

no temptations to attach erroneous or extravagant conceptions to it, as we have, to begin with. They at least had no need to theorize or speculate regarding the nature or extent of the miracle. They had no false first impressions of the phenomenon to alter or correct. There was no beginning of error among the tribes on the subject. Strangers reading their history in after ages, when Jewish authority to rectify their mistakes had gone, might well be forgiven for guess-work and speculation ; but to the early Hebrews themselves no difficulty presented itself.

Our chief difficulties in dealing with the subject are those of *divestment* and *realization*. It is hard to shake ourselves free of impressions produced on our minds by the exploded popular theories of the past, and still harder to realize what could be seen of the light on Gibeon from the battlefield of Bethoron. We have inherited a certain bent or proclivity of imagination as to the form which this miracle assumed ; and it has become associated in our minds with celestial phenomena of one kind or another on such a grand and impressive scale, that we are conscious of keen disappointment, and betray not a little impatience when anything less transcendent or imposing is suggested. Then if we suppose something less startling than the miraculous prolongation of the day, how shall we account for Joshua's prayer and the victory ?

Yet a calm and careful consideration of the circumstances seems to call for a final abandonment of the literal interpretation of the narrative. The sun could not have stood still for the sufficient reason that in its relative position to the earth it does not move. Nor could the arrestment of the earth's motion have made it *appear* to stand over Gibeon, which lay to the east of the battlefield on Bethoron ; for the day must have been far spent when the Hebrew leader offered up his prayer for continued light. Nor could the moon have been visible at Aijalon while the sun shone over Gibeon.

And a still greater difficulty on this supposition, and one that has been much overlooked, remains to be faced : Why should Joshua, here fighting in an exterminating war with the worshippers of the sun god, appeal to their idol for assistance ? Why should he think to win the battle for Jehovah by what the Bible has ever branded as an act of the grossest idolatry ? "Sun ! stand thou still at Gibeon ! and thou, Moon ! in the valley of Aijalon !" He would have deserved to be stoned !

Nor does "refraction of the sun's rays" meet the difficulties of the case ; for we must remember the dark, terrible storm-cloud that hung over the western sea, and the rain of ice that discomfited the host escaping westward, and effectually shutting out all light from the setting sun. "A mock sun" is dangerously like a "mock miracle."

There remains the commonly accepted theory of modern expositors to be considered—that the passage is merely a poetic exaggeration, a highly colored quotation from the Book of Jasher. All that we are entitled to draw from it is this : that the day, after all, proved long enough to enable

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