

combined in all ages to assail the Holy Word, have not quenched its light upon the earth and muffled from our souls forever the secret of a Redeemer's love.

It is not from any want of evidence that men are averse to the belief of the scriptures, nor from any deficiency in the faculty of reason that they are so often unable to appreciate the evidence which demonstrates the truth of the gospel. It can furnish no apology to the unbeliever, that he either supposes the evidence to be deficient or his reason incompetent. There is no just cause of complaint for deficiency of these, but there is the evil bias of a treacherous heart, a certain loathing of what is pure and sacred, an utter disrelish of every thing in which God is obviously concerned, and a settled reluctance of nature against the strictness of the law which God has prescribed. These are the things that interpose between the reason of men and God's instructions, and render a new heart so indispensable for the full apprehension of the truth. This is the moral darkness which blinds their eyes and makes them incapable naturally of perceiving any excellencies in God, or the beauties of that holiness which God requires. This is the natural ungodliness, the original inclination to sin, to retreat from God and be in love with what is opposite to his character and commandments, which is so variously represented in the scriptures, and so repeatedly pressed upon our conviction; and this were sufficient to make dark the understanding of an angel, though placed under the wings of the cherubim and in the open radiance of the divine glory.

That the judgments of men are much influenced by their affections, is a fact that might receive its illustration by instances in every department of human knowledge. The cause is prejudged, even when reason pretends to be the sole judge—and you have only to consult your experience to recollect innumerable cases of that mental delusion which renders all reasoning nugatory, because the ground was pre-occupied by some private prejudice—cases, in which the clearer your demonstration, the greater the determination of the opponent to maintain the ground and fortify the defences of his error.

In morals and religion, persuasion against the heart is a contradiction in terms, and however irresistibly a conclusion may be shewn to be deduced from a series of reasonings, such reasonings are found to be no match for human passions, and no sufficient instrument for the production of a state of grace and salvation. It need not be matter of

wonder, then, that so many disbelieve the truth in Christ, since there are so many who from the earliest prime of life till life's last day, whose passions have engaged them in a constant defence of their objects, and by consequence, in course of uniform hostility against that divine revelation which seeks to put them in chains and correct their disorder. They live and move and have their being in God, but have turned away from the light of his countenance with careless indifference or determined aversion. They may acknowledge it abstractly to be a good and pleasant thing to love and obey him, who has always loved them and been their best friend and bountiful benefactor, but have ever found it most acceptable to their heart, to act as if there were no God, and have really desired when opposite claims came to present themselves, that no God were. His goodness has ever been to them a fountain of never failing blessings, but with what gratitude have they received them? and the sorrows which he designed should have led them to seek a treasure in heaven, have fallen to the ground without good, and left the heart more hardened than before. However impressively God may have called them, they have had no inclination to hearken to his voice, and if at any time serious thoughts have arisen, they have shut them out as injurious to their peace and contentment. They have resolved, in short, to hold no correspondence with God, and, therefore, have plunged more deeply into the business of the world, and more largely drunk of its joys—have resolved to serve no God, but to please themselves.

How then, it may be asked, would such a person be likely to act if at any time, he should take up the word of God from curiosity, to observe what it contained or what evidence of truth it possessed. He would not have proceeded many pages before he discovered that all men are by nature guilty in the sight of God, and that there is but one way to escape the misery of his everlasting curse. But this is a truth which he will not believe, because the belief of it would inspire an intolerable apprehension. Or if he should read that there is a day to come when God will call every work into judgment which man has done under the sun, and when we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: this again he would be disposed to discredit, because he has no sufficient clearness of perception of the nature and enormity of sin, no sense of his long forgetfulness of God, and consequently no ground for framing a correct judgment of the necessity and equity of such a procedure. Need it then be matter of wonder, if he should be inclined to thrust the book aside, to keep his feet from