

As Dr. John Dick in his Lectures on Theology expresses it,—

"The whole series of events was planned by his infinite understanding, the ends as well as the means; and he foresees the ends, not through the medium of the means, but through the medium of his own decree, in which they have a certain future existence. They will not take place without the means; but the proper cause of them is not the means, but his almighty will."*

So that if we are to believe Dr. Dick, or any other consistent Calvinist, the *proper cause of all our sins is God's almighty will!* In his work on Nature and the Supernatural, Dr. Bushnell, though a moderate Calvinist, very gravely tells us that,

"If there be any truth which every Christian ought to assume, as evident beyond all question, it is that God has some eternal plan that includes every thing, and puts every thing in its place. That He 'fore-ordains whatsoever comes to pass' is only another version of the same truth."†

But we believe that the very reverse of this is the case, for if there be any truth which every Christian ought to assume, as evident beyond all question, it is surely that the all-wise and infinitely good One never would or could desire, decree, or put into His perfect plan that evil which he hates. We have no faith in the divine origin of sin,—it never was, and from its very nature, never can be in God's plan, or a part of his plan; and we are bold to say that if we were shut up by a kind of moral necessity to believe either in the heathenish and absurd idea of an eternal uncaused evil principle in antagonism to the good, or, to believe the wicked and monstrous idea that the God of creation and of revelation is the author of all evil as well as all good, we would choose the first alternative as an article of our creed in preference to the second. It is not however necessary to believe in the doctrine of absolute, eternal uncaused evil, on the one hand, or that God decreed it, desired it, and was the efficient cause of its existence, on the other. We are quite confident that the subject can be explained on principles much more satisfactory.

That moral evil exists is admitted on all hands, and that it has existed for many ages every one believes. It is also indisputable that many physical evils, sufferings and woes to which we are subjected can be satisfactorily accounted for only on the principle that moral evil has entered the universe. It is not a necessary thing, and, not being necessary, it must in the very nature of things

* Vol. I, page 397.

† See page 105.