46:9.

<sup>9</sup>Charles, Apocrypha, p. 191. Curiously, מדר was used technically to describe the Jewish mystic ascent on the Merkabah. See Scholem, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>E. Muller, History of Jewish Mysticism (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1946), p. 49. The exact currency of temurah is difficult to establish. It is certainly common in later Kabbalistic speculation and Muller might be supposing too much in ascribing it to these early centuries.

<sup>11</sup>M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature, Vol. I (New York: Pardes, 1950), p. 1190.

<sup>12</sup>This ministering quality is demonstrated by the Job texts.

<sup>13</sup>For example, in the Poimandres: as cited by Jung, p. 182.

<sup>14</sup>There is strong evidence pointing to the currency of  $\text{שׁו}$  in the first centuries B.C./A.D. as a respective substitute for the common names of God. A. Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God: I. The Names & Attributes of God (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 54-107, has documented the frequency of  $\text{שׁו}$  in Talmudic and more specifically in Tannaitic literature. Although "heaven"  $\text{שׁמ״א}$  is the more common, the first two letters mean "name", which would suggest that  $\text{שׁו}$  might have been used as an abbreviation of  $\text{שׁמ״א}$ . More important is the fact that  $\text{שׁו}$  is found in the Qumran material (Covenant of Damascus 15:3). Also, the description of the  $\text{שׁו}$  of  $\text{שׁמ״א}$  in the following paragraph would also illustrate the currency of the term at an early stage.

<sup>15</sup>L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), Vol. 5, pp. 152-3.

<sup>16</sup>Jastrow, Vol. I, p. 443.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{17} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ן} \\ \text{י} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 8 \\ 10 \end{array} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{י} \\ \text{ן} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 7 \\ 5 \end{array} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{א} \\ \text{ו} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 1 \\ 6 \end{array} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ו} \\ \text{א} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 10 \\ 5 \end{array} = 26. \end{array}$$

<sup>18</sup>Unfortunately, M. Black's recently published work on the Enoch material from Qumran could not be secured in time to be incorporated in this work.

## V. I BARUCH

In I Baruch, a text contemporaneous with I Enoch, there is further evidence of a polemic against proto-gnosticism and its interpretation of the myth found in Gen. 6:1 ff.<sup>1</sup>

Baruch begins his attack by posing the question: "Who has found her (הַכִּמָּה) place and has entered her storehouses" (3:15). This is followed by a lengthy description of those who have not found this wisdom (3:16-23). The last named of those classed among the ignorant are the giants (οἱ γίγαντες):

O Israel, how great is the house of God!  
And how vast the territory that he possesses!  
It is great and has no bounds, it is high and  
immeasurable. The giants were born there who  
were famous of old, great in stature, expert  
in war. God did not choose them, nor give  
them the way of knowledge; so they perished  
through their folly. (3:24-27)<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt that Baruch has the גִּבּוֹרִים of Gen. 6 in view, since he employs the exact LXX terminology: οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ὀνομαστοὶ (3:26). For the proto-gnostics, these giants, the men of the Holy Name, would have been perceived as part of the initial link in the transmission of gnosis. But according to Baruch, they never did receive such knowledge: "God did not choose them, nor did he give them the way of knowledge." Contrary to I Enoch, it was not as a consequence of their knowledge (of the existence of the Good God) that they perished, but rather due to their absolute



ignorance.<sup>3</sup>

It is remarkable that there is no mention of the iniquity initiated by the נבונים. This was to be the main focus of the later orthodox exegetes and is already reflected in the book of Enoch though secondarily in the context of the unfortunate end results of the angelic revelation.<sup>4</sup> Yet Baruch makes no mention of these activities which were seen as precipitating the Deluge. Instead, his focus is firmly set on the question of knowledge, or in his view, the lack of it.

In the explanation as to where true knowledge can be found, Baruch exhibits much that would confirm a polemic against proto-gnosticism:

This is our God; and there shall be none accounted of in comparison to him. He hath found out all the way of knowledge and hath given it unto Jacob his servant and Israel his beloved. (3:35-36)

Baruch has made it clear that there is only one true God, the God of Israel, and it is the God of Israel who is all-knowing. This knowledge has been given to Israel by means of the revelation from Sinai:

This is the book of the commandments of God and the law that endureth forever; all they that keep it shall come to life, but such as leave it shall die . . . give not thine honor to another nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation. (4:1-3)

This last passage can best be understood as an attack against proto-gnosticism. The duplicate description of the Tōrah as "the book of the commandments" and the "law that endureth forever" can be explained as follows. It is obvious that

Jewish proto-gnostics held that the written revelation was rightly judged the container of all truth, since they themselves drew important exegetical conclusions from it. They therefore would have been in agreement with Baruch that "the book of the commandments" contained great truths. Baruch therefore added "the law that endureth"; that is, the much broader νόμος/Torah. It is the Torah in its broadest traditional sense that vivifies, while an antinomian, that is, proto-gnostic, study of the physical book leads to death.

To this is appended the strange warning: ". . . give not thine honor to another nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation." The intent of the first part of the warning is clear. Baruch is telling his audience not to worship a god other than the creator God of Israel. The second part is more intriguing in the light of a polemic against proto-gnosticism.

In the passage's context, "the things of profit" can be nothing other than the Sinaitic revelation. In the mind of Baruch, the Jewish proselytic zeal had created something of a theological Frankenstein. The Apologists had tirelessly attempted to demonstrate to the Gentile world the superiority of the Jewish revelation over other supposed revelations. This stimulated a good deal of interest in the study of the Jewish literature among the Gentile population. The author may here be alluding to the possibility that the Gentiles introduced a gnosticizing element into the Jewish community through the medium of their scriptural study. For this reason, the author adopts

the position, uncharacteristic of the Judaism of the time, that the revelation, and by extension, the discussion of this revelation, should not be shared with the Gentiles.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Charles, Apocrypha, Vol. I, p. 576.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from I Baruch are taken from the RSV with the Greek text from A. Rahlfs, ed., Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).

<sup>3</sup>This is against I Enoch, but is found elsewhere: Wisdom 14:6; Sir. 16:7; III Mac. 2:4.

<sup>4</sup>As found in Berešhith Rabbah, for example, 26:5-7.

## VI. JUBILEES

In the Book of Jubilees, the myth of Gen. 6:1 ff. is stated clearly:<sup>1</sup>

And it came to pass that the children of man began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them that the angels saw them at a certain year of this Jubilee and they were beautiful to look upon; and they took themselves of all they chose, and they bore unto them sons and they were giants. And lawlessness increased on the earth, and all flesh corrupted its way. (V:1)<sup>2</sup>

More than in the case of I Enoch (VI:1), it is obvious that the author is repeating the myth as it is found in the book of Genesis. There are a number of significant inclusions and omissions.

The author makes it perfectly clear that the בני האלהים are the angels and that the product of their union with the women, the giants, are responsible for the increased iniquity on earth.

Jubilees does omit the problematic v. 3 with its statement of 120 year life spans that is clearly at variance with the greater Genesis narratives. The significance of this verse to proto-gnosticism will be dealt with at length in a later section. The first half of v. 4 with its mention of the נפלים is also ignored. The most important omission occurs in the second half of v. 4. The giants are mentioned, but their epithet "the men

of renown" is not recorded. As has already been noted, אֱנוֹךְ was critical for the proto-gnostic myth. These features point toward an anti-gnosis predisposition on the part of the author of Jubilees.

