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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.

By Rev. James W. Ward, Abington, Mass.

THE most exciting questions that are ever contested by mankind, have respect to the rights of individuals or communities. If lawsuits arise between neighbors,—if feuds between families or wars between nations, they are, generally, but conflicts for human rights. The numberless political partizans and orators that aim to guide popular opinion, the itinerating lecturers that swarm in almost every town and village, and even the mobs which break out in our cities recklessly wasting property and life, are all contending for the rights of the people in some of their varied relations,—the rights of the poor, the rights of the rich,—the rights of the debtor, the rights of the creditor—the rights of the native born, the rights of the foreigner—the rights of the master, the rights of the slave. In the midst of the smoke and dust of this contention for *human* rights, the rights of *God* have been most unreasonably overlooked or disregarded. It may not therefore be amiss to bring his rights a little more prominently before the public eye.

Among the important rights which God claims to himself, and which reason and Scripture abundantly accord him, is the fundamental right generally expressed by the word "authority." In treating upon this right the first question that arises is, what is meant by the phrase "the authority of God?" Unquestionably this phrase is often employed without any clear and bounded idea of its meaning. A shadowy conception of something connected with the character and government of God floats in the mind, but the thought assumes, in the mind's eye, no distinct form or shape. What then is meant by the phrase "the authority of God?"

To this question it may be replied that the divine authority is not the same thing as the divine power or the omnipotence of God. The word authority is, in common parlance, sometimes used interchangeably with the word power, as when we speak of the authority or power of habit; and hence it happens that the divine power is often confounded in the mind with the divine authority. But the two things are, and ought to be preserved, entirely distinct from each other. A beggar may have great physical power,

much more even than his king, but still have no authority. So God might have power even if he were divested of all authority. His authority is not then synonymous with his power. His power may be used to vindicate his authority and carry it into effect, but it is not the same thing as his authority.

Nor ought authority to be confounded with influence or moral power. A being who possesses authority ought indeed to have influence and generally will have it; still his influence may be lost, at least over many minds, while his authority over even these same minds, remains in all its binding force. Superiority in rank, talents or property often secures extensive influence to their possessors, without imparting to them a single iota of authority. And in a town or city it sometimes happens that a popular orator or an aspiring demagogue wields far more influence than all the civil authorities of the place. Though they are vested with authority and he with none, still he could do vastly more than they to excite or quell a riot. This illustration suggests the true meaning of the word authority. It is, the right to govern; it is, the right to make legal enactments and carry them into execution. The father of a family holds authority over his household. He has a right to give rules to his household and see them executed. The king or emperor holds authority over his subjects. He has a right to give them a code of laws and see it carried into effect. So God holds entire authority over all his moral creatures. He has a right to rule in the armies of heaven above and among the inhabitants of this lower world. This right gives him his dominion over the universe. It constitutes him King of kings and Lord of lords. Divested of it he would no longer hold either a subject or a throne.

Authority always rests upon some basis. The inquiry then may be raised, on what is the divine authority founded; in other words, what is it that gives God the right to rule over his creatures? One being, considered simply as a being, has no natural right to command another being. There must be something which entitles one being to exercise dominion over another. There must be something which entitles God to the throne and allegiance of the universe. What is it? On what is his right to govern his creatures based?

In reply to this inquiry it may be said that the divine authority is not based on the fact that God is the Creator of his moral subjects. There are indeed certain rights which, under certain circumstances, flow from the relation that the Creator sustains to the creature or the former to the thing formed. The builder of a house, for example,

