

doctrines and institutions ; the house of his reason may be replenished with all the learning of the fathers, and may be capable of containing all the details of religious truth, and of embracing within its comprehension the whole system of its principles, and yet the person may be possessed of little or no religion. Unless his knowledge be brought into the temple of the heart, it can never be an acceptable offering for the altar of God—he will not accept of it as a sacrifice. It can never rise up in sweet memorial before him; for though in itself, it be a most desirable advantage, yet, having no connection with the heart, it is an offering altogether unfit for religious purposes. It is the mere skin of the victim or as the flesh of swine, no proper material for the high priest and bishop of our souls. If the degree of religious knowledge were a fit measure of the religion of a man, then a sensualist and a cheat, a proud man, a malicious man, and a profane person, might at the same time be a religious man ; and it is to be feared, that it is by no means uncommon to find those who are well versed in the language and doctrines of the scriptures, who can reason with a clear and piercing intelligence, and state the abstract points of theology with great precision and nicety of expression, utterly devoid of that which constitutes the very life and soul of religion, a new heart, a heart of flesh.

It will not be inferred from this, it is to be hoped, that we have any intention of disparaging the acquisition of religious knowledge, or of undervaluing the duty of a rigorous application of the mind to the understanding of the truths of christianity. It is obvious to every one, that there can be no christianity at all where its doctrines are neither known nor understood, and the man whose heart is most deeply interested in the matter, will always be the first to desire, and the most diligent in seeking the knowledge of that divine charter which is the instrument of his salvation from death, and reconciliation to God. Still, it is necessary to settle it well in the mind, that to know the truth is a thing widely different from its being an effectual means of salvation. One may know all mysteries, or suppose that he does so, and be acquainted with the road that leads him fairly to heaven; but what signifies his knowledge if it have no power to persuade him to holiness, or what avails to be acquainted with the way to heaven if he prefers the road that conducts him to hell? The case, however, is mightily altered, if together with the knowledge of the truth, he joins the love of it in his heart ; if by the grace of God, it has been made efficacious for the production of holiness, if the stony heart has been taken away and a heart of flesh substituted, then, indeed,

the business of the man's salvation has been brought to a favorable conclusion ; then may he lift up his soul in perpetual thanksgiving, and take to himself, without the imputation of a vain and fanatical spirit, the consolation and joy which belong to an heir of immortality—for he has the best assurance that God has not forgotten to be gracious to him, and salvation has already come into his house.

It is a proof of the wisdom of God, that the revelation which he has made for the recovery and salvation of men, is not adapted merely to the circumstances of a few, but is fitted to the state and circumstances of all. No one can say, that the means of salvation are suited to the case of another, while it is impossible they could ever have been designed for him. Had the glad tidings of redemption, before they could have had any practical effect and communicated any blessing, required large measures of knowledge, and extraordinary learning and research, then would he that is wise according to the flesh, have had the best chance of becoming wise unto salvation. But the case is widely different, and it was one of the distinguishing circumstances of the mission and transactions of Jesus, that the poor should have the gospel preached unto them ; that no order or class of men should be peremptorily excluded, but that all might humble themselves before the majesty of God, and seek to walk in the only way which he has opened up to the joys of heaven.

If a man's heart be right with God, there is no great danger of his being miscarried by such a speculative error as amounts to an apostacy from the truth. When the truth is erroneously taught, it is no unreasonable suspicion, that sin may have blended with the error—at least, it is commonly understood in matters of religion, that such a charge is implied ; and as it is far from being a pleasing theme, to be warned of our danger by the sound of an alarm, or to have our natural pride offended by finding our errors exposed and our fond opinions strongly impugned, it often happens that he who has erred from the right, wanders the farther astray when the truth in Christ is vindicated, that his passions take the governance of his reason, that he identifies himself with his opinion, till he brings himself to such a pass, that his mind is incapable of conviction and his heart past persuasion.

The history of the Church of Christ furnishes but too many examples of this melancholy perversity ; and we owe it to the bounty of a merciful God, that those dark and evil influences which have