

temple be correct, and the number of days assigned in it to events connected with the Maccabees lends it some colour, the work then done will rather have been the regulation and codification of existing practice than the assignation of dates to events deserving of commemoration. Possibly at the time when it was compiled the list of acts that might not be done on the Sabbath was also provisionally fixed ; polemical interests may have caused its later alteration. And here it may be regretted that so little of the talent that has been spent on the analysis and grouping of partly imaginary codes, supposed to be contained in the Bible, has been devoted to the comparison of the codes actually existing among the Jews ; for any scientific account of the Old Testament must deal primarily with the form of it current among the Jews, and communication therewith can only be secured by advancing to it through the outworks of comments wherewith the Rabbis have surrounded it.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

*THE TERRORS OF THE SUN AND OF
THE MOON.*

WHEN the Psalmist says to me (Ps. cxxi. 5, 6)—

The Lord is thy Keeper :
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand :
The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night,—

I must needs be delighted, not only with the most comfortable assurance conveyed to me, but also with the charmingly picturesque way in which it is expressed. It is the fashion to lament the decay of poetic feeling under modern conditions of life amongst the general mass of our people. But one must not forget that Religion is the foster-mother of Poetry ; that of all books the Bible is most full of poetry ; that no one can really know and love

his Bible without acquiring (however unwillingly) a true and deep sympathy with that which is most poetic both in conception and in expression. That is not the highest reason for earnestly desiring that the masses of our fellow-countrymen should know and love their Bibles—far from it. But it is one additional reason for dreading that general unacquaintance with the Bible which prevails in certain lands.

The Psalmist's saying is, of course, a great deal more than charmingly picturesque: it contains much more than a comfortable assurance of protection. It goes deep down into human experience, and so divides it into two, that all things do really fall on this side or on that in a very true and marked sense. The sun which smites (or burns) by day, and the moon which threatens to do the same by night, stand very simply and intelligibly—and were, we venture to believe, *meant* to stand—for two widely separated sets of hostile influences. The sun by day is an enemy that cannot possibly be ignored. He is only too patent and obtrusive. In tropical and semi-tropical countries—and at certain times in almost all countries—he flames upon us all day long, and his level rays are even more dangerous than his midday scorch. Only a man without any experience would ever think or speak lightly of the terrors of the sun by day. The moon by night, on the other hand, is not really dangerous. Ask the man of science whether the sun's rays as reflected from the lunar orb can do any harm, and he will assuredly answer "no." Ask the most experienced medical man whether there is any truth in the popular stories of moon-struck folk, and he will certainly deny it. To lie with uncovered face beneath the open sky when the dew is falling has caused many an illness, but the beams of the moon had nothing to do with it. So they will say who ought to know, and we cannot gainsay. The moon does not smite by night.

Be it so. It is, then, an unreal or imaginary terror, as contrasted with the very real and well-founded terror inspired by the sun. That suits the purpose of the Psalmist perfectly, for it tells us, in the most picturesque and persuasive way possible, that the Lord is our defence quite as much (since it is as much needed) against imaginary as against real dangers. To take a very homely example: there are people who live in constant dread of cancer, others who live in constant fear of ghosts. It is not any use to say that if they do they are fools. Perhaps the majority of mankind will always be fools, for they will be uneducated peasants, women with nerves, children in the nursery stage. All these are apt to suffer, more or less, from fear of ghosts, of apparitions, of "spirits." Did not Christ die for fools, even more (if possible) than for wise people? Is it not certainly true that the one remedy which cannot fail against imaginary, as against real, dangers, enemies, terrors, is to place oneself consciously under the shadow of His all-loving, all-powerful protection? Nothing can hurt then, whether it exists or is only fancied to exist; whether it has a certain power to strike, or merely seems to lurk in the dark.

