

Further, I say, it is here to be minded, that if it should be human learning that is here meant, then Paul would have directed Timothy to teach the church to choose such scholars as had more learning than had their master, Christ Jesus: now this, some say, is blasphemy, and threaten me sorely for it.

I answer them, that considering Christ Jesus as God, according to the divine nature, so he is God over all things, he knows all things, and gives all things, Acts xvii. 25. He is the giver of all good gifts, Jam. i. 17; among the rest human learning and wisdom are of him: and if men were not maliciously bent, they might discern, viz. that I, in this argument, had not to speak of Christ merely as God, but as God-man; the minister of God, administering for the good of his body, the church, according to that in Luke iv. 18, where he saith, "The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me that I should minister," &c. and so in this argument he is by the apostle set forth as a man also; "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," Acts ii. 22; as such, and so administering, I do still affirm, and that with great confidence, that he was unlearned in this consideration as man, and without the learning that we are speaking of; and so the tongue of the learned that was said to be given him, is interpreted by the same prophet, to be the Spirit of God: for, saith he, "The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me that I should preach," &c. Isai. lxi. 1. From whence it is plain, that Christ

Jesus, as man, was learned of the Father to preach by the Spirit, without human learning; this is plain to them that believe the scripture, from John vii. 15, where the Jews, astonished, say, "How comes this man to know the scriptures, seeing he was never learned?" From whence it is plain, that he was a man, and that he was unlearned in the letter of the scriptures. As God, he knew all things by a divine power, though not by human learning, no not so much as his own natural tongue by letters; yet in the synagogue he could take the book and read, Luke iv. 17; and this doubtless was one cause why the Jews were said to be astonished at the hearing and seeing of him, as appears from Matt. xiii. 54, &c. Luke iv. 22; so that by all this my affirmation remains true and good, that if human learning should be that which is there meant by the apostle, then he taught the servant to be above his master; whereas Christ Jesus himself saith, "It is enough for the disciple to be as his Lord," Matt. x. 25; and he being destitute of human learning, his disciples may do well without it also, and yet without any offence preach the gospel too. Now if, notwithstanding all this, there be them that will take Stephen's accusers' place, and still accuse me of blasphemy, as they did him, &c. Acts vi. 11; in that I said Jesus Christ was without human learning, and so apply my words to him as God, which I spake of him as man, they may there see themselves ranked among the number of them that are called by the Spirit

of God, false witnesses, as walking in the steps of those envious persons, even such as were always the murderers and betrayers of Christ Jesus, and his servants ; and they that are such, may be likened to them who being full of envy, “ spake against those things that were spoken by Paul, wresting them, and railing on him,” Acts xiii. 45. Mark it, they denied what he taught, but disproved it not ; they spake against it, and railed on the person ; and left not till they had been the means of expelling him out of their coasts ; so was he treated ; and such like measure is still to be expected to befall those that tread in his steps ; but it is to be minded, that envious ones are the movers of it ; and so leaving it, I come to another objection ; which is,

How will such as are unlearned, be able to stop the mouths of gainsayers ? seeing the apostle requires of a bishop, that he should be able so to do, Tit. i. 11.

I answer, that it is not the apostle’s intent that the mouths of gainsayers should be stopped by the knowledge of tongues and arts, but by that way himself directs, Titus i. 9 ; which is by sound doctrine, or by wholesome doctrine : so then to go any other way, to stop their mouths, is both an unsound and an unwholesome way ; and it were far better, in my judgment, and, according to Paul, that their mouths should be left open, than that they should be stopped after any other manner, seeing it doth not profit them in the

spiritual meaning of the word that have been exercised therein : so now it is high time that we, honouring the teaching of the Spirit, should refuse to meddle with such as go another way to work, than by sound doctrine, to declare God's mind to us; because that alone is sufficient to stop the mouths of all gainsayers. "They were not able to resist the Spirit by which he spake," Acts vi. 10; not the tongues and arts, for he used none of them, saying, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal;" tongues and arts are, "but mighty," not by man, but "through God, to the casting down strong holds," 2 Cor. x. 4; therefore these weapons alone are sufficient to stop the mouths of gainsayers; and for such as think them not sufficient, much good may their human learning do them, and the good Lord give me his holy Spirit only to do this work: I come now to a third objection, which is,

That there was the use of tongues in the apostles' times in the churches, Acts ii. 8—10, and xix. 1 Cor. xii. and xiv.

