

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 20—October, 1894.

## I.

### PROF. GEORGE D. HERRON AS A LEADER.

THE Rev. George D. Herron, D.D., has been brought into a new prominence recently, by the issue of the symposium in *The Northwestern Congregationalist* which resulted in the change of that paper into *The Kingdom*, and its erection into the organ of a new movement. He had been already well known and generally favorably regarded as a writer of great force, of intense earnestness, and of profound devotion to the great principle of sacrifice for others, which is the distinctive Christian doctrine, and which he knows how to enforce with startling vividness. In the department of sociology the Christian world is looking anxiously for a leader, for a man who shall come forward and speak the word at the present crisis which shall set the Church upon the way which the times call upon it to tread. Many regard Dr. Herron as this man, though he himself designates himself only as a "voice." Still, if he is a voice which shall exhibit the calmness, wisdom, balance and soundness which are required in a leader, he need but utter his cry and he will be the leader needed. Thousands of others can be found to put into execution the wisdom which he shall express.

The present writer has recently read, throughout, all the published works of Dr. Herron for the sake of determining for himself what the promise of finding here the desired leader may be.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *The Larger Christ*, 1891 (quoted as *L. C.*); *The Call of the Cross*, Four College Sermons, 1892 (*C. C.*); *A Plea for the Gospel*, 1892 (*P. G.*); *The New Redemption*, 1893 (*N. R.*); *The Christian Society*, 1894 (*C. S.*). In the last volume is included Dr. Herron's first tract, *The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth*, 1890 (*M. W.*).

## V.

### THE SONS OF GOD AND THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN.

**I**N regard to the paragraph Gen. vi. 1-8 the most recent critics have fallen back upon the position taken up by fragmentists, such as Vater, who affirmed that it was not only disconnected with the genealogy in chap. v, which precedes, and with the account of the flood which succeeds it, vi. 9 *seqq.*, but that it falls apart itself into two unrelated paragraphs, vers. 1-4 concerning the primeval giants, and vers. 5-8 the divine purpose to destroy the world and save Noah.

But the fact is that there is the most intimate connection throughout, and this passage can neither itself be split into fragments nor sundered from the context in which it stands. The genealogy in chap. v conducts the line of descent by regular steps from Adam to Noah, pausing here because there was something to record about Noah before proceeding further, and departing from the analogy of the rest of the chapter by naming three sons of Noah instead of one, as in the case of every preceding patriarch, because they were all concerned in what was to follow. The closing verse of chap. v is thus directly preparatory for the account of the deluge which comes after. Further, this verse contains the statement of Noah's age at the birth of his children, but the length of his subsequent life and the duration of the whole, which had been regularly given in the case of preceding patriarchs, are here wanting. These are, however, supplied (vii. 6) by the statement of Noah's age at the coming of the flood, and then, after the account of the deluge had been given and all that was to be said further about Noah, there follows in the identical forms of the genealogy (chap. v) the time that Noah lived after the flood and the total of his years (ix. 28, 29). This is a clear indication that this genealogy, instead of being broken off and terminated at the close of chap. v, is simply enlarged by the insertion of the narrative of the deluge, which is incorporated within it. After this the divergent lines of descent are introduced (chap. x), and then the main genealogy is resumed and proceeds (xi. 10-26) until it reaches the name of Abram, when it pauses, or rather is enlarged again, to receive the history of the patriarchs.

Again, vi. 1-8 is formally linked to what precedes in the original Hebrew by Vav Consecutive, and by the statement of men's beginning to multiply on the face of the earth, which sums up the substance of chap. v in a few words, the expansion of the race being indicated by the statement repeated in the case of each patriarch, "He begat sons and daughters." It is further appropriate to the connection as preparing the way for what follows, by explaining the universality of the corruption which was the moral cause of the flood. This is the subject of vers. 1-4, which is accordingly intimately related to vers. 5-8 and leads directly to it, making that clear which would otherwise be quite unaccountable.

The sons of God (vers. 2, 4) are not angels nor demigods,\* whose intermarriage with the daughters of men brought forth a race of monsters or superhuman beings.