has a right to dispose of it as he thinks best, provided that in so doing, he trenches on none of the rights of his fellow-beings. The potter has a right, under the same provision, to put the vessel that his hands have moulded to whatever use he chooses. And the reason here is obvious,—these inanimate objects have no rights of their own. The house, the vessel has no rights which the builder, or the potter can disregard. It is impossible in the nature of things to do an injury to these inanimate objects by trampling on any rights which they possess, for they are utterly incapable of possessing rights. The case is very different with rational, voluntary and sentient beings. At the very commencement of their existence they come into the possession of rights,—(rights flowing from their constitutional character)—which no other being may disregard and be guiltless. It is right in itself that all rational beings should seek the general good. We admit at once that this is their duty, and if their duty, then surely their privilege, their right. And if it is their right to seek the general good, then no one can guiltlessly contravene this right, or throw an obstacle in their way as they are moving forward in their work of benevolence. This right *must* be held sacred by every other being, it *will* be held sacred by the great Creator of all. The relation which he sustains to creatures as their Creator cannot entitle him to overlook this right and command them to do what would be at variance with the general good. And hence we conclude that his authority or his right to command his creatures does not rest on the fact that he has created them. To illustrate this point still further let us suppose that Satan had power to create rational and moral beings and that he should create them and then claim the right of requiring them to hate God, and love and worship himself,—that is, of requiring them to do what would be a decided injury to themselves and the universe. Could such a claim be sustained? Would it be conceded for a moment by any rational being? Suppose a *man* capable of creating men like himself and that he should do it, and then give them a code of laws evidently at conflict with their own best good and the best good of others, would his laws, in such a case, possess any binding force? Would his subjects, though created by himself, be obligated to obey them? Would he, merely as their creator, have a right to demand their obedience and enforce it? If not, how can the mere fact that God has created moral beings be the ground of his authority? How can it lay the foundation of his right to govern them according to his own good pleasure? By creating voluntary agents he has in-

deed supplied himself with moral subjects, and provided materials over which to exercise authority; but the bare creative act cannot bind a single creature of his hand in allegiance to his government, or support a single pillar of his throne.

Nor is the divine authority founded on the fact that God is the Benefactor of his creatures. Benefactions when conferred for a good end,—from feelings of kindness to the benefited or out of regard to the well-being of all,—do indeed demand a return of *gratitude* and *love*. It is justly expected that the recipient of favors will *honor* and *love* his benefactor. Still, however, I am laid under no obligation to *obey* another because, forsooth, he has done me a kindness or even a long series of kindnesses. Nor has he the right, simply on the ground that he has conferred many favors upon me, to impose on me his commands and require my reason and will to bow to his. Should he ask any service at my hands I *might* see fit to render it, but I should by no means feel that he was entitled, merely on the ground of his having shown me favors, to demand my obedience. He might require me to do something which it would be wrong for me to do. It is not very infrequent for wicked men to confer favors on their fellow-men with the sole intention of thereby securing an influence over them, and then using them in the promotion of their own selfish and criminal purposes. But who would say that in such cases the bestowal of favors engendered the right of command? Parents, too, are the constant benefactors of their children. Their offices of kindness are fresh every hour and repeated every moment. Still the communication of these varied and numberless blessings gives the parent no authority over his children. Of itself, it never would sanction a single requirement of his. If the requirement were wrong in itself, no favors conferred by the parent, however numerous, however great, would give him the right to enforce it. Such favors would indeed augment the guilt of a disobedient child that should wilfully disregard the *reasonable* commands of his parent. But, as all readily admit, they could confer on the parent no right to impose unreasonable commands on his children. Nor would they in fact, unaccompanied by other circumstances and relations, give him any more authority over his own children than over the children of his neighbor, admitting that he had accumulated a load of favors on them. He might be a man of kind feelings and prompt to do favors, but imbecile in judgment, and, therefore, incompetent to guide others aright. And would he then, on the ground that he had shown them favors, be entitled

to command them when utterly unqualified for the task? Is the right to command then based on the relation of benefactor? Is the divine authority built on such a foundation? God is indeed the rich and liberal Benefactor of his creatures. His favors are constantly dispensed with an open and munificent hand. They come down upon us, refreshing as the morning showers, numerous as the dewdrops at eventide. And they may fearfully enhance the guilt of those who wickedly refuse to obey his commands. But they put no sceptre into his hand. They give him no right to sway one over the moral universe. That right is built on another foundation, and, with his present character, it would be his, in all its perfection and all its strength, even had he never conferred a single favor on a single creature of his power. Had all his creatures passed, at the very first moment of their creation, into a state of entire and unchanging revolt, and then, as a just retribution, received ever since at his hand only a tide of woe unmitigated and unremitted, still his right to rule over them would, even then, be as complete as now it is to govern the most joyous seraph that basks in the brightest light of the eternal throne.