In Chapter IV, a tradition extraneous to the Biblical account is recorded:

. . . for in his [Jared's] days the angels of the Lord descended on earth, those who are named the Watchers, that they should do judgement and righteousness on the earth. (v. 15)

As was the case with I Enoch, there is a paranomasia on אֱנוֹךְ and Jared. It was noted earlier that Enoch was likely attempting to neutralize the exegetical conclusions that might be derived from the אֱנוֹךְ of אֱנוֹכִים, as well as a zeruf of the same term. It was also suggested that the use of a 'descent' motif might have been due to the pressure of this myth's popularity. In the case of Jubilees, all three positions are possible, with the third being the most likely.

Jung sees this tradition as an orthodox alteration:

. . . the Jewish conception of angels--as ministering to God in heaven--does not admit to their indulging in gross sins. Hence angels of God in Jewish lore could never have gone to earth because they lusted after the daughters of men.<sup>3</sup>

Jung ignores the fact shown in Chapter V, that the Jewish author of the book of Jubilees made no attempt to deny that the angels descend as a result of their lust. The angels' charge as emissaries of God whose purpose it was to aid mankind, is the central theme of the proto-gnostic tradition that emerges from I Enoch. The existence of this tradition in Jubilees would

indicate that this view as to the purpose of the angelic visitation had become so commonplace that it was accepted by the author even though it was proto-gnostic in origin as well as being in disagreement with the text of Genesis. Of course, a further possible explanation is that this passage itself was motivated by a proto-gnostic sympathy. Though a later proto-gnostic might have seen the text in this light, other sections indicate that the author held no such sympathy.

Later in the same chapter of Jubilees, the author does deal with celestial knowledge, but in a fashion that demonstrates that he has little affinity with the gnosis-position:

And he (Methuselah) was moreover with the angel of God these six Jubilee years. And they showed him everything which is on the earth and in the heavens, the rule of the sun . . . . And he wrote down everything. And he testified to the watchers who had sinned with the daughters of men; for these had begun to unite themselves so as to be defiled with the daughters of men . . . . (IV:21)

According to Jubilees, the divine secrets were revealed to the mortals prior to the angels' descent.

Although an anti-gnosis position can be postulated for the book of Jubilees, in general the author shows little concern with the question. As opposed to I Enoch, no mention is made of the angels' sin relating to the betrayal of secret knowledge. The angels are sinners only insofar as they fornicated with the daughters of men.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>According to Charles, Apocrypha, Vol. II, p. 18, Jubilees is to be dated 135-105 B.C.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations of the text will be taken from Charles, Apocrypha.

<sup>3</sup>Jung, p. 186.



## VII. TESTAMENTS OF THE XII PATRIARCHS

The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs adds little of substance to the discussion.<sup>1</sup> It does, however, evidence an attempt by the author to rehabilitate the angels; an attempt which was to be continued into the first and second centuries.

Here the bizarre events of the myth are spiritualized. The angels never materially consummate their illicit union with the "daughters of men". Instead, they simply:

. . . conceived the act in their mind; for they changed themselves into the shape of men, and appeared to them when they were with their husbands. And the women lusting in their minds after forms, gave birth to giants, for the Watchers appeared to them as reaching even unto heaven. (Test. of Reub. V:6-7)<sup>2</sup>

One significant element emerges from this text. The sexual act is only conceptualized in the minds of the women and the angels; that is, in the author's view, it was impossible that an angel could have indulged in an actual physical relationship. Of course, the author is obliged to explain the birth of the giants. This is done by ingeniously suggesting that the women, during intercourse with their natural husbands, witnessed the angels who had taken on gigantic shape. The lust which the women entertained for these celestials was translated into the bearing of children of equally gigantic proportions.

Behind this apparent rehabilitation attempt might also

lie a desire by the author to treat the proto-gnostic myth of Gen. 6.

The crux of this myth was that an actual physical union had occurred. In the pagan mythological stratum already referred to, the price of this physical union was the revelation of knowledge. A physical union naturally lends itself to the possibility of a transmission of knowledge. In the Testaments, there is no such physical union. The angels appear, but are only visible to the women. By relating the myth in this fashion, the author was perhaps attempting to demonstrate that as there was no physical relationship, there was also no transmission of knowledge.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This work is placed by Charles, Apocrypha, Vol. II, pp. 289-290, at approximately 110 B.C. Recently, M. de Jonge has advanced the view that it was composed at the end of the second or the beginning of the third centuries A.D. See Albert-Marie Denis, Introductions Aux Pseudépigraphes Grecs D'Ancien Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 58-9.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations are taken from Charles, Apocrypha.

## VIII. TARGUM PSEUDO-JONATHAN

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan contains a good deal of material that is of value to this discussion. However, as is the case with all the Targumim, its degree of usefulness as a witness to the circumstances of the first centuries remains a matter of contention. Pseudo-Jonathan was long considered a very late Targum that was based largely on the supposedly earlier Targum Onkelos. Recently, in large measure due to the excitement generated by the discovery of the Neofiti codex, Targumic studies have received a good deal more critical attention.<sup>1</sup> As a result of these new explorations, modern scholarship is moving towards the view that parts of Pseudo-Jonathan are in fact much older than had hitherto been acknowledged. Although it does contain material that is undeniably posterior to the rise of Islam, there is also much that reflects a very early Palestinian tradition.<sup>2</sup> The present investigation will be pursued in the light of this change of opinion.

For Pseudo-Jonathan, the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים are not angels. Instead, they are described as the very human בְּנֵי רַבְרִיָּא.<sup>3</sup> The term בְּנֵי רַבְרִיָּא is vague and can mean "big, older, prefect and priest".<sup>4</sup> Spurrel suggests that בְּנֵי רַבְרִיָּא is derived from Ex. 21:6 and 22:7 ff., where the אֱלֹהִים is not to be taken as a divine appellation.<sup>5</sup> The curious point is that the אֱלֹהִים in these

passages is not translated רַב־כֹּחַ, but rather דִּינָא, "judges", as the Hebrew context suggests. In Alexander's view, "there is no substantial difference between these terms."<sup>6</sup> But there surely must be a substantive difference for this Targum not to have employed דִּינָא in both cases, as is the case in the Targum Neofiti. The most plausible explanation is that the connotations of רַב־כֹּחַ help to explain the birth of the גִּבּוֹרִים.

The union of angels and mortals would naturally be expected to produce exceptional offspring. But once the angels are excised from the scene, the birth of remarkable children does not logically follow. The use of דִּינָא, though exegetically defensible (Ex. 21:6; 22:7 ff.), would in no way explain the גִּבּוֹרִים, whereas רַב־כֹּחַ "may mean people bodily strong",<sup>7</sup> which would better serve to explain the super-human qualities of the offspring. Assuming that this passage was an important object of proto-gnostic speculation, it may also be assumed that any Targumic rendering would have had to reflect a sound exegesis capable of withstanding proto-gnostic criticism. Yet, the term רַב־כֹּחַ, unlike דִּינָא, seems to have no credible basis of support elsewhere in scripture.

There is good evidence that this term reflects the addition of a later redaction, which would help in explaining this inconsistency.

The text of Gen. 3:5 is of help in this discussion:

For God knows that when you eat of it  
your eyes will be opened, and you will be  
like God (כְּאֱלֹהִים) knowing good and  
evil.

Targum Onkelos translates רַבְרַבִּיא as אֱלֹהִים, whereas the older Palestinian tradition of Neofiti has preserved מַלְאכֵיִן כְּמִן קִדְּמָא.<sup>8</sup> The credibility of Neofiti as an ancient witness is supported by both Josephus and the LXX who also see these אֱלֹהִים as super-human individuals. Here Pseudo-Jonathan agrees with the older tradition rendering אֱלֹהִים as מַלְאכֵיִן. From these facts, it is now possible to reconstruct the transmission of the Targumic tradition of בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים.

