

besides himself; and accordingly he made will-endowed responsible agents. He became a ruler by giving existence to subjects. Government,—moral government,—government by motives and inducements, started into being whenever the rational, the responsible portion of creation started into being at his bidding. Even God himself was not, and in the nature of things he could not be, a moral governor, till there were moral beings in existence to govern; and there could be no created intelligences, till he by an act of sovereign will, and sovereign power, brought them into being. To give birth or existence, therefore, to a moral system, was an act of pure sovereignty. He who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, could have done very differently from what he did, had he so willed; but he was pleased to do what he has done.

We, dear reader, our fellow men, and all other intelligences in all other worlds, are subjects of the moral empire of Jehovah. We are subjects of his kingdom and under his control. He is our governor; his holy, just, and good law is the rule of our moral actions; and to him we are accountable for the use which we make of our powers and our privileges. We are in the proper sense of the word moral agents; beings who can act, and who do act. We are free agents; not machines at the mercy of necessity. Free agency worthy of the name must imply a power of choice, with full liberty to choose either good or evil. Here we might turn our attention to the nature of the law under which God has placed us,—our obligation and ability to keep that law,—the foundation of moral obligation,—some of the probable reasons why the Creator in his sovereignty saw fit to create moral beings, and sustain toward them the relation of a moral governor; but our limits forbid: and moreover we are more anxious to be brief and practical than to theorize and speculate.

We may safely lay it down as an axiom, that no moral being whatsoever could ever have the slightest claim upon God for either intelligence, sensibility, or will; and therefore the origination of a moral system was an act of Divine sovereignty. We are constrained to cry out, "our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." To make beings in his own image, after his likeness,—to give them self-determining wills, that they might be the first and real causes of their own actions—to endow them with a nature which would render them capable of either tearing themselves away from allegiance to his