On what then is the divine authority founded? Most evidently, on the perfect character of Jehovah,—on his attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and infinite love. These attributes of character, namely, superior knowledge, benevolence and power, always, wherever they are found, confer authority on their possessors. And nothing but superiority in knowledge, goodness and power can possibly confer the least authority on any being. This must be evident to every mind from the very nature of the case. Law does not *create* obligation. It does not *make* one act right and another wrong. Right and wrong exist in the very *nature of things*. And the law only *points out* what is right or wrong. It only *makes known* the path of duty. Right and wrong would exist, even on the supposition that there were no law, or God to give a law. It would still be right for all rational beings to act on the principle of love, and wrong to act counter to that principle. And every rational being who knew that principle would be obligated to regard it in all his conduct. Right and wrong, then, existing in the very nature of things, and law being nothing more nor less than the finger that points them out, or the light that makes them visible, we see at once what must be the elements of a lawgiver's character. He must possess the ability to perceive the path of duty, and the disposition to make it known to others

whose capacity of discovering it is less than his own. In other words, he must possess superior knowledge and goodness. And a perfect lawgiver must, of course, possess omniscience and infinite benevolence. These attributes of character qualify him to hold the place of universal lawgiver. Omniscience can never fail to see the right and the wrong. No matter how involved in darkness and doubt a case may appear when contemplated by a limited vision, in the view of Omniscience the right and the wrong of the case must be as clear as noonday. And in as far as it can be done in consistency with the ends of benevolence, infinite love will always be disposed to point out the path of duty, and put a thread into the hand of the ignorant to guide their erring footsteps through this labyrinth of darkness and doubt. And when the ignorant have once received the rule of duty they are obligated to follow it. It comes from wisdom higher than their own. They can lean on it with more safety than on their own understanding. It points out to them the right course of conduct, and they are therefore just as much obligated to follow it as they are to do right. The law then of infinite wisdom and love is imperatively binding on all inferior orders of being, and for this very reason, that it is the product of superior and perfect intelligence and goodness. And, as they are bound to obey it, so also infinite perfection has a right to give it. Omniscience will necessarily perceive the law or the rule of right action, and infinite love will prompt to its enactment. And it is always right to follow the promptings of benevolence when guided by perfect knowledge. It is right then for God to give law to his rational creatures. And if it is right for him to do it, then he has the right to do it, for every being necessarily possesses the right to do right. God holds then the right to give laws to his creatures,—a right founded on the perfection of his character, on his infinite wisdom and love. And his omnipotence qualifies him to execute the law. And it is always right that a good law should be executed, and executed by him who is best qualified to do it. He ought to execute it and he alone. God then is, on this ground, the proper executor of his laws.

This foundation of authority is abundantly recognized in the various relations of human society. The father of a family has the right to give laws to his household. But why? Evidently because he is supposed better qualified to legislate for the little domestic community than any other one of its members. It is taken for granted that he has more knowledge than his children.