This I grant was true; but we find that they were the immediate gifts of God, freely given and bestowed on them, as other spiritual gifts were, without their industry or pains, as appears in divers scriptures, Acts ii. 2; viii. 27; xix. 6. Now where-soever such gifts are to be found, them will I freely acknowledge, as being indeed suitable to the gospel, which gospel brings to us freely, all good gifts, without any labour or pains of ours; and

therefore all is said to be of grace, lest any man should boast: but if the tongues pleaded for are such as are attained by industry and pains-taking of our own, then they better suit with works than grace; so are more meet for Egypt and Babylon, than for the church of Jesus Christ, who comes by all her precious gifts gratis; therefore such as plead for these things, as essential to the ministry, are no better than Simon Magus, who would have obtained the gifts of the Spirit by money, Acts viii. 18, in which there was the gift of tongues; and if these tongues pleaded for be the same, they are all attained by money; and if this was a good way for obtaining gifts, why did Peter so evilly entreat Simon for desiring them for money? The same arts are used to this day; but Peter perceived and declared him to be in the "gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity," in that he sought to obtain the gift of God's Spirit by money; and if it be human excellencies he seeks, then, of necessity, his course is to be repented of also, that any should offer to add any human thing to God's word, when it is so expressly enjoined us, that we put nothing thereto, nor take any thing therefrom, Deut. xii. 32. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar," Prov. xxx. 6. Now there is nothing but the word and Spirit are to go together; therefore they who add to, or take from it, are liable to God's reproof, which is tearing in pieces, Psal. l. 21, 22. Then let all such as plead

for learning to bring men to the knowledge of God's word, consider whether Peter's exhortation to Simon Magus ought not to take place with them, namely, to "repent of this their wickedness," Acts viii. 22; and acknowledge the Spirit of God, freely bestowed, to be the alone qualifier of us for that which is right in his sight; without which none have part or fellowship in the business of understanding, and unfolding, the things of God. And so I come to another query.

4. Suppose two men, both alike endued with the grace of God, and alike gifted by his Spirit, the one learned, and the other an unlearned man, which of these two should be chosen into the ministry of Christ in his church?

I answer, The unlearned man. For these reasons:

First, Because God respects no man's person: now if God should take the learned man, then he must be respected above the other for it, if it be right and due to prefer him, which would be wickedness once to think of, for all are alike in that respect: but the scripture tells us, and that for good reason, that without any respect at all, he of his good pleasure, that no flesh shall glory, hath chosen the foolish and the vile things in man's account, the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, 1 Cor. i. 27. Then if God hath so chosen, let him have his own choice; it is meet he should, for his choice is the best, to answer his end, that he might confound the wise, and so fulfil

his word, as Paul expresth; and thus he chooseth the foolish in man's account, not only for salvation, but for ministration, 1 Cor. i. 19; iv. 10.

Paul, it seems, was so foolish in theirs and others account in his administration of the word, that they could scarce suffer it; and this sense must needs be good, supposing the place to be understood of God's choice to salvation only, which cannot be all the meaning; because, as we may see, 2 Cor. xi. 7, Paul's argument is about preaching the gospel, opposing the scribes and disputers of this world, to them that were not such; and so proceeds to declare among whom it was that the Lord made his choice, that it was from among the foolish in the world's eyes: but, as I said before, take the other for the sense, if you will, and yet the point still remains true; because out of such as God chooseth to salvation, out of them he chooseth ministers; and for salvation it is granted he chooseth the foolish; it must needs follow, therefore, that out of the foolish he also chooseth ministers.

Secondly, This indeed is most suitable to the gospel, which is in itself simplicity, and appears to the wisdom of man so to be; and it is not meet, our Saviour saith, to put contraries together, "as a new piece into an old garment, nor new wine into old vessels," but to have all things suitable: therefore, seeing his gospel is foolishness to the wise, it is meet he should have foolish ministers in the wise world's account; yea, and in his servants

too, when they see as man sees, and not as doth the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 25. For thus it was of old with Samuel, the Lord's prophet, when the Lord sent him to the house of Jesse to anoint him a king, he seeing as a man doth, said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me:" but we find the Lord corrects that, and tells him it was not so; the more unlikely man, and the unthought of one, was he that God had chosen to himself; 1 Cor. xvi. 6, 7; and so it is here, we are not to see as man sees, but as the Lord directs us.

