

tered into their minds, that it was possible for an infinitely good Being to create intelligent beings with whom evil might and actually did originate, and hence they came to the conclusion that there must be *two first causes, co-eternal*, one the author of all good, and the other the author of all evil.

We are informed that this was the principal doctrine held by the Medes and Persians at a very early period of their history. They considered one of the uncaused causes to be *light* from which all the good proceeded, and the other to be *darkness* from which all the evil proceeded; and as these two co-eternal principles were in constant conflict with each other, all things were made by them when engaged in the struggle. The poets as well as philosophers among the heathen seem also to have reasoned after this fashion. Hence, *Homer* represents *Jupiter* as having two hogs-heads set before him, the one filled with *evil*, the other with *good* things, a mixture of which he dispenses amongst mankind, sometimes taking out *evil* and sometimes *good*.

Of course we have no sympathy with, and no faith in the heathenish idea of two co-eternal principles of good and evil, though it is worthy of notice, that many heathen philosophers preferred even this idea, wild though it was, in preference to the wicked and still wilder idea of fathering all the evil that existed on the author of all good.

It is well known that *Augustine*, Bishop of Hippo, in the early part of his life believed in a principle of absolute evil; he was led however to renounce it; and soon after, he became a firm believer in, and advocate of, *unconditional predestination*. This, in our humble opinion, was only making bad worse; for to believe the doctrine that God has absolutely and unchangeably decreed from eternity all the evil in the universe, is to believe a monstrosity much more inexcusable in a Christian, than it is for a heathen to believe the other.

I do not need to inform you that there are many theologians who hold principles which make God the author of all the sin in the universe. They look upon sin as a divinely decreed thing. They consider it to be something which God in his mysterious providence was pleased to plan;—something which he in his sovereignty desired and determined should be, and which he actually brings to pass for his own glory.*

* See Calvin's Institutes, Book III, ch. 23, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. III.