

continue in their career of vice and crime until the approach of death, or some great calamity, frightens them into sudden compliance with the requirements of the great "plan." Every murderer, almost, who is hanged, confesses his belief in Christ and looks to Calvary for salvation. In the Middle Ages, especially, this doctrine promoted every kind of vice and villainy. To some extent—in proportion as it is believed—it does the same to-day. When men come to have less faith in Christ, and more faith in moral rectitude, they will attach less importance to their creed, and feel more concerned in giving full weight and measure, keeping their word, and paying their honest debts.

The belief in satanic agency and divine judgments has greatly injured the cause of human progress. It has turned men's attention from the real to the imaginary causes of their misfortunes. Afflicted with pestilence, and regarding it as a visitation of God to punish the people for some neglect of religious duties, men have commenced fasting and praying when they should have applied their minds to the study of physiology and hygiene, when they should have been at work, cleaning their streets, draining their marshes, and ventilating and fumigating their dwellings. Multitudes have been on their knees praying to God for the removal of plagues and other evils, because the Bible teaches that prayer and supplication are the proper means by which to effect their removal, when they should have been improving their physical condition. In proportion as men have outgrown the notion that evils are destroyed by such methods they have made progress in bettering their condition. Nowadays they trust to natural agencies. Even when a church is built and has been dedicated to God, the congregation has more faith in lightning rods than in the efficacy of prayer. Having dedicated the building to God, do they trust to his discrimination when he hurls his thunderbolts? By no means. They have no faith that the purpose for which the house was built will exempt it from the liability of accident, else they would use the money which is expended for lightning rods in publishing and distributing tracts, or in sustaining missionaries in heathen lands. When Frederick Douglass, after praying fifteen years in the usual way, came to the conclusion that a prayer with his legs was the only prayer that would reach his case, and accomplish his purpose, he represented the actual belief, and acted in accordance with the general practice of this utilitarian age.

Christianity, by making the Bible an authoritative standard of truth, has naturally perpetuated the errors and abuses which the book sanctions, while it has suppressed or discouraged the announcement of discoveries, and the dissemination of truths in conflict with those errors.

In our own country, and within the memory of men who are yet young, human slavery has been defended by the Bible, even when the best sentiment of the nation has been against it. That the Bible sanctions slavery is not a matter of doubt. See Lev. 25 : 44, 45 ; Exodus, 21 : 20 ; 1 Tim. 6 : 1, 2 ; Titus, 2 : 9.

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