Thirdly, God chooseth such things in opposition to others to astonish the wisdom of man. When the council perceived Peter and John were unlearned men, and without knowledge, they marvelled and were amazed, Acts iv. 13. And so saith the apostle, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness," 1 Cor. iii. 19. They think that all knowledge lies in their breasts; now the Lord he comes and makes fools wise, and so catcheth them; manifesting, that their thoughts be but vain, in thinking that the wise are they that God hath chosen; but it is not so, for he chooseth the foolish to confound the wise; and therefore such as are spiritually wise should choose God's wise, but the world's foolish things for his service, before the world's wise ones; and so I come to another exception; which is,

Fifthly, If wordly wisdom be sanctified, it must needs be a good help to the right understanding of the truth. To which I reply,



It is true if it be sanctified, so it is; but how, or where doth it appear, that ever it was sanctified? Hath not the Lord long ago told us by his prophet, and wished his people to behold it, That he would do a marvellous work? and then he doubles it again, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and then all comes to this, that he would cause to perish, and destroy, the wisdom of the wise, and cast away the understanding of the prudent, Isa. xxix. 14. And here, if we could see, we might all of us stay our wondering at this strange thing, and consider, the Lord tells us it is a marvellous work and a wonder; and so our wondering and marvelling how these things can come so to be, is but a fulfilling of God's word; and men might rest in it, and see in the next words, that it is a woe to them for the former abuse of the same; so Malachi saith, that he would curse their blessing, and that he had done it already, Mal. ii. 2. To both which agrees the apostle, from Isaiah; and concludes also, that God hath destroyed it; and in another place tells us, the wisdom of the wise is enmity with God. How shall any dare say then, it is sanctified, when so plain a curse is on it, that we are warned to beware of being spoiled by it, Col. ii. 8. Now are we warned any where to beware of being spoiled by that which is sanctified to us, in a spiritual way? Now these things can be sanctified no farther than they are of use, and that is but in a worldly way; for as to any spiritual use, they be accursed from it.

Here perhaps another objection will arise, which is, 'That by this way of arguing, all human learning seems utterly to be condemned.

I answer, that it follows not, because it is not to be allowed in this way, that therefore it is not of any use; for I do acknowledge it to be itself a good thing, and good in its proper place, which is for the repairing of that decay, which came upon man for sin: I say, it is of use, for the repairing of that loss, and so fit for statesmen, physicians, lawyers, and gentlemen; yea, all men, so far as they can attain to it, are as men, beyond and above others that are without it; yea, and it is beyond all other excellencies that this world can afford; but bring it once to be a help to understanding the mind of God in the holy scriptures, and there it becomes as detestable filth, dross, and dung, in that respect, and so good for nothing, but to destroy and cause men to err, as we have seen before, 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. It is with that, as it is with fire, keep it in the chimney, and it serves as a good blessing from God, for good and necessary uses; but let it once come into the roof of the house, and it destroys all, because it is not in its proper place; so is this thing among men; for human and worldly employments it is good; but bring it once to the perfecting of the gospel, and it will be found to be the spoiling of the right understanding thereof.

And yet further, I acknowledge tongues to be of use, so far as to yield us the translation of the

scriptures, out of one language into another; without which we that are unlearned, could not come to have the letter of the word, and so far there is a necessity of it for that use; but that such men of language are more able to understand the spiritual meaning of the word thereby, that I deny; and withal do affirm that a spiritual man may, through the teaching of the Spirit, know the mind of God, which a natural man can never reach unto: according to that saying of our Saviour, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xiii. 11; to you, his simple disciples, it is given; "but to others," learned Scribes and Pharisees, "it is not given:" but in this case it may fare as it did with those that built Noah's ark, they made a place of safeguard for others, but were drowned themselves: so these men may prepare a good help for others, and themselves be altogether without the benefit of it. A lanthorn, you know, is of good use to contain the candle, but let one carry it in a dark night, and it will do him no service without a lighted candle in it; of the same use is the letter of the word, it is but as a lanthorn or candle without light. Now the Spirit is the light of the letter, and so is the apostle's opposition, 2 Cor. iii. Such men then in this respect may be a help to others, and yet when they have done all, be cast away themselves; seeing, as we have before observed, the Egyptians and Babylonians in this kind of learning did excel; and it is none other blessing than what the Pope,