We deceive ourselves in this matter because we have in our own land and age so successfully got rid of "ghosts." We have got rid of them, and all their kind, in virtue of the steady and victorious progress of the secular, the materialistic, spirit of the age. It has helped us greatly here, so much so that for the educated and enlightened imaginary terrors have almost ceased to exist. We are thankful, but none the less do we recognise that this is not God's way—it is not the method of Christ's religion. It is far too expensive, for one thing: the spirit of the age which kills superstition does its best to kill faith too, and has largely succeeded. For another thing, it acts too partially; those who are seen and heard, who come to

the surface, are delivered from ghosts; the dim multitude below are not. The method of Christ's religion is not to tell people that there *are* no ghosts, but to tell them that, even though there were, they cannot possibly do any harm, they need not certainly cause any terror, to those that abide under the shadow of His wings. Such a method only befits the *universal* character and the *positive* character of Christ's religion: whereas the spirit of the age, though it sometimes works to the same ends, must needs work by methods which are negative and partial.

There is an excellent instance of the Bible method in Romans viii. at the end. In that splendid passage St. Paul repeats in a form more rhetorical but less poetical the assurances of Psalm cxxi. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing, however formidable: neither life nor death; neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers; neither things present nor things to come; neither height nor depth, nor any other creature. Now, as soon as ever we examine this list, we perceive that while many of the items are but too severely real—like life and death—others are mere creatures of the imagination. "Height" and "depth" have no actual existence. They are mere abstractions, conceptions of the human mind, products of that law of thinking according to which we are forced to arrange all things in time and space. Man, who is for ever being whirled about in space, is nevertheless obliged to think of himself as though he abode on a fixed point with a line stretching straight up above him for ever, which he calls "height," and another stretching straight down below him without end, which he calls "depth." It is not any way possible (and St. Paul must have known it was not) that these abstractions, these creatures of the imagination which have no real existence, should ever intervene between the faithful soul and the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ. You might as well ransack Euclid, or the tables of navigation, for possible enemies of the soul. You might as well go about to assure the anxious disciple that the square root of minus one could not and should not separate him from the love of God. Why, then, does the Apostle mention height and depth alongside of death and life and other most real and potent causes of fear? Because he is rhetorical, and his rhetoric leads him to write what is in effect nonsense? Rhetorical he is, and that must be honestly allowed for; but withal never anything but practical, because always concerned with the facts of the spiritual life. What he means is just what the Psalmist meant, that neither real dangers nor imaginary dangers are to be feared, neither the smiting of the sun by day nor of the moon by night. Of course he did not pick up those words "height" and "depth" at haphazard. Religion was curiously mixed up with cosmogony then, as it was afterwards with astrology. The jargon of the Gnostics in the second and third centuries is more or less familiar to all readers of Church history. Nothing is more distinctive of it than the juxtaposition of abstract names belonging to their pseudo-science of time and space with the names of most real and sacred personages. The forerunners of these men were among the religious impostors of St. Paul's age, and were nowhere more influential than in the province of Asia. Such terms as "height" and "depth" were often on their lips, and served to impress and alarm the ignorant and feeble-minded. Men did really fear lest their eternal future should be blasted through the malign influences of these abstract notions, these creatures of the mind! St. Paul does not stop to distinguish, to argue, to show up the unreason of such fears. It would not be like him to do so. It is enough for him that such fears did in fact exist. It is not in the least necessary (he would say) to discuss

that question *now*. Whether what you fear has any actual existence or not, makes (thank God) no difference in this respect. *Whatever* it is, however awfully real, however absurdly unreal, it cannot possibly do you any harm if you are in Christ. You may, by dint of education, be quite inaccessible to visionary terrors, or you may by character and training be a lifelong victim to them; it matters not. If you know what the Lord is to His own, you know that no conceivable power in earth or heaven can *really* harm you, since nothing has any efficacy against Him or His. The Lord Jesus is your Keeper: He is your shelter and shade: the sun shall not smite you by day, neither the moon by night.

