

can be established, that we may rest on this as an impregnable foundation. But it shews also the importance of being familiar with the way and manner of disposing of the plausible and formidable difficulties on which mainly the Arminians found their case. These difficulties, that is, the alleged inconsistency of Calvinism with the truths, that God is not the author of sin, and that man is responsible for his conduct and fate, lie upon the very surface of the subject, and must at once present themselves even to the most ordinary minds; while, at the same time, they are so plausible, that they are well fitted to startle and to impress men, especially if they have not previously reflected much upon the subject. We can do nothing at present in the way of producing the direct and positive evidence in support of the Calvinistic doctrine; but a few brief hints may help a little to shew that the difficulties attaching to it, are, though not admitting of a full solution, yet by no means so formidable as at first sight they appear to be, and at any rate furnish no sufficient ground in right reason for rejecting the body of direct, positive, unanswerable proof by which the fundamental principles of Calvinism can be established. The following are some of the most obvious yet most important considerations bearing upon this matter, that ought to be remembered and applied, and especially that ought to be viewed in combination with each other, as parts of one argument upon one important topic.

1st, When the same objections were advanced against the same doctrines as taught by the Apostle Paul, *he* manifested no very great solicitude about giving them a direct or formal answer, but contented himself with resolving the whole difficulty into God's sovereignty and man's ignorance, dependence, and incapacity. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" He knew that the doctrines were true, because he had received them by inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and we know that they are true, because he and other inspired men have declared them unto us. This should satisfy us and repress any great anxiety about disposing of objections based upon grounds, the full investigation of which runs up into matters, the full comprehension of which lies beyond the reach of our natural faculties, and of which we can know nothing except from the revelation which God has given us.

2d, It is utterly inconsistent with right views of our condition and capacities, and with the principles usually acted upon in regard to other departments of Christian theology, as, for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity, to assume, as these objections do, that we are entitled to make our actual perception of, or our capacity of perceiving, the consistency of two doctrines with each other, the test or standard of their truth. We do not pretend to be able to solve all the difficulties connected with the alleged inconsistency between the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, and the truths that God is not the author of sin, and that man is responsible for his character and conduct, so as to make their consistency with each other plain and palpable to our own minds or the minds of others; but we cannot admit that this affords any sufficient reason why we should reject one or other of the doctrines, provided each separately can be established upon competent and satisfactory evidence.

3d, The difficulties in question do not apply to the Calvinistic system alone, but bear as really, though not perhaps at first view as palpably, upon every system of religion which admits the moral government of God, the prevalence of moral evil among his intelligent creatures, and their future eternal punishment. Indeed, it is easy to shew, that in truth the leading difficulties connected with every scheme of doctrine, virtually run up into one great difficulty, which attaches, and attaches equally, to them all, viz., the explanation of the existence and prevalence of moral evil; or what is practically the same question in another