It is taken for granted that he will be more disposed than they to give such rules only as are adapted to the general good of the household. It is taken for granted that he has more ability to execute them well than any one else. And on these grounds the right of government is vested in him. But should any other member of the family point out a better course of conduct than the one which he had prescribed,—a course which the father and the other members of the household saw to be better,—the father, though possessing the *civil* right to make and execute his own family rules, would still be *morally* obligated himself, and so would the rest of the household, to take and pursue the better course. And should the father, in such a case, wilfully attempt to enforce his own laws, that moment his parental authority would be transformed into parental tyranny. He would require those for whose best good he was bound to consult, to do what it would not be best that they should do. And, requiring them thus to do wrong, his authority would cease and with it their obligation to obey him. The same is true in civil governments. The legislative power is supposed to embody the congregated wisdom of the nation. True indeed it is not always so, but so it ought always to be. Those who make laws ought to know better what laws would promote the best welfare of the State than those for whom they are made. And they ought to be good men,—men disposed always to enact such laws and only such as the best good of the people demands. These qualifications alone, namely, superior knowledge and goodness, give them a *moral* right to legislate for their fellow men; and those who do not possess these qualifications have no right,—no moral right to a seat in the halls of legislation. If they are there, they are out of their proper place, and they ought to remain at home and yield their usurped seats to men of superior intelligence and probity. And, to secure a prompt and energetic execution of the laws, the executive power is always the greatest in the State. These examples show on what authority in general and on what the divine authority in particular, is based. It rests on superior knowledge, goodness and power. God is omniscient, and therefore knows by what laws all his creatures, ought, in all cases, to regulate their conduct. He is all benevolent, and will therefore impose such laws on his subjects, and only such, as will tend to the highest good of his kingdom. And he has power to execute his laws with promptness and vigor. It is then his capacity to govern all

things in the best possible manner,—it is the perfection of his character,—which affords the foundation of his authority. A foundation is that which being removed the superstructure falls. Now remove in imagination the fact that God created men, and, his character remaining the same, he would still have the right to govern men and worlds. Remove the fact that he has poured out his favors upon them, and, with his present character, his right to rule them would still remain unimpaired. But remove his perfect character, divest him of that,—suppose him impotent, imbecile, malignant,—and would he then have a right to govern the universe? Would not the reins drop at once from his hands and the throne crumble beneath him and his authority all vanish into air? His right to rule is not then founded on his creative act, it is not founded on his benefactions to his creatures, but on his perfect character. It is this which lays the solid foundations of his throne. It is this which puts into his hand the sceptre of dominion and gives him an unquestionable right to wave it over the universe.

Is it then a fact that the divine authority is universal? Scarcely any one will doubt that it extends over the entire physical creation, embracing every object in the natural world. If the laws of nature are not eternal, then, from the very necessity of the case, the Creator of matter must impress on matter its appropriate laws. It is impossible to conceive of the *existence* of matter without properties. And the properties of matter are but another name for the laws of matter. Necessity then seems to be laid upon God either to impose laws on matter or not create it. Besides, whatever laws he were disposed to give to matter, he could do it no injury, he could contravene none of its rights, for it has no rights. And he would not only be disposed but *competent* to give it such laws as would tend to the highest possible good of all his sentient creatures. Who but he could give a law so perfect as that of attraction, so simple in its nature, and yet so beneficently efficient in its operation, binding as with an invisible chain the whole universe together, and then fastening it to the base of his own moveless throne? Who then can question his right to rule in the world of nature? Some may, indeed many do complain of the particular operation of some of his physical laws. But though in the estimation of such persons there may be too much cold or too much heat, too much rain or too much sunshine, too much sickness or too much poverty to

suit their personal convenience, yet the general laws from which these supposed inconveniences result are seldom, perhaps never condemned. And if the laws are good, then God does right in giving them and has a right to give them; and all the evil of their regular operation must be taken and laid on the heads of those who refuse to conform to them.

The divine authority extends too over the *moral* world embracing in its ample sweep every rational creature in the universe. It is as full as perfect over

"vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns."

It is indeed sometimes strangely imagined, that, wherever the authority of God is unacknowledged or resisted, there it is impaired or destroyed. But the denial of a right no more vitiates or annuls that right than the denial of truth converts it into falsehood. Did the refusal of the man who denied the existence of the moons of Jupiter, to look at that planet through the telescope of Galileo, lest perchance he should see the moons with his own eyes and be forced to admit their existence, render their existence any the less a fact? Is a will made void by the mere denial of its validity? Is my title to my property annulled simply because it has been disputed? And is then God's right to reign impaired because it is resisted? Must his title to dominion be surrendered wherever it is denied? His right to reign over a province or a heart is as complete after as before revolt. His title to dominion is as perfect without as within the pale of the church. His authority is as unimpaired in the regions of darkness and despair as in the world of light and glory. It goes out from Zion, the mountain of his holiness and takes an unrelaxing hold of every moral being in the universe. It is wide as immensity, high as heaven, deep as hell and lasting as eternity.