We may go further in the same direction without going too far. What are these "principalities," these "powers," of which he speaks in this same significant passage? Do they belong, as the angels do, to the category of the real, though unfamiliar? Or, like "height" and "depth," to the category of the unreal? The names are, of course, fairly common; they recur in the writings of St. Paul; they were full of suggestion to those (and they were many) who had dabbled in the half-Jewish, half-Persian, lore of the day. But had they any real existence for St. Paul himself? That is a question which does not seem to have been frankly discussed. It has been assumed (in forgetfulness of the "height" and "depth" of Romans viii. 39) that whenever he mentions any names or titles of hostile beings, he must be taken to assert that such beings do in fact exist, and are in truth formidable. Devout people, *e.g.*, reading in Ephesians vi., feel themselves bound by the rules of faith to believe that the world at large, and especially the sub-celestial region of the atmosphere which surrounds the earth, is full of evil spirits of varying rank; that all these spiritual existences, so many and so powerful as they be, are the sworn enemies of the servants of God, and are

for ever exerting themselves to compass the destruction of our souls. This belief, which is nominally common to Catholics and Protestants, is well expressed in a story not unfrequently quoted in English pulpits. A certain saint, beginning his journey on the narrow way, was accorded a vision for his more enlightenment; and in his vision he saw the whole world full of devils who set gins and snares and prepared traps and pitfalls in every conceivable place to catch the followers of Christ. It is not necessary to criticise this story, because it merely expresses somewhat crudely what most Christians profess to believe, and what St. Paul seems to teach, concerning the "principalities" and "powers" of evil. With respect, however, to that teaching, two things fall to be considered which cannot possibly be ignored. The first is, that there is no such doctrine about devils in any other part of St. Paul's writings. In the Epistle to the Romans, *e.g.*, it is admitted that he goes into the deepest things of temptation, of sin, of spiritual life and health, disease and death. One stands amazed, even to one's latest reading, at the profoundness of his insight, the boldness of his analysis. But he has nothing to tell us of, nothing to warn us of, as regards devils. It is most emphatically true that in this Epistle our wrestling is *not* against principalities, or powers, or world-rulers of a darkened sphere, or spiritual hordes in the upper strata of the atmosphere, but precisely against that flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, against the old fallen nature within us, against that worse self which we have inherited as members of a sinful race, against that incorrigible passion of wrong desire which the very law of God has initiated and stimulated into fatal activity within us. St. Paul's astonishing presentation of his double self in chap. vii. may be full of difficulties, but it is accepted by the universal conscience as substantially true; and it leaves practically no room for

the activity of devils. You may introduce the agency of devils in the interests of theology; but in fact their presence is superfluous, and what men believe of them is purely formal and inoperative. "Wrestling" there is, God knows, bitter wrestling, without end, and sometimes almost without hope. But it is so terrible because it is against the unregenerate self, against the indomitable desires of the flesh and of the mind; *not* a thousand times, *not* against such vague and outside influences as "principalities" and "powers." Moreover it is obvious that with this agree altogether St. Peter and St. James. With the former it is "fleshly lusts which war against the soul," not spiritual intelligences out of the awful unknown. With the latter it is plain certainty that whosoever is tempted is so simply because he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.

It is not of course denied that both St. Paul in the Romans (and elsewhere), and St. Peter in his Epistle, are aware of the working of a Satan, an adversary, whose rage against the servants of Christ may be discerned in the systematic opposition and even persecution which they have learnt to expect. It is not forgotten that St. James recalls the characteristic behaviour of those evil spirits in Galilee of whom his Master cast so many out of the bodies of unhappy men and women. But there is nothing in these references (whatever difficulties of their own they may raise) which at all resembles that vast counter-hierarchy of malignant spiritual intelligences which St. Paul dimly outlines for us in Ephesians vi. There is indeed an appearance of unity and harmony in the kingdom of darkness which suggests the existence, behind the scenes, of a single evil will of vast power and resource; there are facts connected with the life-history of many people in many lands which point to the likelihood of their being "possessed," apart from express statements of Holy Writ. It