Cardinals, and other professed enemies of the truth, as all in general confess them to be, have, in as great a measure, and beyond many others that profess to know the truth, yet stand stiffly for learning, as a special help to understand the true meaning of the Lord in the word; which if it be so, then the Papists have the advantage of them, and so are to be more revered by others, as having more knowledge than they; now let them acknowledge their error, in counting themselves wise above what is meet, or else confess, that learning is unavailable for finding out the mind of God. Neither for all this would I have any to conclude of me, as some affirm, that I hold all learned men to be excluded from the spiritual meaning of the word: God forbid; for,

Though the apostle says, “not many” of several ranks, yet he saith not, there are none, but, “not many,” 1 Cor. i. 26. There was one Joseph of Arimathea, Mark xv. 43; one Nicodemus, John iii. 1; one deputy Sergius Paulus, Acts xiii. 7, a prudent man; and divers of the priests, Acts vi. 7. But this was not usual, for it is hard for such men to entertain the truth: God’s ordinary way is among the foolish, weak, and vile; so that when the wise, rich, noble, and learned, come to receive the gospel, they then come to make themselves equal with those of the lower sort, the foolish, vile, and unlearned, for those be the true heirs of it; and therefore it was not in vain that James said, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God

chosen the poor?" He well saw that the rich and carnal were dull of hearing in this matter, and therefore he tells them, " God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith," James ii. 5, with Matt. xi. 5; and upon this consideration it is, that he wisheth the brother of high degree to rejoice in that he was made low; that is, brought in mind and estimation on a level with the poor, accounting himself never the higher for any such excellencies: and so, " the brother of low degree, to rejoice in that he is exalted," James i. 9, 10; that is, that he was made a king and priest unto God, Rev. i. 6, and was set in heavenly places with Jesus Christ, Ephes. ii. 6; so that as the one is made low, in respect of any fleshly confidence he hath in such things, the other is exalted, though outwardly poor and illiterate, by being in Christ Jesus, and so they both meet in one. But now, by reason of the smoke that is risen out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 2, and that the devil is cast out of heaven, and all his angels with him to the earth, Rev. xii. 9; which angels were the fallen stars that he drew after his tail, that now he hath, by reason of them since hatched a religion in the world; in which he would have the wise, the rich, the noble, and the learned, be the only ones to understand and the poor must be beholden to them; whereas this is like himself, directly to oppose Jesus Christ; so that we may truly say with the prophet, " Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But again, it is yet farther objected; That it is common for such as cannot themselves attain to that excellency which is in another, to disparage it in them, that so they may advance themselves.

This, I confess, is a carnal course, that such as are themselves fleshly are subject to take; and it may as well be my fault as another's; but yet I profess, in the presence of the Lord, that I do not allow myself in any such course: such a reflection as this becomes not a man, that is led by the Spirit of truth to make, against any servant of God, that professeth opposition to the same things, and to be led thereto by the word and Spirit of truth; but it savours strongly of the flesh, and is too suitable to the practice of reprobates, whose practice is to take things in the evil part; whereas love, by which all the saints should judge, hopes the best of things, until such time as it can espy any cause otherwise so to do. As for the lifting up of myself, to be sure if I do so, God's word says, that he will pluck the mighty from their seat; and then you may be sure, that according to his word, my fall will be far greater than my exaltation can possibly be; and therefore it were best for all such, as so conceive of me, to commit their judgement to the Lord; and themselves judge nothing before the time, nor speak any more presumptuously; "let not arrogancy come out of your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him enterprises are established."

After this manner of reasoning, carnal men may

pervert the whole gospel: for whereas the scripture says that Jesus Christ was without form, or beauty, or any thing, whereby he should be desired; the carnal man will soon reply, no other but such a one would be so foolish as to part from honours, riches, credit, and such like, to endure so much sorrow, if he need not. And whereas the apostle saith, "That he took on him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 7, they would soon answer, Good reason why, because he could not be a master. And whereas it is said, he chooseth the poor; they will say, he must needs do so, and the foolish too, for none of the rich and wise would be so simple as to follow him. And whereas he saith, "Love not the world, nor the things in it;" good cause why, will they answer, for such fools as you know not how to get it, or else, to be sure, you would love it as well as others. And thus have I given you a glimpse how, that by this manner of carnal arguing, we might oppose our own salvation, and sit down in the very vale and shadow of death, as full of darkness, as this argument is destitute of truth.

