

drawing near to the courts of God's house, and betake himself with greater ardour to dissipate, by flat infidelity, his unpleasant reflections, and secure what he calls his peace of mind from the invasions of truth.

Again, such is the purity, and so broad the measure of God's law, as to produce almost of necessity, a dislike and revulsion in the mind of the natural man. The length and breadth of the duties which bind the disciples of Christ, alarm his fears and reprove his defects. The self sacrifice which they require, is deemed too great, yea, impossible to be borne. If the terms of salvation had been easier, his belief of divine truth would have been wonderfully facilitated. But how, for instance, can he brook to become humble, according to the example and express precepts of the Redeemer? Nothing can be more at variance with the most powerful principles of his nature and the ends which he has proposed to himself as absolutely indispensable to his present happiness. This first commandment of Jesus, therefore, were sufficient to turn the full tide of his affections against the belief of the gospel.

Again, it is requisite for him that would become wise unto salvation, to receive the truth in Christ with docility of mind, and with meekness of heart, willing to be led, as it were, by the hand, into the road to heaven, praying to be filled with God's love, and to be enlightened with the knowledge of divine truth; and surely no disposition and practice could be more becoming in a creature towards its Creator, in him who was fashioned out of the dust towards an infinite and glorious God. But this is not a rule which can very readily commend itself to a person over-confident in his own wisdom. He will condescend to be a believer only in his own way, and supposes himself qualified to demonstrate the truth or falseness of God's word. He will feed his objections, demur and stagger at every seeming obstacle, till he becomes as blind to the open radiance that beams from every page as he that is blind is to the beauty and magnificence of external nature.

In the same manner, it might be spoken of every other besetting sin and sinful error. Single or combined, they form a barrier to the reception of the truth into the soul that can be broken down and removed only by the power of an Almighty God. Reason cannot surmount the fence which innumerable sinful habits have drawn around it. It is carried captive by every passion, or thrust aside when it refuses to judge on the side of inclination. "I will do whatever I please," is the natural language of

every human heart; "I will believe only what pleases me," is its no less natural and universal sentiment.

What then is the main distinction of the christian character? What is that which is the chief badge of his profession? Is it that he loves to contemplate the mysteries of christianity, that he roves in imagination among the stately pillars and through the magnificent and splendid apartments of the temple? Or is it that he has duly studied the proportions of the edifice and is acquainted with its whole plan from the foundation upwards, through all its passages and inmost recesses? Neither of these constitutes the chief distinction of a believer. Neither the lofty imagination of religious things, nor the sharp understanding of religious truths can save the man in the hour of his need. His gifts may perish with him and may only load him, in his condemnation, with a heavier curse.—What then is that, being possessed of which, we possess all things, and wanting which, we yet want all things? It is that which the Lord our God has promised in the text, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

A heart of flesh is one of those general expressions which designate that great moral and spiritual change which is at once the effect and evidence of faith. Is it not the great and declared intent of the scriptures, of that revelation which God has there recorded for our use, to prepare the heart—to furnish the soul with meekness to dwell with him in heaven? And is this present life of believers not manifestly represented as a condition of probation, in which by manifold trials, by unwearied patience and constant endeavours there is, as it is represented, a race to be run, and so run, as that the prize be obtained—a work to be achieved while it is day, and a battle to be fought. This being the nature of his state, it is evident that the believer will have to encounter and overcome a multitude of dangers and difficulties. His faith is no faith unless it have the power to sanctify him, unless it teach and dispose him to die unto sin and live unto righteousness—that is, unless his heart is changed, so as to love what God loves, which it did not do before, and to hate what God hates, which it did not do before. Else, why in almost every page of the sacred word are there precept upon precept, and line upon line—moral directions inexpressibly various and innumerable? Else, why do we find such minute distinctions laid down for us between the sins that God abhors, and the acts of righteousness and mercy which he loves? And why has the believer written for him an elaborate chart of the