is, at any rate, quite open to Christian people to believe this much concerning infernal existences and agencies, and yet to disbelieve utterly in the principalities and powers, the world-rulers and the spiritual hordes of that passage in Ephesians. In order to bring that passage into harmony with other apostolic writings it would be necessary to assume that it embodies a fresh revelation of the unseen; for the Apostles show no consciousness elsewhere that we have to fight (as Christians) against devils. Let us then ask whether this can in truth be held to be a further revelation from God. If it be, it will of course be true whether we believe it or not. But, more than that, the truth of it will also vindicate itself (like the truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God) in the thinking and living of Christians. Now this doctrine about devils is—and this is our second point—dead, so far as intelligent Christian people are concerned. It has died a natural death, because in all their efforts to live up to their high calling no place for devils has been found. Most of these good people, perhaps, have retained a nominal belief in devils, because they understood they ought to; but the belief has been almost entirely nominal and inoperative. When it *had* some vitality, as in the case of Dunstan, or of Luther, the result has been simply a laughter and an astonishment to the world. In its vulgar form the belief in devils (quite naturally derived from the passage in Ephesians) has been killed for us by such efforts as the *Ingoldsby Legends* and Burns's "Address to the De'il." *It could not have been killed, even in its vulgar form, if it had had any vital connection with the true religion of a Christian.* But it has not. The more intensely a man realizes the awful and almost overwhelming importance of the strife to which he is called, the more exclusively will he be taken up with his sinful and treacherous self, the more intently will he fasten his eyes upon the weak points in his own character. That he will look up, and look off,

is indeed most certain; not, however, to those sub-celestial regions where malignant spirits do congregate and hatch their plots against men, but to that one place in the unseen where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. It is not any use to deny that it is so. This celebrated passage forms the theme of many sermons, but it stands in no real connection with the life-struggle of any single Christian person. There may be "principalities" and "powers"; but for us they are unreal, they may be frankly treated as non-existent (like "height" and "depth"); the less we think about them—save as mere matter for theological speculation—the better. Like the "meats" of which it speaks in the Epistle to the Hebrews, they have not profited them that have been occupied therewith. Why does no one nowadays put *Monro's Allegories* into the hands of his children? Because they are full of devils, of spiritual hordes of wickedness infesting the world, plotting and fighting against the souls of the faithful. Ask a good Christian parent whether such teaching is untrue to Scripture, and he will probably evade the question; but all the same he will quite rightly feel that such teaching is unwholesome and undesirable for his child. In short, if we want to put ourselves in harmony with what is truest and soundest in the almost universal conviction of Christian people nowadays, we could not do better than invert the saying of the Apostle, and read it thus: "For our wrestling is not against the principalities, the powers, the world-rulers, etc., but against flesh and blood, against the unregenerate self, against the law of sin which is in our members."

It remains to account for the passage as it stands; and herein we have the key ready to our hands in Romans viii. 38-39. There we have things so obviously and undeniably unreal as "height" and "depth" caught up by the indiscriminating sweep of the Apostle's rhetoric side by side with

other things so tremendously real as life and death. The very purpose of the passage is to collect and include all conceivable terrors, actual or imaginary, in one group, and to strike them *all* out in the name of Christ. The sun by day, the moon by night, neither shall have power to hurt or terrify any more. And along with life and death, with height and depth, we find already "principalities" and "powers" the nucleus, evidently, of that extended list of spiritual foes which bewilders us in Ephesians vi. If we are to estimate this latter passage aright, we must never forget that amongst the Ephesians (as amongst their Colossian neighbours) there existed a half-Jewish cultus of angels blended with a largely developed oriental demonology. When people become Christians, they do not take a sponge and wipe out once and for ever all the religious impressions previously made upon their minds. On the contrary, the mind of a Christian convert is a palimpsest, in which the Christian faith is written over what was there before; and what was there before frequently comes to view again—especially what does not seem contrary to the Christian faith, but may be regarded as supplemental to it. Now St. Paul was, above everything, practical—one might almost venture to say too much so. If he had a fault *in method*, it was that he was almost too ready to make himself all things to all men, so that he *seemed* to contradict himself, *seemed* to play fast and loose with his principles, *seemed* to agree with people when he really did not. His ardour for the salvation of men led him so eagerly to put himself in their place, to see things with their eyes, that he unquestionably laid himself open to misconstruction. In this matter also love is ready to run all risks, having so great an end in view; but in this matter also love has to take the consequences of its daring, and sometimes they are disastrous. The Ephesian Christians believed very much in "principalities" and "powers." They always had so believed, and as Christians