Onkelos was perhaps composed at a date posterior to the polemical preoccupation with this passage. Therefore, this compilation was not necessarily interested in a text that could be defended exegetically as much as in attempting to provide a logical reading. Onkelos was intent on following the earlier humanizing tradition. The use of קִיִּינִיא, though defensible exegetically, did not sufficiently account for the birth of the גְּבוּרִים. For this reason, רַבְרַבִּיא was employed in its stead. Once this was done, considerations of support for this translation, coupled with the proximity of the passages in question (Gen. 3:5; 6:1) demanded that the אֱלֹהִים (מַלְאכֵיִן) of Gen. 3:5 be treated in an identical manner, that is, רַבְרַבִּיא. The likelihood of this is improved by the context of Gen. 3:5, where the knowing of "good and evil" could have been more logically applied to the קִיִּינִיא than to the רַבְרַבִּיא.

With regard to Ex. 21:6 and 22:7, there was never a traditional identification of the אֱלֹהִים with the angels, nor were these passages located near the "fallen angels" narrative. Therefore, Onkelos was free to follow the more logical older

tradition and employ דִּינִיָּא. It can now be posited that the רַב־רַבִּי of Pseudo-Jonathan does not reflect the original. Had it been original, one might have expected רַב־רַבִּי in Gen. 3:5. Instead, the text of Pseudo-Jonathan was changed in order to correspond more closely with that of the Targum Onkelos. This alteration was made in an inconsistent manner, as shown by the continued presence of מִלֵּאכִי in Gen. 3:5. The two most likely possibilities for the original text are מִלֵּאכִי as in the Neofiti margin or דִּינִיָּא as in the Neofiti text.<sup>9</sup> An examination of verse 4 provides strong evidence for the likelihood of the second. It also manifests a sensitivity to the proto-gnostic exegesis and a clever means of attacking it. In this polemic, Pseudo-Jonathan accommodates part of the proto-gnostic tradition and turns it to his own orthodox advantage.

In verse 4, "Shamhazai and Azael fell from heaven and were on the earth in those days and also after that . . . ." The נְפִלִים are identified by the Targumist with the angels, an exegesis based on the radical נָפַל of נְפִלִים. Bamberger, in accepting the רַב־רַבִּי as original, views the inclusion of שְׁמַחַזַּי וְאַזְאֵל as of late edition.<sup>10</sup> Alexander is surely correct in seeing here an ancient stratum of the tradition, "since it mentions by name the traditional captains of the rebel angels."<sup>11</sup>

It is not surprising to find Shamhazai and Azael singled out, but it is surprising to find Azael employed in favor of Azazel, which is the name that emerges more often in the Rabbinic literature.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that Pseudo-Jonathan was entertaining apologetic considerations regarding the scapegoat ceremony

with which Azazel was associated.<sup>13</sup> This ceremony was of more than dubious origin and the Rabbis had difficulty in explaining away that, superficially at least, it could be construed as a sacrifice offered to a demonic being.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the text was merely attempting to avoid the identification of the liturgical Azazel with the demonic "fallen angel".

It is also possible that here we have another element of the original proto-gnostic exegesis. A gematria of Shemhazai (366) and Azael (108) yields 474, which is equal to the numerical value of the Hebrew for Gnosis, נֵחֵם.<sup>15</sup> If this exegesis was common and popular at the time, it might well have influenced this Targumic version. But while Pseudo-Jonathan may have accommodated this proto-gnostic tradition, he turns it to anti-proto-gnostic advantage.

In the Enochite myth, it is Azazel (Azael) who taught mankind the manufacture of "bracelets, and ornaments, and the use of antimony, and the beautification of the eyelids, and all kinds of costly stones . . ." (VIII:1). In Pseudo-Jonathan, the women are described as being "beautiful with eyes painted and hair curled . . ." (v. 2). If the women had their "eyes painted", they must have been visited by Azazel (Azael) prior to the descent of the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים.<sup>16</sup> This is further corroborated by the נְפִלִים being on "the earth in those days". By this use of the proto-gnostic exegesis, Pseudo-Jonathan was able to humanize the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, without denying that in fact there had been an angelic visitation. By doing so, it is the human בְּנֵי דִינְיָא who consort with the women and produce the גְּבוּרִים. These גְּבוּרִים,



the אַנְשֵׁי הַמַּלְאָכִים, had nothing to do with the angels and therefore did not receive the divine knowledge that their name suggested to the proto-gnostics.

Verse 3 provides further information regarding the proto-  
gnostic exegesis of Gen. 6:1 ff. The difficult verb יָדַן is translated by Pseudo-Johathan as יִתְּנוּן, indicating that it is derivative of יָדַן, "to judge". This would represent a new departure in the ongoing exegetical tradition. The LXX translated the term as καταμένειν, "to remain".<sup>17</sup> Bowker notes that this was "also the way in which Jub. v. 8 understood it, despite its long paragraph on judgement."<sup>18</sup>

With יָדַן as "judge", v. 3, can now be read in the following way: "And Yahweh said: 'My spirit will not judge mankind forever. For that he is flesh his years shall be one hundred and twenty.'" In proto-gnostic terminology, this would serve to indicate that as a result of the descent of the angels, the absolute dominion of the Demiurge is broken. He can no longer judge the illuminated of mankind. He would of course like to make an end of these individuals, but since they have now become conscious of the existence of the Good God, they are both material and spiritual and as such, the Demiurge can only take his revenge by shortening their lives.

According to Bowker, "The word din came increasingly to refer to legal decisions and judgements."<sup>19</sup> To the Judaic mind, this din is an inevitable result of Torah. Thus this type of exegesis, with its apparent neglect of judgement, would have been a factor in the antinomianism that was so violently attacked

by the orthodoxy of both Judaism and Christianity.

It is worth noting that the most famous Old Testament figure to live 120 years was Moses (Deut. 33:7). It is difficult to establish whether or not Moses enjoyed an exalted position among the proto-gnostics. On the one hand, as the recipient of the Torah, he may have been despised as a culpable accessory to the malignant designs of the Demiurge. On the other hand, the proto-gnostics do not seem to have denied the relevance of the Sinaitic revelation if understood in its proper, that is proto-gnostic sense. For the proto-gnostics, it is possible that Moses' living 120 years would scripturally prove what they already believed; Moses, as one of the most illustrious of the illuminated, was party to divine knowledge, and as such, his life could not exceed 120 years. It is of interest that Bereshith Rabbah also links Moses with this same verse, although in terms of a gematria on מנחם.<sup>20</sup>

The motivation for Pseudo-Jonathan's handling of v. 3 appears clear. It is two-fold. The condemnation of mankind to a premature death is not corroborated by the Genesis narratives, as numerous post-deluvians lived much longer. Pseudo-Jonathan attempts to redress this difficulty by providing the harmonizing expansion that has the evil generation of the flood receiving a 120 reprieve "in the hope that they would work repentance . . ." This tradition is also intimated in Josephus (Antt. I:II:1).

Meanwhile, it would have been this same inconsistency that attracted the attention of the proto-gnostics. Rather than seeing any need for harmonization, they would have found here an

indication that the  $\text{בְּנֵי הָאָדָם}$  referred to was not mankind in general, but rather those who had been fortunate enough to have received the knowledge of the Good God's existence. It would then have also been against this proto-gnostic view that Pseudo-Jonathan's rendition was directed.

It was already mentioned that  $\text{הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ}$  of Gen. 6:4 was perceived in proto-gnostic circles as an intimation that the revelation of the Divine Name related to the descent of the angels and their intercourse with the "daughters of men". The Targum Onkelos translates  $\text{הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ}$  quite literally as  $\text{הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ}$ . Pseudo-Jonathan is more cautious in employing  $\text{הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ}$  which would point to his greater proximity and sensitivity to the proto-gnostic exegesis.

