

## THE VALUE OF SUPERSTITION.

As Josephus was disposed to apologize for his countrymen the Jews, and to attempt to show that their restlessness under the government of Caesar was not the result of their religious laws, etc., (as shown in our August issue), so many Christians are disposed to apologize for the spread of a Revolutionary spirit, a spirit of insubordination, wherever the gospel goes; and they, like Josephus, disclaim the responsibility of themselves and of the Christian religion. But this is because both they and Josephus are tinctured with the philosophy of their times.

The *liberty* and *equality* which the gospel inculcates is much akin to the more shadowy typical teachings of the same, given to the Jews; and the natural results of this knowledge upon the unconsecrated are much the same now as then, leading to socialism, anarchism and various impracticable ideas on the part of some who are neither controlled by a well-balanced intellect, nor by the spirit of Christ, nor directed by a knowledge of God's *time* and *method* of righting matters now seriously at fault.

Josephus, writing for Grecians and Romans in Rome, manifests his object to have been, to show that the Jewish philosophies, no less than the Grecian, tended to peace, and submission to rulers; hence after reporting the Jewish views as nearly as possible to correspond to the Grecian, he adds, "on account of which doctrines they are able to *greatly persuade* the body of the people."

The intelligent portion of the world has always esteemed peace and good government as of vital importance, hence worldly-wise philosophers and statesmen have often approved and even advocated theories which they themselves at heart rejected as absurdities, simply because they realized the need of some "doctrines by which the body of the people might be *greatly persuaded*" to relinquish their freedom

and submit to the ruling of the more able and crafty. Since fear is one of the greatest incentives, fear has generally been used; and since prejudice and superstition are the ablest supports to fear, these have been cultivated by all philosophies. And by whatsoever name known, or accompanied by whatsoever appearances of learning – as colleges, learned men, books, etc., – such philosophies (built upon superstition and prejudice) are really but vain imaginings of imperfect men, and reveal their *ignorance of the truth*.

Nevertheless, in some respects at least, the world has profited by these systems and their various errors, which have had the effect aimed at by them all – namely "to greatly persuade the body of the people" – through fear. And it is for the same reason (philosophical conservatism), that wise statesmen and thinkers of later times, – such as Webster, Clay, Lincoln, Grant, Bismarck, and others, while not able or willing to accept any of the modern creeds of Christendom, nevertheless have favored all, realizing the need of "doctrines which would *greatly persuade* the body of the people."

Mankind in general, in the present fallen state, is mentally unbalanced and incapable of reasoning logically on any question. Only the few, the exceptions, are capable of drawing logical conclusions on financial, scientific and social, *i.e.* political, problems. Hence the world had its season of greatest *contentment* (which in some respects should be sought by all) when the masses were in utter ignorance, and trusted and obeyed blindly the dictates of the abler, more logical, and balanced minds, which rose to the surface and gained the power. But avarice, greed for power and honor and wealth, continually corrupted this abler class; and the philosophies of oppression and superstition overleaped their bounds; and the sleeping world began to awaken; and the great Reformation of the sixteenth century followed.

By fits and starts the awakening of the Reformation time has since progressed. And it has brought with it revolutions – political, ecclesiastical and scientific. This results from the dissemination of

Bible truths among the people. The Bible is the greatest of all levellers; the greatest of all liberators; the greatest of all revolutionizers. It sows its seeds deep and broad, by showing that all men are of *one blood*; that all alike were condemned to death; and that all alike, king and pope and peasant and slave, were redeemed by the *one sacrifice* given "once for all;" and that there is only *one way* for all to come to God, and that as they come they must all stand upon *one level* of acceptance, because God is no respecter of persons.

Wherever these principles of the true gospel are appreciated they are recognized as a grant of *liberty* from God, which inspires the people to a realization of their common rights and privileges, and causes them to feel restive under earthly potentates both kingly and priestly.

Though the world possesses the blessing of greater knowledge, and that more widely distributed among the masses than ever before; and though with it they possess many more comforts and conveniences than ever before – yes, even luxuries formerly possessed scarcely by the few, are now classed among the necessities by the many; and though there never has been a period of such general freedom, – liberty of person, of thought, and of conduct; yet for all this, it is doubtful if there ever was a period of more general discontent.

Let none misunderstand our meaning when we assert, that the Bible is indirectly the source of this discontent, as well as of present enlightenment and progress. Had the Bible been kept in the background, hidden from the people under cover of dead languages, as Papacy designed; had the decretals and bulls of [R1065 : page 3] the church of Rome continued to be the standard and law of men's consciences; the dark ages would still continue, and ignorance, superstition and *contentment* would prevail now, as it did in the twelfth century.

Knowledge and liberty can only be profitably used, and without danger of bad results, either by *perfect beings* able and willing to reason out fully the results, and to voluntarily submit to such restraints

and regulations as would be for the general good; or by imperfect beings, who are conscious of the imperfections of their minds and bodies, but whose hearts recognize the divine law and voluntarily submit every thought and act thereto; or by fallen beings under a just, infallible, rigorous government which could and would enforce righteousness.

To-day we see the knowledge of human rights spreading among the masses, and the chains of ignorance and superstition breaking, yet the people are unprepared for such liberty; they are unbalanced in judgment so as to be incapable of correctly estimating causes and effects; they are not consecrated to God, so as to be willing to be under the control of his will, expressed in the Scriptures; and we have no just, infallible government, able to *enforce* righteousness.

The result must be, that as superstitious dread of everlasting torment and other falsities depart, and the unwise, unbalanced masses gain a knowledge of their power, laws and governments, good, bad and indifferent, will all be swept away, and confusion and anarchy will obtain, – to the injury of all. That this very condition of things is rapidly approaching, all can see, who see at all. It cannot be repressed; it already has a great momentum and makes greater progress daily. It is both an evil and a blessing. Its first results will be evil, but it will prove to all mankind the absolute necessity of a just, strong government, which can enforce the right while men progress in knowledge – without requiring the aids of ignorance and superstition to maintain its control.

And while the people will be getting ready to welcome such a government, God is preparing just such a government for them, – Christ's Millennial Kingdom. Under its beneficent reign, knowledge shall be greatly increased, and man restored to God's image, which has been almost effaced by the past six thousand years of sin, so that he will be mentally balanced again and able to reason correctly on good and evil, right and wrong, advantage and disadvantage.

So then, ignorance and superstition are more favorable to *contentment* than a little knowledge; and the worldly-wise of the past saw this, and to the benefit of all kept the masses under subjection to law by these means. And God permitted it so to be, until his due time should come, in which, under control of the King of kings knowledge shall be made so perfect as to turn aside its present danger and to make it the basis of a much greater and more enjoyable contentment than ignorance ever produced.

We are now in the transition period, from the rule of superstition to the rule of truth. Many seeing the trouble will be inclined to shrink back, and to desire ignorance and superstition to chain and restrain the masses; and attempts to perpetuate these restraints will doubtless be made; but since God's due time has come for knowledge to be increased none can stay its progress. The consecrated church occupies, as ever, a peculiar position, seeing and appreciating without fear the result which others will dread. We have no fear, because we see the glorious results to be wrought out thus. It is in order that we should not be in darkness, as the world, that our Father's plans are thus unfolded to those of his children who, led of his spirit, have an ear to hear.