The evidence that the authority of God is thus universal may be found in every man's bosom. We judge of the validity of rights, just as we do of the character of moral conduct,—by reason and conscience. It has been shown that authority or the right to govern rests on certain attributes of character, on superior knowledge, goodness and power; and when these attributes have been proved to belong to any being, conscience or reason just as naturally accords him the right to rule or to point out to those of inferior capacities the course of right action, as it condemns bad and approves of good actions. Let us then interrogate conscience,—

no Delphian priestess but a prophetess divine,—and listen to her safe responses. What sayest thou then, speak out thou arbiter of right and wrong, is it not proper that God should hold the reins of uncontrolled and universal dominion? Is it not right that he should give laws to all his creatures. Does he not know better than they what course they ought to pursue in order to secure the highest amount possible of good? Is he liable to mistake the tendency of any law which he may impose upon his subjects? Does not his omniscience enable him to point out such rules of action as will invariably tend to the best welfare of the universe? And is he not perfect love, and so disposed to give such laws and only such as are adapted to compass the highest good of his kingdom? Is it not best then that he should hold the office of Universal Lawgiver? In condescending to take the office and give laws to creatures, and thus pour the light of heaven on the path of duty, does he not confer a priceless blessing on those who otherwise would see that path but darkly? And is it not a rich favor to them to have the path of duty,—a path which if taken will conduct to perfect bliss,—illuminated with beams of light from the face of Omniscience? And has not Omniscience the right to shed this light on the darkness of created mind? And if, when the way of duty is thus glowing with heavenly light, there be those who refuse to travel it, and who thus take a course adapted to injure themselves and others, and diminish the aggregate of happiness in the universe, shall not every voice cry out against them and demand their punishment? And who but Omniscience can decide what the punishment shall be? Who but he can annex the best penalty to the law? And who can execute the law so wisely, so efficiently as he? Is it not best then; is it not right that he should hold the reins of empire? Say then, thou judge of truth and right in man, say, has not God a right to the throne of the universe? What now is the response of conscience to these interrogations? Do you not hear, in the depth of your own bosom, her voice of distinct and decided affirmation,—“Yes—yes—yes, he has the undoubted right of universal dominion; his is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

But every right implies a corresponding obligation; and if God has the right of universal dominion then all intelligent creatures are obligated to yield unhesitatingly to his authority. There is a difference between yielding to truth and evidence and yielding to authority. In the one case we pursue a specific course, because, by the light of reason, we see clearly that that course will con-

duce to the general good. In the other case we perform an act because God has commanded it. We go on the principle of faith in God, and though our dim vision may not see *how* its performance can issue in good, yet we fully believe that Omniscience does clearly see it, and we therefore go confidently forward in the pathway of obedience. It was this readiness to yield to the divine authority,—this childlike confidence in God which led the patriarch to take the wood and the knife and lay his beloved Isaac upon the altar of burnt-sacrifice. He fully believed that God had power to gather up the ashes of his son, mould them anew into a body and breathe into it the breath of life; and that the promise would yet be fulfilled, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." It was this which divested the prophet Daniel of all fear of a despotic king's commandment, and led him to the place of daily prayer, even though to go there was to enter a den of unchained and hungry lions. He knew that it was always safer and better to yield to the authority of God than the laws of man. Give the church at the present day an unshaken disposition to submit, in all cases and under all circumstances, implicitly to the divine authority, and you would clothe her with a beauty, and arm her with a power which would soon make her the admiration of the world. She would hear her divine Master saying to her, "preach the gospel to every creature," and she would value no sacrifices, stop at no obstacles, be daunted by no dangers till the work was done, and she saw with her own eyes the heathen given to Christ for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. And let the world at large adopt the principle and the practice of unhesitating submission to the divine authority, and it would soon cover the earth with the loveliness of Eden and the joys of paradise. The great majority of mankind are, in all they do,—and even the best men are in a considerable portion of their conduct, influenced by the decisions of prejudice or passion or a darkened understanding. They know very well what the law of God demands, but then they somehow strangely imagine that in their case and in their peculiar situation it will be best for them to disregard it. And they act accordingly, and then, when too late to rectify the evil, ascertain, sometimes even in this life, that their wisdom was but the height of folly. It is not because God has left his commands covered with obscurity, that men generally pursue the ways of evil. It is because they believe that in their peculiar circumstances it is not best for them to obey his commands. And so they