1. This purely mythological conceit was foisted upon the passage in certain apocryphal books like the Book of Enoch; also by Philo and Josephus, who were misled by the analogy of ancient heathen fables. But it was repelled by the great body of Jewish and Christian interpreters from the earliest periods, though it has been taken up again by a number of modern scholars. It is assumed by them that a transgression of angels is here spoken of, though the existence of angels has not been before mentioned nor in any way referred to in the previous part of the Book of Genesis. This view has no sanction whatever in Scripture. Jude, vers. 6, 7, and 2 Pet. ii. 4 have been tortured into sustaining it; but they contain no reference to this passage whatever. And there is no analogy anywhere in the Bible for the adoption by the sacred writers of mythological notions in general, or for the idea in particular of the intermarriage of angels and men. Sexual relations are nowhere in Scripture attributed to superior beings. There is no suggestion that angels are married or are given in marriage; the contrary is expressly declared (Matt. xxii. 30). Male and female deities have no place in the Bible, except as a heathen notion which is uniformly reprobated. The Hebrew language does not even possess a word for "goddess." The whole conception of sexual life as connected with God or angels, is absolutely foreign to Hebrew thought, and for that reason cannot be supposed to be countenanced here.

2. The sole foundation for this mistaken interpretation is the alle-

\*The Targums and some other Jewish authorities understand by "sons of God" nobles, men of high rank or official station, who in Ps. lxxxii. 6 are denominated "sons of the Most High;" and by "daughters of men" women of inferior position, as in Ps. xlix. 2, lxii. 9, בְּנֵי אֱדֹמִים are contrasted with בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים as men of low degree with men of high degree. But no such contrast is suggested here; and the intermarriage of different classes in society is nowhere represented as displeasing to God or provoking the divine judgment.

gation that "sons of God" must according to Scriptural usage mean "angels;" which, however, is not the case. Even if that were the more usual and obvious interpretation of the phrase, which it is not, the connection in which it stands would compel us to seek a different meaning for it here, if that were possible, and one which would be compatible with marriage. "Sons of God" בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים is a poetic designation of angels occurring three times in the book of Job, i. 6, ii. 1, xxxviii. 7; and a like expression בְּנֵי אֱלִים is found twice in the Psalms in the same sense, xxix. 1, lxxxix. 6. Daniel iii. 25, בְּרֵי אֱלֹהִין "son of the gods," has also been appealed to; but this has nothing to do with the case, as it is the language of Nebuchadnezzar, and represents a genuine heathen conception. Angels are nowhere so called in the Pentateuch, nor anywhere in the Bible but in the few passages already referred to.

3. On the contrary, "sons of God" is a familiar designation of the chosen race, the worshippers of the true God. Moses is instructed to say to Pharaoh, Ex. iv. 22: Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son: let my son go. So Deut. xiv. 1: Ye are the sons of Jehovah your God. In the Song of Moses, Deut. xxxii, this idea of sonship occurs repeatedly. Ver. 5: They have dealt corruptly with him, they are not his sons. Ver. 6: Is Jehovah not thy father? Ver. 18: He is called the Rock that begat thee, the God that gave thee birth: and the people are called (ver. 19) His sons and His daughters. Hos. i. 10: Ye are the sons of the living God; xi. 1: Israel is called God's son. Isaiah in repeated passages speaks of the people as God's sons. Isa. i. 2, xliii. 6, xlv. 11. In Jer. xxxi. 20, the Lord calls Ephraim His dear son, His favorite child. In Ps. lxxiii. 15, the pious are called "the generation of God's children." And, on the other hand, the worshippers of false gods are called their children. Thus Num. xxi. 29; the people of Moab are spoken of as the sons and daughters of Chemosh. Mal. ii. 11, an Israelite who had taken a foreign wife is said to have married the daughter of a strange god. It is in entire accord with this Biblical usage that the pious race, who adhered to the true worship of God, are called the sons of God in contrast with the descendants of Cain, who had gone out from the presence of Jehovah and abandoned the seat of His worship entirely.