There are two further texts in Genesis that demonstrate that  $\text{הַשֵּׁם הַקָּדוֹשׁ}$  was critical to the proto-gnostic understanding of Gen. 6:1 ff., as well as to their understanding of certain other passages in Genesis.

In Gen. 4:26, we read: "To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord ( $\text{וַיִּקְרָא בְנֵי הָאָדָם}$ )." There is no explanation as to how this hitherto unknown name of the Lord was revealed to the generation of Enosh. The proto-gnostic response would have been that this name was revealed by the descending angels. The Enoch tradition locates the descent of the angels in the time of Jared while Enoch had already ascended to take on his function as heavenly scribe. This would have made Enosh 752 years old (d. 905) at the traditional time of the angelic visitation.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the text would chronologically confirm the proto-gnostic view that during the lifetimes of Jared and Enoch, and also during the contemporaneous lifetime of Enosh, the angels descended and imparted the mystery of the Divine Name. To counter the prevalence of this view, Pseudo-Jonathan's rendition of the passage is as follows:

And to Seth, to him also was born a son; and he called his name Enosh. That was the generation, in whose days they began to err and make idols for themselves, and to call their idols by the name of the word of the Lord.

Bowker explains this "radical alteration" as an attempt by this Targum to reconcile the passage with Ex. 6:3: "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name I did not make myself known unto them." An investigation of a Midrashic text that Bowker himself marshalls as evidence supports the view that Pseudo-Jonathan's intent was more polemical than harmonistic:

In three places the word huhal is taken to mean rebellion: 'Then they rebelled by calling upon the name of the Lord' (Gen. 4:26); 'when man rebelled on the face of the earth' (Gen. 6:1); 'He, Nimrod rebelled when he was a mighty man on the earth' (Gen. 10:8).<sup>22</sup>

It will be shown that it is not coincidence that these texts, and in particular Gen. 4:26 and 6:1, are linked in this way. It is rather the fact that Gen. 4:26 and Gen. 10:8 were used by the proto-gnostics to expand their exegesis of Gen. 6:1 ff. Against the position of this midrash, these texts were linked not by the word huhal, although huhal was used as support, but rather through the uv of Gen. 6:4.

The MT of Gen. 6:1 reads: "When man began (huhal) to

multiply on the face of the earth." The Midrashic tradition is certainly contrived as it appears to be at odds with both scripture and the very ethos of the orthodox Judaism of the time. In no way would an orthodox Jew accept that man rebelled (hubal) in reproducing, as suggested by the midrash. This view would be at variance with Gen. 1:28 (cf. Gen. 9:1) where God blesses Adam and commands: "Be fruitful and multiply". This type of exegesis would have been more in keeping with a gnostic-orientation which was often rigidly ascetic.

Furthermore, nowhere in the MT is rebellious activity related to these three texts. The Targumim Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti do render two of the passages (Gen. 4:26; 10:8-9) in rebellious terms and this suggests an agreement with this midrash. But if the treatment accorded the primary "link word" (hubal) is examined, it becomes clear that these Targumim were not au courant with the recorded midrashic tradition. In all three cases, these Targumim translate hubal in the Hebraic sense of "to begin", rather than "to rebel".

A more credible explanation of these texts' relationship can be offered. These texts were related following the sixth rule of Hillel by which "a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another which has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity."<sup>23</sup> The difficult text in question is Gen. 6:1. Gen. 6:1 ff. and Gen. 4:26 are linked through the common bw, supported by the concurrent presence of hubal. The Talmud recognizes this relationship in a different context. With regard to v. 4 of the Babel narrative

(Gen. 11), it is recorded:

... but elsewhere it is written 'Make no mention of other gods' (Ex. 23:13). Just as the name (הסם) means idolatry there, so it does here as well.

As was noted earlier, the proto-gnostics would have employed Gen. 4:26, with its mention of the revelation of the Name, to further corroborate the גבורים אנוסי הסם having received this same revelation:

Gen. 10:8-9 does not make mention of הסם. But it too can be explained in terms of the proto-gnostic exegesis. The MT of this passage reads:

Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first (החל) to be a mighty man (גבור). He was a mighty (גבור) hunter before (לפני) the Lord.

Huhal here is the secondary "link word". The primary relationship is based on the word גבורים, also common to Gen. 6:4. It seems reasonable to assert that for the proto-gnostics, Nimrod was the first גבור of the גבורים, "the men of the Holy Name". There is yet another connective word. Nimrod is characterized as being לפני. As was noted earlier, נפלים could be understood as לפנים if a zeruf was applied. It has also been noted that in some circles, the גבורים were identified with the נפלים. Nimrod then could be seen as the first גבור/נפיל. This thesis is corroborated by the Chronicles of Jerahmeel, where Nimrod is described as נפיל גאה לפני יי.<sup>25</sup> Josephus also implies a certain relationship between Nimrod and the גבורים:

They (the people that settled in Shumar) were invited to the insolent contempt of God by Nebrodes, a grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man of great strength of hand. He also said that he would be revenged of God, if he should

have in mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that they would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers. (Antt. I:IV:2)<sup>26</sup>

There is a reference to the flood which shows an implicit relationship between Nimrod and the גבורים. The final line of this quotation appears even more explicit. Nimrod speaks of avenging himself on "God for destroying their forefathers." This is a rather curious statement, since it is difficult to ascertain exactly who these "forefathers" were. It is assumed that all the ante-deluvians were destroyed in the flood, leaving only Noah and his family. Thus, according to the MT, those addressed by Nimrod should have been descendants of the flood's refugees, that is, Noah and family. So in fact, their forefathers in the strictest sense did not perish. If Nimrod and those he is addressing are seen as גבורים / נפלים, Josephus' account becomes understandable. The נפלים "were on the earth in those days, and also afterwards" (Gen. 6:4). This would imply that these individuals survived the flood, corroborated by a proto-gnostic understanding of ירון of v. 3. Nimrod would then be referring to avenging the earthy half of their parentage who perished in the flood.

Josephus' conflation of the two traditions, that of Babel (Gen. 11:1 ff.) and that of Nimrod (Gen. 10:9) is perhaps due to the fact that Nimrod's first kingdom was Babel (Gen. 10:10). Another possible explanation is that Nimrod's name can be derived from מרד "to rebel", and the Babel incident is viewed as the first rebellion of man against God.<sup>27</sup> But if we turn to

the MT account of the Babel legend, it again seems possible that a proto-gnostic conflation lies behind that of Josephus.

The critical verse in this narrative is v. 4, where the intent of the rebels is explained in the following fashion:

Come let us build ourselves a city and a tower  
with its tops in the heavens, and let us  
make a name (שם) for ourselves, lest  
we be scattered abroad the face of the earth.

Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti and the Fragmentary Targum all translate שם as "idol", following the Talmudic tradition mentioned earlier. It is possible that Nimrod, being a נפיל / גבור and having received the knowledge of the Name, was then associated with this rebellion against the Demiurge, particularly since this rebellion occurred in his kingdom.

In summary, the following is suggested: The three huh'al texts were linked by the proto-gnostics in this way. Gen. 4:26 and Gen. 6:1 ff. were related by the concurrence of שם supported by the common huh'al. Gen. 10:8-9 were related to Gen. 6:4 through the common גבור and נפיל / לפני, again with further support from the common huh'al. This allowed the Nimrod text (Gen. 10:8-9) in turn to be related to the Babel narrative (Gen. 11:1) through the now common שם.

