

covered them in humanity. They are observed in man, and as in him they are admired in contrast to the opposite qualities, they are ascribed to God; and then theologians, having invested God with human qualities and denied to man what they have borrowed from him with which to invest this God before they could form any conception of God as a moral being, most ungratefully as well as inconsistently declare there can be no morality independently of their theological system and book revelation.

Of course, it is nothing to ignore the fact that before either the one or the other appeared, society existed and nations flourished essentially the same as they do to-day!

One would suppose from the claims which are frequently made, that there was no morality before the Christian era; that men were entirely wanting in knowledge of what is right, and the disposition to do it; in short, that all men were thieves, robbers and murderers, before they heard of Jesus Christ. I do not wonder that a system which through its representatives gives currency to such a falsehood as this wants the aid of civil power to enforce its teachings.

The morality of the advanced nations of to-day is commonly called Christian morality, but only with the same disregard of truth which is implied in denying the existence of virtue and goodness before Christ and outside of Christendom. The morality of this age does not owe its existence to any religion, to any book, to any historic character, however much or little any of these has influenced mankind. Our present conception of morality has grown through many centuries of human experience, and exists now only because by many mistakes and much suffering man has learned its adaptedness to his wants. It is the result of our natural character and education. To ascribe it to the dominant religion were as absurd as to attribute the enlightenment of the ancient Greeks to their mythology, or the enlightenment of the Saracens of Spain in the ninth and tenth centuries, when darkness enveloped Christian Europe, to the Koran.

The fact is, that with the advancement of the human mind, with the discoveries in science and progress in morality, believers in all systems of religion modify their views so as to adjust them to the new order of things, always claiming, in ancient and in modern times, in Egypt, India, Rome, Turkey, England, America, that they find authority for their new ideas or reforms in their sacred books or religious systems. Soon they claim that these religions are entitled to the exclusive credit of having produced the beneficent changes which they have been powerless to prevent.

Thus, while the Bible teaches the subordination of woman in plain and unequivocal language, sanctions and authorizes human slavery, and consigns to unresisting submission to their condition the subjects of oppressive governments, to-day in this country the orthodox believers deny the plain signification of the Bible on these points and claim that it has been effective in the destruction of all kinds of political and social bondage; this, too, in spite of the fact that its most zealous advocates, within the memory of men who are yet living—of whom I am one—were quoting its