they had not been taught otherwise. Indeed as a mere matter of speculation it was open to Christians, as to others, to people the upper air with spiritual intelligences. But it was not any part of the faith which is in Christ: and for St. Paul himself it certainly had not any particular significance—as his other Epistles testify. Nevertheless in writing to the Ephesians he would fain become as an Ephesian, in order that he might enter into their religious anxieties, and show them how to rise above them. “Be it so” (he says in effect) “that you and I do not fear so much what *man* can do unto us—though I myself have ‘fought with beasts’ in your cities—but *are* terribly afraid of those awful unseen powers of evil, in whose grasp we seem so helpless. Be it so. It is not necessary to enquire just now whether these terrors are real or imaginary, nor is it desirable. Be it as bad as it can possibly be thought. Principalities, powers, world-rulers, spiritual hordes—whosoever, whatsoever, wheresoever, they be—you are as Christians fully armed against them, you have only to use your arms in order to be absolutely safe, and certainly victorious. You and I do not fear the smiting of the sun by day: we are in fact so used to it that we have measured and allowed for its dangers, and to a great extent dismissed them from our minds. But we *do* fear the smiting of the moon by night, so subtle, so incalculable, so disquieting. Be it so: to them that trust in God and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, the terrors of the moon by night shall be as little formidable as those of the sun by day.”

We are not of course to conclude that all this was as distinctly in the Apostle’s mind as we have set it down here. It is like enough that he had a certain hesitating, speculative belief in the existence, energy, malignity, of such an infernal hierarchy. But whatever this half-belief amounted to, it was no part of the faith which he taught in all the Churches. It formed no part of his religion, practically. Only it enabled

him, without any dishonesty, to put himself into line with these Ephesians for the moment, and to show them, from their own point of view, how to meet these terrors of the imagination. It is indeed often assumed that an inspired Apostle must either have certainly believed *or* emphatically disbelieved, anything and everything called religious. There is no ground for such an assumption. In every age and land there has been a wide margin of half-beliefs which form no part of the vital and effective faith of the man, but which often betray their existence in his speech and writing. It is in perfect keeping with all we know of inspiration that this should have been the case with St. Paul. It is impossible to determine how much or how little he himself believed in all these principalities and powers of evil. It is enough that, if anybody else believe in them, he may learn to go fully armed against them, neither open to their assault nor afraid of their terror. It does not matter at all whether there be any reality about them, or whether they be wholly visionary. The disciple of the Lord is defended against terrors of the imagination as well as against those of real life. The sun shall not smite him by day, neither the moon by night. After all is said, there remains the possibility that the moon *does* smite by night in some way unknown at present to science. Seafaring men, and men whose business keeps them much beneath the open sky at night, obstinately assert that the danger exists. Their opinion is not worth very much perhaps. Be it so. We have no desire to adopt it. Still, there *may* be worth in it. And there may, after all, be mysteries of infernal activity which threaten us from out the unseen. It is *possible* that the belief of Christians may swing back in this respect to that of the earliest age at Ephesus. It does not matter, for the question is not practical. It is certainly the sun by day against which we have to guard ourselves with care. As for the danger of the moon by night, it is enough

to know for certain that neither need we be the least afraid of *that*.

RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM.

HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES
TO THE CORINTHIANS.

XXVII. THE CORINTHIAN PHILOSOPHERS.

THE questions put by the Corinthians to St. Paul were suggested to them by the pressing calls and difficulties of their present situation—a scanty, needy group, almost submerged in the surrounding ocean of Paganism, keeping their heads above it only with difficulty, and with a constant tendency to sink again beneath the surface.

The Christians in Corinth had just risen out of the dead level of Paganism. The first effort had carried them clear above the surface; but reaction was inevitable, and with it many of them were in danger of sinking back again—probably some actually did sink.

We all know how difficult it is to sustain one's self permanently above the moral level of society, and with what force surrounding society continually presses us into itself. But if we feel this when we are trained up from infancy amidst influences and exhortations reminding us that it is our duty to try to rise above the level of society, how much more must the Corinthians have felt it when this idea of moral elevation had been presented new to them after they were grown to mature age, and still more after the voice of their first teacher was withdrawn from them and they were left to struggle alone!

Again, we have grown up amid an atmosphere and spirit in society and in education which Christianity has created. Even those who now strenuously resist Christianity cannot, if they would, free themselves from what it has planted