

which these men profess, they having these black smoky principles, do yet so stiffly contend for learning, that there is no removing of them from the high conceit they have of it. Doth not this sufficiently declare, as the apostle saith, that satan hath blinded the minds of men, so that they cannot see, 2 Cor. iv. 4; but are so much the blinder, because they say, and think, they do see? John ix. 41. And hence came it to pass, that it was demanded of me once, for mentioning Plato and Aristotle, and such others, how I came by the knowledge of them if not by human learning? to cast contempt upon me, as if what I had from them, who were human learned men, was of itself sufficient to overthrow the matter which I had there delivered.

To which I answered then, and do still, it was none other but as Paul told the Athenians of their own poets, Acts xvii. 28. And yet for all that he was as great an enemy to human learning as I am, and greater too. And it is to be minded, as I have before declared, that I do not oppose the knowledge of human things, nor yet deny, but that we may be acquainted with their sayings as the apostle himself, and our Saviour was; yea, and that sometimes we may make use of them too, as occasion requires, and as I have done here, though sparingly, and but seldom; and on such occasions it may be of great use, as at those three times that Paul used them, and no more, that I remember, in all the scripture. Now such wisdom the

Spirit teacheth and therefore it cannot properly be called human learning, especially in the sense that I have to do with it, which is to oppose that learning maintained as necessary to make men fitting to open the mind of God, in his word, which is the learning of tongues and arts; whereas, this knowledge I have used only by the bye, and not to find out the truth; which has been before sufficiently proved by themselves also. It is the Spirit's work to gain men's acknowledgment of it, that this is no other learning than what every man, without scholarship, as ye call it, may attain unto; whereas that which is so much gloried in is, that a man be able aptly to speak according to art and knowledge in the sciences; and this is it by which men are still hatched in schools, and bred up to the ministry; this, I believe, was the means of bringing in all those abominable errors that the earth hath drunk in, both in doctrines and practice, and so have occasioned those noisome lusts that drown men in perdition; which the man of God is to flee, as best suiting the tail of the dragon, and suiting with the great woe, which is farther manifested, by comparing the ministers of Jesus Christ and those together.

Now what marks they be known by, you may read in 2 Cor. vi. from the third to the eleventh verse, where, as in a looking-glass, you may behold the true picture, both of the one and of the other; by such marks we approve ourselves as the ministers of Christ, and give none occasion why our

ministry should be reprov'd. Saith Paul, " In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watching, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand, and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." These ye see are the marks by which Paul approves himself, with his fellow-labourers, to be the minister of Christ; now quite the contrary may be seen of those that only profess themselves to be so; they disprove themselves to be the ministers of Christ in all these things: where is their patient bearing with the contrary minded, as Paul saith, the servants of God should do? 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. And where are their afflictions which they suffer, with their necessities and distresses? Are they not for the most part full of outward necessities? What are they in distress for? How many stripes do they suffer, or shall have need so to do, be they but observant of their canonical obedience? How many, nay, where are any imprisonments that they suffer, or at least need so to do, if they live according to their own laws? And

as for tumults, they are so far from abiding any, that they be far more ready to make them against others, than to endure them themselves. As for their labours, which, what he means, you may perceive by 1 Cor. iv. 12, and that to be sure they are guiltless of; and so for their watchings and fastings, and all the rest being duly considered, we may read the very contrary fulfilled in them; so that of necessity there will appear as vast a difference, as is betwixt light and darkness, and that those persons more fitly suit that description belonging to the locusts, Rev. ix. 7—11; than with this description here of the apostle. So far are they from what they pretend themselves to be, that the words of the prophet came truly to be fulfilled in them, “Their wisdom and their knowledge perverts them, and causes them to err, and is the wickedness they trust in,” Isai. xlvii. 10. And this is it that lifts them up in their own conceits, so far that they think in their hearts, and stick not to say also with their tongues, that they are the ministers of the word, and none else; the Lord saith, That their wisdom and knowledge is the cause of this their error, whereas they say, it is the means of right understanding; now, who is to be believed, God or they, let all judge, especially when we see, that the Lord himself is against them for it; in denying others, he denies them, saying, “Therefore shall evil come upon thee, and thou shalt not know whence it ariseth,” &c. ver. 11. All which declares the depth of the woe they lie

under; for is not this a woeful thing, that of that which God hath made a curse, men should make a blessing; and that against his will; and say, that his mind cannot be known without it; what can be more against him?