It is now possible to conclude that the midrash under study was intent on expurgating this proto-gnostic exegetical tradition, and through the use of huh'al, demonstrated these texts' relationship without making mention of the proto-gnostic שם, גבור and נפיל. It is also possible that under proto-gnostic pressure, these texts were accepted into the orthodox tradition



in their integrated form. In the course of time, the original significance of these texts was lost, that is, the primary source of the relationship was forgotten, and only the secondary huhal link was transmitted.

7

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the Targumim, see J. Bowker, The Targum and Rabbinic Literature (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 3-28; G. J. Kuiper, The Pseudo-Jonathan Targum and its Relationship to the Targum Onkelos (Rome: Institutum Patristicum 'Augustinianum', 1972), pp. 2-44.

<sup>2</sup>Three classic anachronisms are Ishmael's wives having the same names as those of Muhammad; a mention of Constantinople; as well as the six orders of the Mishnah; as cited by Bowker, p. 26, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup>The text is taken from the edition of M. Ginsburger, (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1903), with the English translation from Bowker.

<sup>4</sup>Jung, p. 191, n. 157. See also Jastrow, Vol. II, p. 1446.

<sup>5</sup>Spurrell, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup>Jung, p. 191, n. 157.

<sup>8</sup>Text from Neophyti I, ed. A. Diez-Macho (Madrid-Barcelona: Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas, 1968).

<sup>9</sup>Alexander, p. 70, arrives at the same conclusion, but for different reasons.

<sup>10</sup>Bamberger, p. 129, n. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup>B. Heller, "La Chute des Anges," Revue des Etudes Juives 60 (1910): 205-6.

<sup>13</sup>Interestingly, Pseudo-Jonathan renders  $\text{לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  Lev. 16:10 as  $\text{לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  rather than  $\text{לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל}$ .

<sup>14</sup>Ginzberg, Vol. 5, pp. 170-1.

<sup>15</sup>
$$\begin{aligned} \{w\}300 + \{n\}40 + \{n\}8 + \{r\}7 + \{x\}1 + \{y\}10 &= 366. \\ \{y\}70 + \{r\}7 + \{x\}1 + \{y\}30 &= 108. \\ \{r\}4 + \{y\}70 + \{n\}400 &= 474. \end{aligned}$$

<sup>16</sup>Alexander, p. 70, approaches this position in noticing the relationship between the "painting of the eyes" and I Enoch.

<sup>17</sup>The LXX sense was used by Philo On the Giants 1:5; and Josephus Antt. I:III:2. Pseudo-Philo employs the "judgmental" sense of the word (III:2).

<sup>18</sup>Bowker, p. 154.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-1.

<sup>20</sup>Bereshith Rabbah 26:6; also Pseudo-Philo 9:8 and Philo On the Giants 55.

<sup>21</sup>The chronology employed is taken from Spurrell, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup>Bereshith Rabbah 26:4; as cited by Bowker, p. 186.

<sup>23</sup>Bowker, Appendix II, p. 315.

<sup>24</sup>b. San. 109a; as cited by Bowker, p. 141.

<sup>25</sup>Chronicles of Jerahmeel, 27:4; The Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo-Philo, ed. D. J. Harrington (University of Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974). These Chronicles cannot of course be used as direct evidence, as they are of very late edition.

<sup>26</sup>Translation of Josephus from The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. W. Whiston (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, n.d.).

<sup>27</sup>So Bereshith Rabbah 23:7; also Philo On the Giants XV:66; Questions on Genesis II:82; and Pseudo-Philo: VI:14.

## IX. TARGUM NEOFITI I

The recently discovered Targum Neofiti I has prompted much discussion among scholars as to its credibility as an ancient Palestinian Targum. Scholarship seems prepared to accept the antiquity of much of the content of this codex.<sup>1</sup>

The כְּנִי דִּינִיָּא of Gen. 6:2;4 is translated as כְּנִי דִּינִיָּא. This is likely based on an exegesis of Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 ff., where אֱלֹהִים is found as דִּינִיָּא in agreement with both Pseudo-Jonathan and Onkelos. There is ample evidence that, as was the case with Pseudo-Jonathan, the rendition of כְּנִי דִּינִיָּא is of later edition. In the marginal notes, דִּינִיָּא is referred to as מְלַאכֵיָּא, the "angels". G. Vermes has pointed out that the marginal notes of Neofiti tend to reflect an earlier tradition than that recorded in the text.<sup>2</sup> Although on first glance, it would seem that this earlier translation is devoid of polemic, a closer examination of the text proves otherwise.

If מְלַאכֵיָּא is understood as an equivalent for אֱלֹהִים rather than כְּנִי דִּינִיָּא, this marginal note assumes a polemical tone.

It was noted earlier that מְלַאכֵיָּא, as opposed to אֱלֹהִים was based on Gen. 3:5. Here, אֱלֹהִים is found as מִן קֳדָם יְיָ. Thus, the כְּנִי דִּינִיָּא of Gen. 6 would be translated as כְּנִי מְלַאכֵיָּא, "sons of the angels".

In a discussion of the "sons of the holy angels" of I

Enoch, C. Kaplan notes contra Charles that:

The term 'sons of angels' stands for a lower class (of angels), the dwellers of the first heaven, who carry the messages to earth; they are therefore subject to the purification process of fire baptism . . . . In the higher plane, the heaven of heavens, their superiors dwell, 71:7 . . . . In 69 likewise, a line is drawn between the 'sons of the angels' and the 'higher angels'.<sup>3</sup>

Kaplan also mentions that in the Old Testament, the term בני הנביאים also describes prophets who are of lower rank.

For the proto-gnostics, the angels that descended were far from being of low rank. Instead, they were angels of the highest order, the לפנים, who had access to the most privileged of information. It can therefore be suggested that Neofiti's marginal notation reflects an earlier and seemingly unsuccessful attempt to attack the proto-gnostic tradition. The reasons for this lack of success can be explained in the following way. Although ingenious, Neofiti's translation ignores the Job texts, where the בני האלהים are obviously the ministering angels. It can be argued that it is assuming too much that the linkage of these texts was so common as to render ineffective Neofiti's earlier polemical translation. But Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew shows otherwise.

The chapter in question is LXXIX:1-2. This chapter must be approached with care as it is either an "interpolation or at least . . . out of its proper place"<sup>4</sup>, as it seemingly has no relation to either what precedes or follows it.

Here Trypho becomes annoyed with his adversary's "blasphemous" use of scripture: "For you say that the angels have acted maliciously and have fallen away from God."<sup>5</sup> Alexander

sees this statement as a strong condemnation of those "who equated the בני האלהים with the angels."<sup>6</sup> But Alexander has failed to consider this passage in the light of its broader context.

Justin follows Trypho's rebuke with a number of proof texts that demonstrate that the angels do have the propensity to sin (Dan. 7:13; LXX Isa. 30:1-5; Zach. 3:1; Job 1:6; 2:1). Justin reminds Trypho that he himself had employed Zach. 3:1 as well as the Job texts elsewhere in the Dialogue. The significance of these latter texts for Justin's argument is that Satan is numbered among the angels, thus by implication, the angels, as well as the angelic Satan, have the ability to sin. There is nothing in their discussion that would indicate that Trypho objected in any way to the identification of the בני האלהים and the angels.

It is significant that Justin utilized the Job texts in the argument over the role of the בני האלהים of Gen. 6. In Gen. 6:1-4, the בני האלהים are translated literally as υιοι του θεου excepting v. 1 of codex A, while the Job texts are translated as οι αγγελοι του θεου.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the linkage of these texts could only have been achieved through an agreement found in the Hebraic text. But it must be remembered that Justin and Trypho knew no Hebrew and were conducting their scriptural battle through the common medium of the LXX.<sup>8</sup> This proves that the so-called Hellenistic tradition, as represented by Justin and Trypho, was subject to the influence of the Aramaic community with regards to the handling of Gen. 6. This would also serve to indicate

that this Hebraic linkage was so well accepted that it was capable of winning a place for itself in the Hellenistic world even when the Greek text did not corroborate the textual association.

