

others. This we can trace in the practice of men in ancient times. How otherwise are we to account for the universal prevalence of slavery? and for the manner in which slaves were then treated? They did not stand on an equality, with others, with citizens and freemen, in the eyes of the law. And how lightly their lives were sacrificed at the caprice, or for the pleasure and amusement of their owners. They were indeed but little accounted of, when it was the favourite amusement of imperial Rome, to see them slaughter one another in the amphitheatre. And though, sometimes, in the literature of Greece and Rome, we find expressions that seem to indicate right thought on this matter, yet, it is plain that the Athenian or Roman citizen is alone considered, to the entire exclusion of the multitude of subject peoples among whom they dwell as lords. Our reason for not referring here to any modern theories of liberty and equality, may be obvious. The Scriptures, where they are known, have insensibly leavened the mind of society; and it would be hard to say how much of the right thought and feeling, of those even by whom they are despised and neglected, are owing, after all, to their presence and influence. Much, very much, without a doubt, is due to these.

But we see this tendency, of which we now speak, more palpably in the different systems of religion which men have established for themselves. One of the most ancient, which remains even to this day, may supply us with an instance in point, namely Brahminism. The different castes into which the people of India are divided by Brahminism, is an attempt to establish the essential superiority of one class of men over another. What a vast distance there is between the holy Brahmin, and the outcast Pariah. Essential superiority and inferiority, seems to be the fundamental idea of the distinction of caste. The same may be said with respect to a matter in which the religion of India agrees with that of almost every other heathen land, namely: the inferior position, essentially inferior, which is assigned to the female sex. In every such land, women are treated as mere perishing toys, or transformed into household drudges. From such a grievous yoke as this, the Word of God sets them free.

In every human system of religion, we find the traces of this tendency; not even excepting Romanism, with its mixture of the human and divine; the germs of it may be discerned in the position and claims of the priesthood. Why is it that they arrogate to themselves a position of honour and privilege so much higher than that of the great body of the faithful? And how is it that the holy father in Rome can look with such complacency on the prostrate crowds that bow down to the earth before his face? The Word of God gives no countenance to such over-abundance of honour on the one side, and of abasement on the other. And were he imbued with the spirit of that Word, were he of like spirit with Him whose successor he claims to be, he could not look on such a spectacle without pain; he would then reject all such honour, and call aloud to the prostrate crowd, "*Stand up; I myself also am a man.*"

Thus in each and in all of those systems of religion, framed by men, this tendency shews itself more or less; exalting some family, it may be, or some class of men, to a position or state higher than others; or degrading some to a position or state in which they ought not to be placed: interfering, thus, with the command to give that *honour to all men*, which the remembrance of our equal estimation in the sight of God, and in view of eternity, should lead us to render. In the Scriptures there is no trace of such a tendency, but everything to discourage and destroy it. In the peculiar characteristics which belong to the Word, we can see, not uncertainly, the stamp and impress of that God who created man at the beginning, who hath fashioned all their hearts alike, and to whom, with an equal hand, He giveth life and breath, and all things—of that God, with whom there is no respect of persons. †