disobey and thus introduce discord, disorder and woe into the world and scatter them far and wide around. Would they but always yield submissively to the leadings of divine wisdom, would ALL but do it, every jar in the great system would cease, every discordant sound would be hushed, every wheel in the machinery of the universe would turn regularly and beautifully in its place, not only working out its results of good but uttering, as it rolled, its sweet and thrilling note of praise to the great Contriver of all, and we should thus hear all around us the fabled harmony of the spheres, and witness all around us scenes "surpassing fable, of accomplished bliss." Is it not then the unquestionable duty of every rational being to act in concert for "a consummation so devoutly to be wished?"

And does not the man who resists the authority of God contract amazing guilt? He does an irreparable injury to himself. He debases his character, he lets an overwhelming flood of anguish in upon his heart. He is endowed with noble capacities and appointed to a noble work. He is fitted to take a part in an angel's employments and enjoyments, and participate in an archangel's destiny. But by resisting the authority of God he disrobes himself of all that is attractive and lovely in his character, he prostitutes to a base and unworthy purpose the noble powers of his being, he assumes the temper,—the iron purpose of wrong,—he engages in the work, he contracts the depravity, and he must share the doom of an archangel fallen. Nor is this all. He does an injury to his fellow men. Like Ishmael he raises his hand against every man. He arrays all his power and influence against the best interests of the universe. He goes out into the world, not to do good, but to trample on the law of love and the rights of his fellow men, to wound the reputation of relatives and friends, to set an example noxious in the extreme to his inferiors and equals and to injure the well being of all whom the fatal miasma of his character or conduct reaches. He passes through life, marking his pathway wherever he goes with tracks of ruin, and scattering around him the seeds of sin to spring up when he is gone and produce the bitter fruits of temporal and eternal woe. The plague spot is in his heart and he communicates the disease to all who behold him. And were it not for the remedial influences of heaven the infection would spread till the whole created universe became one great Lazaretto,—I should say,—one charnel-house of death. Nor is even this all. He pours contempt on the Ruler of the universe. By resisting

the divine authority and transgressing the divine law he proclaims to all in the strong language of action his firm conviction that the law of God is a bad one, that the principles of his administration are hurtful to the well being of creatures, and that the overthrow of his government would afford good reasons for a general jubilee. By doing it he enters the very audience chamber of God and with nerves of iron and a face of triple brass, he says to Him before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces, "You are unworthy to hold the throne, your law bespeaks ignorance or malignity, your government is unwisely and ruinously administered, give to me the sceptre, to me surrender the crown, if not, I will spread rebellion in your empire and tear the diadem from your brow." Such is the expressive and awful language of resistance to the divine authority. And if this is not the consummation of depravity then where is it to be found?

We cannot close this Article without an expression of grateful feeling that a Being perfectly qualified to rule does hold the reins of unlimited empire. The fact that a perfect God reigns affords good grounds of universal rejoicing. In respect to the government of the universe only three suppositions are possible;—*God* must reign, or some *other* being or beings, or there be *no government*. But would it be best to have *no government*? Would it be best to lift off from the moral universe all the restraints of law and permit every moral being to act out, unbridled all the feelings of his heart? Would it be best to abolish all laws human and divine and leave all hearts to the natural working of every good and evil passion? What would be the consequence of such a universal emancipation of mind from the restraints of law? Would created mind rule itself? That question has been long since settled. Notwithstanding all the controlling influences which the laws of God and man throw around it, its constant tendency even now is, to break loose from this control and follow recklessly the leadings of passion. And were these restraints entirely removed and a full license given throughout the universe to the natural workings of created mind and heart, what would the universe become but one broad Aceldama, a field of terror and anarchy and blood. Thanks, then, to the great Universal Lawgiver that this is not the scene everywhere presented to the eye.