It was this popular association that thwarted Neofiti's attempt to make the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים "angels of a low order".

Neofiti would then show two distinct stages of development in the attempt to counter the proto-gnostic exegesis. It first attempted to remove the "ministering" angels from the scene by the use of Gen. 3:5 leading to the "sons of the angels". However, this exegesis proved inadequate against the obviously "ministering" quality attributed to these same בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים in the Book of Job. It was then felt that the only means available to handle this text would be to fully humanize the celestial actors. This was achieved through the aide of Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 ff., which led to בְּנֵי דִינְיָא.

In Neofiti, the women are once again cast in the role of seductresses. In amplification of the MT version, this Targum adds that the women were "beautiful", but without taking the liberty of Pseudo-Jonathan in enumerating their charms.

In v. 4, the נַפְלִים, following the LXX tradition, is rendered גְּבִרָא. This is in opposition to Pseudo-Jonathan's excursus on שְׂמֻחַא' וְעֻזָּא'. This indicates that the בְּנֵי דִינְיָא in Pseudo-Jonathan was earlier than that of Neofiti, since Pseudo-Jonathan does humanize the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים but still includes a descent of the angels (שְׂמֻחַא' וְעֻזָּא') owing to the pressure of this exegesis' popularity. Neofiti also manifests evidence of

this pressure by using מלאכיא בני האלהים for מלאכיא. When מלאכיא was changed to דיין, no attempt was made to make any reference to an angelic visitation of any kind. The desire of Neofiti was to fully remove this element from the narrative. It would appear that at the time this was done, the climate had sufficiently changed so as to allow this more radical exegesis to stand. It shall be demonstrated at a later stage that this change can be located historically.

Neofiti also reflects the altered exegesis of the obscure דיין which is translated יתרון from דיין, in all likelihood under the pressure of the proto-gnostic exegesis.



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>See section Pseudo-Jonathan, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>G. Vermès, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism, *Studia Post-Biblica*, Vol. 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. 228. The text and translation are taken from A. Diez-Macho.

<sup>3</sup>C. Kaplan, "Versions and Readings in the Book of Henoch," American Journal of Semitic Studies 50 (1933-34): 174.

<sup>4</sup>Justin Martyr--The Dialogue with Trypho, trans. A. L. Williams (London: S.P.C.K., 1930), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Translation taken from Williams.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>See section Septuagint, n. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Williams, p. 145, n. 1.

## X. THEODOTION

Theodotion was formerly thought to have been produced in the third century A.D. Recently, this position has been convincingly challenged by D. Barthélemy who would place this work "vers. la fin de la première moitié du premier siècle,"<sup>1</sup> that is, prior to both Aquila and Symmachus.

Barthélemy's position would seem to be reinforced by Theodotion's treatment of Gen. 6:1 ff. Theodotion's translation closely follows the LXX version. As with the LXX, the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים are rendered οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. Similarly, the נְפִלִים are translated οἱ δε γίγαντες. These unfortunately are the only examples of Theodotion's translation of the "fallen angels" narrative that have been preserved.

Elsewhere, on six occasions, Theodotion translates אֱלֹהִים or a construct thereof, in the plural. On four of these instances (Ps. 94(95):3; 95(96):4; Isa. 8:21; 37:19), the אֱלֹהִים in question are clearly pagan deities. The two exceptional cases are Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 ff. passages which were employed by the Targumim exegetically to derive אֱלֹהִים. Here, Theodotion employs the plural against the singular treatment of the LXX, though in 21:6, the LXX was obviously aware of the judgemental context using the more human phrase κατατήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. This pluralization suggests that here Theodotion was working within the orthodox Aramaic Targumic tradition. But unlike the Targumim,

Theodotion failed to make the exegetical leap of employing these texts to humanize the **בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים**.

Thus far, Theodotion exhibits nothing that could be construed as being anti-proto-gnostic in intent. There is one passage that can be related to Gen. 6:1 ff., which indicates that Theodotion also was not averse to polemicizing against proto-gnosticism.

In Hos. 12:3-4, the MT reads as follows:

... **בְּ**his (Jacob's) manhood he strove with God (**אֱלֹהִים**). He strove with the angel (**מַלְאָךְ**) and prevailed.

This is Hosea's interpretation of the events found recorded in Gen. 32:25 ff. In the MT account, there is no specific mention of angels, although the **אֱלֹהִים** of v. 25 could be understood as such.<sup>2</sup> This term reemerges in the plural in v. 29 in a parallel construction with **כִּי שָׂרִית עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם אַנְשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים**, which approximates Hosea's text.

The parallelism of Hosea, with the use of the identical verbs (**שָׂרָה**; **יָסַר**) could easily be turned to proto-gnostic advantage. The **אֱלֹהִים** of the Old Testament is clearly not the God, but is rather to be seen as an angelic figure (Demiurge). To avoid this difficulty, Theodotion translates **אֱלֹהִים** as **ἄγγελος** (**מַלְאָךְ**), thereby agreeing with the Aramaic Targumim's handling of Gen. 32:25 ff.

In view of Theodotion's similarity to the Targumic renditions of Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 ff., as well as the liberty that was taken in changing the **אֱלֹהִים** of Hosea to **ἄγγελος**, it is doubly curious that the **בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים** of Gen. 6 was translated **οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ**

0200 . The only plausible explanation is that, at this point historically, that is, "towards the end of the first half of the first century," the Aramaic traditions had themselves not made this alteration. It would be some eighty years later with Aquila that the LXX's literal translation would be changed under the guiding instruction of the Pharisaic orthodoxy.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>D. Barthélemy, Les Devanciers D'Aquila, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>ו'ק is also understood as a synonym for God, Marmorstein, Names, pp. 65-7.

<sup>3</sup>As found in Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti.

## XI. AQUILA

Aquila, traditionally under the guidance of R. Akiba (c. 120 A.D.),<sup>1</sup> breaks radically from the LXX translation (Theodotion included), in his treatment of בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים. As is often the case with Aquila, he translates the phrase quite literally as οἱ υἱοὶ θεῶν. Alexander notes that "in no case where בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים clearly means the true God do we find it rendered by the plural θεοί."<sup>2</sup> Of the ten plurals that have been preserved, eight clearly deal with pagan gods, while the two exceptions, as in the case of Theodotion, are Ex. 21:6 and 22:9. This would point to Aquila's reliance on both the Aramaic Targumic tradition and Theodotion. Whereas Theodotion did not utilize the exegetical conclusions drawn from the Exodus passages in his translation of בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, the Aramaic Targumim did. It would seem that Aquila followed the Targumim in this instance. Origen likely had Aquila in mind when he wrote with reference to Ex. 22:8 ff.

These men (the judges) were entrusted with the responsibility of giving judgements, and because of their purity of character, surpassing human nature, they were called 'gods' by traditional Jewish usage.<sup>3</sup>

It can be suggested that with Aquila's οἱ υἱοὶ θεῶν, we once again see an attempt to humanize the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים.