And thus having answered such exceptions as I know are made against this truth, I come now to such uses as it shall afford us. The first is,

Use 1. As it discovers to us the depth of the great woe, Rev. ix. 1—11, that the world lies under, set forth, and revealed to us; in which the word of the Lord is fulfilled, and men see it not: and this, you know, the scripture in sundry places makes the depth and terribleness of his judgments;

as in Hosea, Ephraim is said to have here and there "gray hairs, and yet he saw them not," Hosea vii. 9; and in this we know was the strength of that great judgment, that men should confidently take lies for truth, 2 Thess. ii. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 2: this is there made the depth of their woe. And the like is manifested elsewhere by the same apostle, declaring, that though they speak lies, yet they were so seared in their own consciences, that they felt, nor feared, the danger that they were in, no more than the drunken man did, though he lay sleeping on the top of the mast, and ready to be drowned, yet he feared not, Prov. xxiii. 34, 35; and yet such is the case, the sun and the air being darkened, their condition must needs be woeful. This is the case of the inhabitants of the earth, that they cannot be brought to believe but that they are in a very good state, though "the light of the glorious gospel, which is the image of God in Christ, doth not shine upon them," as saith the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. Now that by which the sun is said to be darkened, is the smoke of the bottomless pit, and that we shall find to be the false glory and power of a false church, called by the name of the bottomless pit. That this may the better appear, we find many places in the scriptures manifesting the glory of God, and his power, to be his smoke also, Isa. vi. 4; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; Rev. viii. And because God hath smoke in his temple, so will God's adversary in his temple also, or rather his bottomless pit. After



his smoke, in Rev. ix. 2, 3, there follows power; and if you look in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses, there is his glory; and it doth farther appear by the thirteenth chapter, and the third verse, that it was so great power and glory, that all the world wondered and admired at it; and yet Jesus Christ accounts it a great woe and plague to them. Now part of the woe, I believe, is this learning which we have here in question: for as, we have before manifested, the sun-light of the gospel of Jesus Christ allows it not; for the glory of Christ's doctrine is, that it is of the Spirit's teaching; by which we behold the glory of the Lord in the most perfect measure, so as to be changed thereinto from glory, 2 Cor. iii. 11; yet all this is from the Spirit of the Lord, the promised Comforter, that is to teach us all good things belonging to our perfection in Christ Jesus.

It must needs follow then, that this smoky power and false glory flowing from the kingdom of Satan, is human wisdom; and so is a part of that tail with which the dragon drew the stars after him with, Rev. xii. 4. And hence it comes to pass, that now, according to Peter's prophecy, in opposition to the Spirit's teaching, there are a generation who "privily bring in damnable errors," 2 Pet. ii. 1; and so, forsaking the spirit of truth, "they speak lies in hypocrisy," 1 Tim. iv. 2, as Paul also witnesseth they should do; pretending now, that the true and right way for understanding the scriptures and the mind of God is that men

must, for that end, learn parts from others, only for that work, and so be taught in tongues and divers languages, and have their wits exercised in human arts and sciences; and such a flourish this bears in man's conceit, that it seems the only way that can be for a man to be made fit for the work; so, while the angels kept their station in heaven, the Spirit's simple teaching was judged sufficient; they being now fallen from thence to the earth, and having the key of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 1, 2, which being opened, now ariseth up Plato and Aristotle, and a multitude more of heathen philosophers. "These are the four angels that stand on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, that they should not blow on the earth, neither on the sea, neither on any tree," Rev. vii. 1, as being those that have the whole power of preaching in their hand, not suffering any to blow but who they please, and so do withhold the "truth in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18. manifesting thereby they be under the wrath of God; while they seem to yield these starry principles, appearing to men more fit to open the mind of God than those taught by the Spirit can be; whereas before, when the perfect teachings of the Holy Spirit were in force, these men, of all others, were, by reason of their learning and wisdom, the most incapable men that were in the world for the receiving of the truth, as appears by the testimony of Luke; and to this day, notwithstanding all the great sun-light of the glorious gospel of Christ,