4. And this brings the verses before us into correspondence with numerous other passages of the Pentateuch in its practical aim. The law of Moses again and again forbids intermarriages with the Canaanites lest they should contaminate Israel and seduce them to idolatry. The Book of Genesis inculcates the same lesson when it depicts Abraham's concern about the marriage of Isaac (xxiv. 3, 4), and that of Isaac and Rebekah about the marriage of Jacob (xxvii.

46, xxviii. 1, 2), the distress which Esau's marriage caused his parents (xxvi. 34, 35, xxviii. 6-8), and the trials of Jacob's family at Shechem (chap. xxxiv). If the verses before us point out the ruinous consequences of the intermarriage of the godly race with the ungodly, it furthers an aim which the writer of Genesis and of the Pentateuch evidently had greatly at heart. A warning not to intermarry with angels would be altogether unmeaning.

5. This explanation of how it came to pass that the pious portion of the race were infected with the universal degeneracy is not only appropriate in the connection, but is necessary to account for the universality of the following judgment, which is repeatedly and largely insisted upon. This is an integral and essential part of the narrative, the omission of which would leave an unfilled chasm. The primal source of human corruption had been germinally shown in the fall (chap. iii); the degeneracy of the Cainites had been traced (chap. iv). Nothing but good, however, had thus far been said of the race of Seth (iv. 26, v. 22, 24, 29). That this pious race were themselves involved in the degeneracy which had overtaken the rest of mankind, is here stated for the first time. But this is necessary to explain why the whole race of man, with the exception of a single family, should be doomed to destruction.

6. The explanation now given is further confirmed by ver. 3, where sentence is passed for the offense described in the preceding verse. In what the offense consisted, if the sons of God were angels, is not very obvious. It is not illicit intercourse which is described; the terms used denote lawful marriage. But if it was wrong for the angels to marry women, the angels surely were the chief offenders: and yet no penalty is denounced upon angels. The divine sentence falls exclusively upon men. There is such an obvious incongruity in this that Budde\* insists that ver. 3 is an interpolation and does not belong in this connection, but has been transferred from the account of the fall of our first parents. The incongruity that is alleged, however, does not show the verse to be an interpolation, but simply that the mythological sense which has been given to the passage is false.

7. The word Nephilim, occurring ver. 4, has given rise to the strange deduction that this passage originally stood in no connection with the account of the flood; that the author of it in fact knew of no such event. The only foundation for this inference is that the same word is found again in Num. xiii. 33 in the evil report of the spies respecting Canaan. If the Nephilim here spoken of were still in existence in the days of Moses, how could there have been a catastrophe in the interval which swept away all mankind

\* *Biblische Urgeschichte*, p. 30.

except the family of Noah? But this rests upon the unproved assumption that the Nephilim of the Book of Numbers were lineal descendants of those of Genesis. And on this uncertain basis the author or compiler of Genesis is charged with the absurdity of introducing a passage as preliminary to the deluge, which by its very terms implies that no deluge had taken place. Could he have so grossly mistaken its meaning? Or is it not possible that modern critics may have put a wrong interpretation on these isolated verses? The mere fact that the same term, "Nephilim," is applied both to antediluvians and to Canaanites is a very slender premise on which to base so extraordinary a conclusion. The word is obscure in its meaning and its derivation. It is more probably an appellative or descriptive term than a gentile noun. The LXX. translates it "giants;" other old Greek versions render it "assailants" or "violent men." It does not occur again in the narrative of the conquest of Canaan, as though it were the proper name of a tribe, but only in the report of the spies, whose excited imagination could best express the terror inspired by these men of great stature and powerful frame by saying that they were the old giants revived.

It is further to be observed that the Nephilim are not said to have sprung from the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. The statement is that the Nephilim were in the earth prior to these intermarriages, and also after these intermarriages had taken place. But it is not said that they were in any case the fruit of such marriages. The critics, however, tell us that though this is not expressly stated, it is implied. This is by no means necessarily so. But suppose it to be granted; the mythological interpretation is an impossibility nevertheless. The idea that the Nephilim were a superhuman race sprung from the union of angels with the daughters of men is completely nullified by the explicit declaration that the Nephilim existed before such marriages took place as well as after. No new species of creature can be intended, therefore, whose origin is traced to the intermarriage of different orders of beings.

