

4. The Nephilim were in the earth in those days and also afterwards when the sons of God went in unto the daughters of men and they bore unto them. They were the heroes, which in olden days were renowned men,

Really quite a simple verse, unless one proceeds from the misinterpretation of the preceding verses and tries to link it up with the idea of angel marriages, a misconception prevalent since the days of the Septuagint translation. The basic rules of interpretation merely have to be observed: the presupposition, namely, that the Scriptures make good sense, develop their thoughts logically and naturally, and that simple grammatical rules still are in force. Says Skinner: "It was precisely this perspicuity of narration which the editor wishes to avoid." But why charge a Biblical writer with trying to write something not clear! Procksch assumes that the author J had quite a different original account, which he doctored up but left in a "wrecked state" (*truemmerhafte Gestalt*), which, of course, rather perplexes us. So men speak when they cannot find their meaning in the text.

Note now the simple fact that v. 4 does not follow v. 2. Note also that it does not attach itself by the expressive Hebrew "and" to what precedes. Verse 4 begins without a conjunction. It does not try to show what manner of persons the children of the misalliance of v. 2 were. Anybody can figure that thing out for himself. If fathers do not care to choose God-fearing wives to rear their children, the result will be that the children are not taught the fear of God, and so the godly ways of the patriarchs are abandoned. That's the result, nothing more. But v. 4 speaks of another class of ungodly men of olden times, setting the noun "*nephilim*" first by way of emphasis to make the new more prominent. But who were the *Nephilim*? Apparently, a type of men who were the climax of all such who inspired fear, as the only other passage where the term is used indicates, Num. 13:33. For there the spies first call all Canaanites "men of stature," and then they mention that even "Nephilim," sons of Anak, were there. Consequently, we are driven to seek some meaning for the word which makes them awe-inspiring. Following the Hebrew root *naphal* is by far the simplest. One meaning of this verb is to "fall upon == attack" (B DB) : see Jer. 48:32; Josh. 11:7; and without any preposition, Job 1:15. This verb

could readily yield this noun in the sense of “attackers,” “robbers,” “bandits.” So we have the thought: the descendants of the godly patriarchs abandoned their spiritual heritage (v. 1, 2) so that God was moved to determine upon their destruction (v. 3); and there were also violent attackers and robbers abroad in those days (v. 4). There was a negative breakdown of some, positive aggressive wickedness of others. Such an interpretation makes good sense. Besides, the very clause that follows makes it clear that these Nephilim, whom Luther describes quite aptly as “tyrants,” were on the earth already at the time when the Sethites commingled with the Cainites, but also that they continued after that sad confusion. The time clause, “when the sons of God went in,” makes this sad confusion stand out as a major calamity, so important that one could actually reckon time from it. Then the text adds that these Nephilim were the “heroes” of antiquity, the men of renown (Heb. “men of the name”). They achieved a reputation the world over by their violence, but a reputation better deserving of the term notoriety. The world certainly did not in those days, even as it does not now, esteem godly men highly. Only the wicked were renowned or had a name (*shem*).

The translation “giants” (A. V.) is most unfortunate. It originated with the Septuagint (γίγαντες). It does not follow from Num. 13:33, even if there the “attackers” should also happen to have been giants. For “sons of Anak” means “sons of the long-necked one,” and this *may* refer to gigantic stature. The unfortunate thing about this mistranslation is that it directs attention away from the moral issue (wicked bandits) to a physical one (tall stature). Besides, then, with a show of propriety modern interpreters combine the idea of giants with the misinterpretation about angel marriages and claim that the giants were the result of this union. But, in reality, nothing of the sort is found in the text. It is the result of a clever combination or of a mistranslation. Meek renders: “There were giants in the earth who were born to the gods whenever they had intercourse with the daughters of men.” This amounts to an unwarranted alteration of the text in the interest of a dogmatic preconception. Note well, too, that if there were a notice about giants inserted here it would not at all fit into the connection. Several critics are compelled to admit that they do not know why v. 4

does not follow v. 2. Certain older translators were nearer the truth than the Septuagint. Aquila, who like Symmachus wrote to correct the Greek version, rendered *Nephilim* επιπιπτόντες == “they who fall upon.” Symmachus, in a similar strain, βίαιοι == “powerful.”

The article before *Nephilim* is categorical (K. C.). *Yabho’u*, imperfect, expresses continuance: “they kept going in” (K. S. 157 ; G. K. 107 e). *Bo’* is euphemistic. *Hemah* is a characteristic sudden change of subject (K. S. 399 B).