In treating the balance of Gen. 6:1 ff., Aquila shows both his individuality vis-à-vis the LXX translation and the

orthodoxy of his approach. The פללים are not equated with the גבורים, as was the case with the LXX, Theodotion, and the Targum Neofiti. Instead, as in Pseudo-Jonathan, Aquila approaches the term with regard to its root פל. As seen earlier, Pseudo-Jonathan used פל to incorporate the נחש וזאב myth into his narrative, which he turned to polemical advantage. Aquila approaches the text in much the same way and with the same intent. In Job 1:15 and Isa. 47:11, Aquila translates פל as ἐπιπίπτειν. In both these cases, the פל can be taken to mean much the same as the English "to fall upon". This then allows him to translate פללים as ἐπιπίπτοντες, or "assailants". This translation accomplishes two ends. The term פללים, which could be seen as relating to the בני האלהים, is neutralized, while the immoral character of the פללים is affirmed.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bowker, p. 25, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander, pp. 64-5.

<sup>3</sup>Contra Celsum IV:31, as cited by Alexander, p. 65.



## XII. JOSEPHUS

Josephus' testimony, while appearing scant at first glance, has in fact many features that invite comment. There seems little doubt that Josephus was au courant with the tradition of the angelic בני האלהים consorting with the "daughters of men", and in his case more specifically, the daughters of Seth. He begins his description of the Sethite line in the following way:

[Adam] had indeed many other children, but Seth in particular. As for the rest, it would be tedious to name them; I will therefore only endeavor to give an account of those who proceeded from Seth. (Antt. I:II:3)<sup>1</sup>

Josephus does not spare the reader the tedium of his panegyric on the righteous line of Seth. Unfortunately, according to the apologist, the Sethites only remained righteous for seven generations:

But in the process of time they were perverted . . . . But for what degree of zeal they had formerly shown for virtue, they now showed by their actions a double degree of wickedness, whereby they made God their enemy; for many angels of God accompanied with women and begot sons that proved unjust and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had . . . for the tradition is that these men did what resembled the acts of those the Grecians call giants. (Antt. I:II:1)

In Josephus' mind the בני האלהים are clearly the angels. He also implies the tradition that it was the righteous line of Seth that had intercourse with the angels. This could be taken to indicate a counter-tradition to that found in I Enoch, where

it is the Cainite line who were the consorts.

In Chapter LXXXV of Enoch, which is somewhat later than the Noachite fragments, the "fallen angels" narrative is repeated in a dream vision. In this vision, the children of Cain are designated as black oxen, while those of Abel and later Seth are designated as white oxen. The "falling angels" (stars) do not consort with all the children of man, but rather only with the Cainites who subsequently bore giants (elephants, camels and asses). It is perhaps of note that there was a gnostic group which took the name of the Cainites. This could be a reflection on this passage where only the Cainite line would have had access to the esoteric knowledge brought by the angels.<sup>2</sup>

In Josephus' account, against that of Enoch, the Sethites sin prior to the descent of the angels. This can be understood in an apologetic light, since it is this sinful behavior which seduces the watchers. The product of the union is described in LXX terminology as οἱ γίγοντες. These giants, despite the appeals of Noah, continue in their sinful ways. It is due to their behavior that God decides to take dramatic action:

. . . he not only condemned those other men [giants] for their wickedness, but determined to destroy the whole race of mankind . . . and cutting short their lives, and making their years not so many as they formerly lived, but one hundred and twenty only. (Antt. I:IV:2)

It is difficult to determine whether the shortening of life spans refers to the giants only, or to mankind in general, though the latter seems the more likely.<sup>3</sup> If so, Josephus ignores the longevity that was recorded of various post-deluvians.

The ensuing flood kills "all these men" which can be

taken to refer to both the giants and mankind. This position is against that of I Enoch as well as showing no compulsion on the part of Josephus to strike a narrative harmonious with both Gen. 6:3 and Num. 13:33.

Thus far, there is nothing that points to an anti-protognostic polemic. Returning to the Sethite panegyric, it becomes evident that Josephus also was not without a certain anti-gnosis preoccupation.

The children of Seth:

. . . were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies, and their order . . . they made two pillars, the one of birch, the other of stone, they described their discoveries on them both . . . Now this remains in the land of Siriad to this day.  
(Antt. I:II:3)

The scientific discoveries which Enoch saw as evil-inspiring revelations from the angels are now cast in a positive light. This is not to be taken as a pro-gnosis position on the part of Josephus. Much of the knowledge which Enoch so roundly condemned, such as astrology, would have seemed attractive to an inquiring mind of that age. A religious group that claimed to have received divine revelation about these same sciences would have of course appeared doubly attractive.

Josephus attempts to undercut this potential attraction by rearranging the myth. The Cainite line of gnostic transmission is denied and replaced with the Sethite, in opposition to the Enoch myth. The revelatory constituent of this knowledge is also denied with the Sethites being termed "inventors". The angels meanwhile, are removed entirely from the scene, as this

narrative antedates the descent. But Josephus is not content to alter this tradition without demonstrating to his possible detractors (proto-gnostic?) that this tradition is based on "scientific" fact. For those who might question the historicity of this account, Josephus points to the existence of the Sethite pillar "in the land of Siriad to this day".

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Text taken from Josephus, Loeb Classical Library (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930). English translation from Whiston.

<sup>2</sup>The use of animals in this allegory might be a product of the view that the נפלים were "abortions" as in Bereshith Rabbah 26:7, that is, unnatural births. Another possibility presents itself. If a נ were added to המה of v. 4, the text would read "and they bore animals (בהמה) to them".

<sup>3</sup>So Whiston, p. 28, note.

## XIII. PSEUDO-PHILO

Pseudo-Philo, or Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (LAB), is a work with a remarkably checkered history. It was first published in 1597 and at that time was accredited as a work of Philo of Alexandria, hence Pseudo-Philo.<sup>1</sup> It then somehow was forgotten to be resurrected for scholarly attention in the present century. This work has survived in the Latin and scholars argue that this is a translation from the Greek which had in turn been translated from the Hebrew original.<sup>2</sup> This original is usually placed in the first century A.D., sometime after the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

Although its supposed trilingual history raises suspicions as to its trustworthiness, it is recognized as being potentially of great utility. J. Bowker enthusiastically writes:

It is one of the earliest examples of continuous haggadic interpretation and it is an important witness to the antiquity of many traditions and to the early form of others.<sup>4</sup>

Although dated in the first century, Bowker feels that "its traditions and legends may well go back much earlier."<sup>5</sup>

Pseudo-Philo's version of Gen. 6:1 ff. is brief enough that it would perhaps be useful to quote it at length:

And it happened when men had begun to multiply on the earth, that beautiful daughters, were born unto them. And the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were very beautiful; they took wives for themselves of all that they had chosen.

And God said: 'My spirit will not judge these men forever because they are flesh; but their years will be 120'; at which He set the limits of life; and in their hands the law will not be extinguished. And God saw that among all the dwellers of the earth evil works were put into effect . . . . (III:1-3)<sup>6</sup>

Pseudo-Philo's handling of the Genesis text shows the utmost care. He surprisingly translates the בני האלהים as "sons of God". Bowker explains this literalism in the following manner:

At the time when Pseudo-Philo was written, it was still possible to write 'sons of God', but the alteration [of the Targumim] became standard and expected.<sup>7</sup>

Bowker's assessment suffers on a number of counts. He assumes that the Targumic alteration was due to a more respectful handling of divine names. It has been demonstrated in this work that in this case at least, polemical priorities lay behind the varied interpretations and renditions of the text. The caution that Pseudo-Philo exhibits in regard to this text indicates that at the time of its composition, the same dangerous currents were operative that necessitated the Targumists' alteration of the text in the "standard/expected" manner.

Also, it is quite possible that Pseudo-Philo was a Hellenistic product which would put it under the influence of the LXX tradition, a tradition which literally translated בני האלהים. It should be remembered that, as was the case of the LXX, a "sons of God" rendition need not point to the text's being unproblematic, but can be taken to be an absolution from involvement in the problem, or a "washing the hands" of respon-

sibility as to the conclusions an individual might draw.