8. It is objected that "the daughters of men" must have the same universal sense in ver. 2 as in ver. 1; and that the contrast of "the sons of God" with "the daughters of men" shows that different orders of being are here referred to. But this contrast works precisely the other way. It has been already shown that in Scripture language the sons of God are His chosen people—the God-fearing race. In contrast with them "the daughters of men" are necessarily limited to the rest of mankind, the ungodly mass. Abundant illustrations can be given of the restriction put upon

universal terms by their context. In Jer. xxxii. 20, God is said to have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, in Israel and among men. It is said of the wicked (Ps. lxxiii. 5), "They are not in trouble as men; neither are they plagued like men." In Judges xvi. 17, Samson says: "If I be shaven I shall become weak and be like all men." No one has ever inferred from these passages that Egypt and Israel, the wicked and Samson, belonged to some other race of beings because they are set in contrast with "men." The universal term is restricted by its connection; and hence the English version properly inserts the word "other" and reads "other men."\* A precisely parallel case may be found in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent (Gen. iii. 15): "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed." The seed of the woman interpreted by the following verse and taken in its unlimited sense would denote all her descendants. But the contrast with the seed of the serpent necessarily limits it to those of her race, who have not fallen under the power of evil, and of whom alone it can be said that they shall bruise the serpent's head.

9. Whatever interpretation be put upon doubtful expressions in ver. 3, it plainly intimates the divine purpose to inflict some penalty affecting the life of the whole human race. "His days shall be an hundred and twenty years," if spoken of the generation then living would mean that they should not survive that limit; if of successive generations of men, that this should henceforth be the term of human life. The former is demanded by the context. The latter is preferred by critics whose uniform usage is to interpret at variance with the context, if possible. It is here absolutely without support. There is no suggestion anywhere that the duration of human life was ever fixed at one hundred and twenty years. It is contradicted by all that is recorded of the ages of subsequent patriarchs from Noah to Jacob. This verse, then, explicitly points to a catastrophe, in which that whole generation should be involved, and which should take place in one hundred and twenty years.

10. Finally it is to be remarked that the argument for diversity

\* Prof. Strack (*Comment. on Genesis*, p. 21) refers likewise to several other passages in which general terms are limited by the connection, *e. g.*, Gen. xiv. 16, "the women and the people," *i. e.*, the rest of the people; or in which the same expression is used first in a universal and then in a restricted sense. In Judges xix. 30, "the children of Israel" means the entire people, but in the immediately following verses (xx. 1-3) all except Benjamin. In 1 Sam. xiii. 6, "the people" first means the whole, then a portion, and in ver. 7, "all the people" means the rest of the people. So Lev. viii. 15, "the blood" and "the" (rest of the) "blood." Compare Ex. xxix. 12; Lev. iv. 7, 18, 25, 30, 34.

of writers is not here rested in any measure upon differences of diction and style. The attempt which is made in this connection to analyze one of the so-called Pentateuchal documents still further into primitive and secondary portions, and to assign vi. 1-4 with a few other brief passages to J<sup>1</sup> in distinction from J<sup>2</sup>, is stoutly resisted by Dr. Dillmann,\* who says, "Aim, the writer's style and linguistic peculiarities are alike throughout the alleged older and more recent J passages; and one cannot see how the later writer could succeed in imitating the primitive document in so deceptive a manner; moreover, the differences between the passages of the alleged primitive document are actually much greater than between it and that which is alleged to be secondary." Budde,† too, has pointed out in detail the exact conformity of vi. 1, 2, in all its clauses and expressions, to the language of other passages, which are ascribed by the critics to the document J.

This passage has been considered thus at length in order to show how futile is the critical allegation that the opening verses of chap. vi are imbued with mythological ideas, and have been inserted here from some unknown document, and made to bear a sense at variance with their original and proper meaning. Equally groundless is the assertion that iv. 17-24 and xi. 1-9 imply that there had been no deluge. The further conclusion that these passages are isolated extracts from a common source, which knew nothing of any such catastrophe, falls of itself.

PRINCETON.

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\**Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua*, p. 632.

† *Biblische Urgeschichte*, p. 6.