Would it then be best that any *other* being than God should take the government upon his shoulders? Who would under-

take to bear the burden? Who would presume, Phaeton like, to drive the chariot of the sun? Who, to guide the comets through the complicated system of revolving worlds? Who, to govern and keep in harmony the still more complicated system of the moral universe,—liable as every flaming orb of mind there is, to its countless aberrations? But admitting that beings might be found presumptuous enough to undertake the work, (as we know there would be, for all naturally love preëminence,) still who would be willing to entrust them with the government? Who is there to whom you would not shudder to commit it? Would you give the dominion to the arch-apostate? What! take the sceptre from the hands of infinite mercy and love and transfer it to the hands of perfect malignity and rage! The blood flows heavily in upon the heart and curdles there at the mere thought of such a change. The eye of imagination runs downward to the murky throne of the infernal king, glances over his flaming dominions, and then passes upward and throughout creation and beholds it all under the dominion of Satan, transformed into a hell. Would you then entrust the government to man? Why he has been already tried and found incompetent to govern even *himself*. And having been proved unfaithful in that which is his own who shall commit to him that which is another's? Would you then put the reigns of empire into the hands of any of the spirits of heaven, even of the highest arch-angel there? But could he manage well the interests of the universe? Could he rule the world of nature? Could he give laws to the world of mind and heart, and see them wisely executed? And if those laws were broken could he contrive a redemptive scheme? Why, give him the sceptre and evil would soon enter the system, and then go on accumulating,—derangement following derangement and disaster treading on the heels of disaster,—till the whole train of worlds, broken loose from law and dashing onward in wild disorder, and with lightning speed, leaping at length from the appointed track, became one universal wreck. To whom then would you give the government? We have ranged creation through and find no hand competent to wield the sceptre. We gaze on the appalling spectacle which the universe without a ruler or under the guidance of any created mind presents, and we are forced in horror to turn away from it and look upwards for relief to the great Creator; and as we see in his character every conceivable attribute of a perfect Universal Ruler, and see too the reins of government held calmly in his hand, and then

look around and witness everywhere the beneficent results of his wise and benevolent administration, our souls with a full gush of rapturous emotion involuntarily exclaim: "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

ARTICLE III.

INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL INFLUENCE OF ROMANISM.

A Dudleian Lecture delivered before the University in Cambridge, May 14, 1845. By Prof. Edwards A. Park, of Andover Theological Seminary.

WHEREFORE BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.—Matt. 7: 20.

THE character of a religious system may be learned, first, from the relation of its principles to the standard of reason and scripture; secondly, from its influence on the soul of man. The influence of a system may be ascertained by an examination either of its inherent fitnesses or of its actual operations. If we confine our regard to its inward tendencies we may become visionary; our speculations not being verified by facts. If we limit our view to the consequences which have apparently flowed from it, we may become empirical and mistake the appendages of the system for the effects of it. In order to be certain that its real influence is good or evil, we must combine a philosophical inquiry into its adaptations, with an historical inquiry into its consequences; each of these different views serving to illustrate and complete the other. Our survey of Romanism, for example, may be too superficial, if we dwell on the circumstances that have occurred in its train, and pass by the commentary which they receive from the essential fitnesses of the system. Its more skilful advocates will allow that its history is stained with many dark scenes, but they affirm that although conjoined with certain evils as accidents, it has not been united with them as appropriate developments; that it has *happened* to be allied with political despotism, with the Feudal system, with the peculiar tastes of the middle ages, and has been tintured in this manner with influences which are far from being congenial with its own spirit. We say in reply, that the evils connected with Romanism have been prominent through so many successive ages, in so many different