In Pseudo-Philo, there is no mention of the progeny of the angels and the women, nor is there any mention made of the נפלים. It has consistently been shown that this last mentioned term posed no end of difficulty for the orthodox exegetes. It should therefore come as no surprise that Pseudo-Philo chose to ignore it. Perhaps in deciding to avoid any reference to the נפלים, Pseudo-Philo opted to ignore Gen. 6:4 in its entirety. Another possibility is that the author felt the phrase גבורים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ too dangerous for the reasons mentioned earlier.

There is, however, one significant addition. Pseudo-Philo adds to v. 3 "in their hands the law will not be extinguished". It was noted earlier that a judgemental understanding of חוק could be perceived by the proto-gnostics as an invitation to antinomianism. Pseudo-Philo does translate חוק in a judgemental sense, but adds by way of warning that "the law will not be extinguished".

There is one further text that is of interest. In describing the genealogy of Cain, and more specifically the birth of Tabel (Tubal Cain), it reads:

And this is the Tabel who showed men skills in lead and tin and iron and copper and silver and gold. And then the dwellers on earth began to make images and worship them. (II:9)

Here is an allusion to two disparate biblical texts and traditions; Gen. 4:22 and the Targumic version of Gen. 4:26. The former deals with the Cainite line of descent, while the latter deals with the Sethite. By conflating these two texts,



Pseudo-Philo is able to condemn the Cainites while rehabilitating the Sethites, by attributing the Sethite sin of idolatry (Gen. 4:26) to the Cainites.

# Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bamberger, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>M. R. James, The Biblical Antiquities of Philo (New York: S.P.C.K., Macmillan Co., 1917), pp. 27-8. More recently, see L. H. Feldman, proleg., The Biblical Antiquities of Philo (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1971), pp. xxviii-xxx1.

<sup>3</sup>James, pp. 29-34.

<sup>4</sup>Bowker, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>The translation for Pseudo-Philo is taken from Bowker, Appendix I.

<sup>7</sup>Bowker, p. 61, n. 6.

## XIV. BERESHITH RABBAH

To conclude this discussion, a Midrashic statement attributed to the noted tanna R. Simeon b. Yohai will be investigated:

R. Simeon b. Yohai called them (בני האלהים) the sons of nobles (בני דייניא); R. Simeon b. Yohai cursed all those who called them sons of God (בני אלהיא).

There are several difficulties in this highly polemical passage. The nature of the literary material is itself a problem in that the Midrashic material, while admittedly containing much that is of primitive tradition, is a late compilation. Thus, when presented with a statement of an individual active in the middle of the second century A.D., there are no absolute assurances that its contents reflect a theological perspective anterior to the final edition of the text in question.

In this particular case, an early tradition is reasonably certain. In treating the Targumim, it was noted that בני דייניא was employed. The בני דייניא rendition was known to Origen and in all probability influenced Aquila, while it seems to have been unknown to Josephus. It is then highly likely that this translation was initiated in R. Simeon's time, that is, the beginning of the second century A.D.

Besides these general problems, this text poses linguistic difficulties. The term employed for בני האלהים is

כְּנִי אֱלֹהִים.<sup>2</sup> As Alexander points out, the divine name, assuming that it is in fact אֱלֹהִים, is rather difficult to translate literally. Instead, he suggests that it is used in a plural majestatis sense, similar to the Targum of Ps. 136:2.<sup>3</sup> Even in accepting Alexander's position as credible, one is still obliged to ask why the sage chose such a surprisingly vague and difficult term. Owing to the intent of the passage in question, one might have anticipated שְׁמִי or a variant thereof.<sup>4</sup>

Alexander unfortunately does not address himself to this question. Instead, he attempts to show that R. Simeon's desire was to criticize the prevailing view that the כְּנִי אֱלֹהִים were angels. This assertion further confuses the already obscure motive behind R. Simeon's heated remarks. If the author had only intended an identification with angels, why did he not curse all those who called them "angels" (מַלְאכִי)?

From the broader investigation thus far, the following solution can be proposed. R. Simeon did in fact have an identification with angels in view. But the focus of his attack was not the angelic nature of the כְּנִי אֱלֹהִים, but rather their origin. It has been demonstrated that the proto-gnostics believed these angels originated from the presence of the Good God. It was against the holders of this latter position that R. Simeon's diatribe was directed. The employment of כְּנִי שְׁמִי or a variant would not have sufficed in this case, as שְׁמִי etc. are but respectful substitutes for the name of the God of Israel. מַלְאכִי would not have sufficed, since it does not indicate that these angels descended from a realm other than that of the God of

Israel. R. Simeon therefore used the plural אלהים, which was not to be taken as a reference to the creator God of Israel, but rather to a god whose existence was perceived as other than the creator God. It is therefore difficult to accept Alexander's analysis. A plural majestatis loses its 'majesty' if it is not preceded by a singular.<sup>5</sup> It is the plurality of gods that R. Simeon is attacking; that is, the שתי גזירות or "two principles (powers)". In effect, this midrash should be taken to read: "R. Simeon b. Yohai cursed all those that called them angels of the Good God of gnosis."

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bereshith Rabbah, 26:5, 2. Text taken from the edition of J. Theodor, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965); translation is from Alexander.

<sup>2</sup>אלהיא is found in Oxford 147, Stuttgart 32, and Vatican 30; with Vatican 60, Venice, Oxford 2335 אלהיא and Paris אלהא.

<sup>3</sup>Alexander, p. 61, n. 6.

<sup>4</sup>See Marmorstein, Names.

<sup>5</sup>It is of note that a plural majestatis often does not admit the reality of the plural.

## XV. CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to reconstruct the proto-gnostic exegesis of Gen. 6:1 ff. through an analysis of the orthodox counter-exegetical traditions. In summary, the following proto-gnostic exegesis can be postulated:

Angels (בני האלהים/נפלים) from the Good God of gnosis descend (ירד) to earth to reveal the existence of their divinity (Gen. 4:26) (לקרא בשם יי; שמחזאי; אנשי השם), thereby liberating mankind from the malevolent dominion of the Demiurge. Unfortunately, for the recipients (גבורים אנשי השם) of this knowledge, their continued presence on earth allows the Demiurge to avenge himself for his loss of absolute authority by shortening their lifetimes (Moses). But at the same time, his power has in fact been broken by the revelation. The illuminated are no longer subject to his judgement (לא ירון) and by extension to the rigors of legal prescriptions.

This investigation has proceeded in a chronological manner, which allows further observations to be made.

For approximately four hundred years, the anti-gnosis polemic was conducted with due reference to the existing and obviously popular gnostic exegesis. This situation changed dramatically in the late first and early second centuries A.D. with Aquila, Simeon b. Yohai, and the Targum Neofiti. At this

point in time, the orthodox appear to have adopted a much more aggressive posture by humanizing the בני האלהים. This change in attitude corresponds to the profound changes in the structure of Jewish life that accompanied the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The defeat of the Jewish insurgents by the Romans heralded the victory of the Pharisees. The religio-political centre of authority shifted from Jerusalem to the newly constituted Jamnian community, and it was from Jamnia that a much more aggressive and monolithic Judaism emerged. The new leadership attempted to consolidate its ranks by the pruning of religious dissidents, a policy typified in the famous "Benediction Against Heretics". It is beyond the bounds of this discussion to investigate whether in fact the בני האלהים here referred to are Jewish Christians or rather Jewish heretics (proto-gnostic?) in general.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that religious deviation was not to be tolerated by the Pharisaic authorities, and it was due to these new circumstances that a more radical policy was pursued vis-à-vis the proto-gnostic exegesis of Gen. 6:1-4.



Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>See section Introduction, n. 3.

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