In the next place, it being so, that men taught by God's Spirit are through it sufficiently made able to know his mind in his word, then it teacheth us not to account any man a whit the nearer to understand the scriptures by human excellencies; but rather let us be suspicious of him that hath them, especially if he be forward to use them in those respects; for, as we have seen, they are dangerous to be leaned unto. It is high time that now we should all awake from sleep, and watch in the Spirit, and so let the Lord have all the praise and glory of his own grace. "Not unto us, not unto us, but to his name be all glory," seeing it is he only that doth great things, Psal. cxv. 1.

Also it may teach all men to cease pinning of their faith upon the sleeves of learned men, for there is no good cause why we should so do; but to see with our own eyes, knowing that the just is to live by his own faith; and to believe what the Lord hath said, which is, that he hath hid those things, that is, the mysteries of the gospel, from the wise and learned, Luke x. 21: and this I verily believe is the wholesome doctrine of the gospel, though the wise and learned are against it,

opposing and denying it to be so; and so confirming the words of our Saviour: therefore we need not wait for their witness to it, but be glad, and rejoice, to see his saying made true, That he will reveal them to babes; that is, the simple in the world's eye and account; and with this consideration, to overlook all contempt that can be cast upon us for the same. For so it is now with some men, they judge that nothing is hid from such wise ones, whereas we are to expect the fulfilling of the prophecy of Zechariah, that the Lord will cut off the names of the idols, and the unclean spirits of the land, and that while they prophesy, their father and mother that begat them, shall run them through with the sword of the Spirit; and say, "Thou shalt not live, because thou toldest lies in the name of the Lord," Zech. xiii. 2—4; then shall they be ashamed of their vision. And then shall it be manifest that their garments, by which they be known and taken for true ministers, are garments of deceit; and at that day such prophets shall be so ashamed of themselves, as to disown that they stand in any relation to such prophets, as are there described, when their nearest friends with contempt shall refuse them, and run them through, saying, "Thou toldest us lies in the name of the Lord;" such light it seems shall then appear, that they themselves shall count him no prophet, that is made so by man's teaching. Now this teaching in question, is but man's teach-

ing, and therefore when the clear light appears they shall be ashamed of it, though now they prefer it.

These considerations also minister matter of thankfulness to God on our parts, for his exceeding kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, that he is pleased to reveal these great mysteries to such mean and simple things as we are, while he conceals them from the wise and prudent. This use Christ Jesus himself makes, Matt. xi. 25, 26, and gives us to understand the true cause why; that he puts not any value on them, more than others, but only according to the nature of the gospel, the good pleasure of God; which is indeed the only ground of all our happiness; and all those must needs be blessed that can, with our Saviour, truly say, Amen.

And so I come to the next point; for having found out who are the learned men that Peter here intends, which are they that are taught by the Spirit of God; it must needs follow, that they who are not such are the perverters of these and all other scriptures to their own destruction. And this brings me to another observation, viz.

That such as are destitute of the Spirit's teaching, though furnished with human learning, are the perverters and wresters of these, and all other scriptures, to their own destruction.

The truth of this conclusion appears plainly confirmed to us in the Pharisees, as our Saviour declares in many particulars; plainly discovering the blind-

ness of these learned teachers, in esteeming and preferring things less in themselves, above such as were far greater; as the proportion was made betwixt the gold of the temple, and the temple; and the altar, and that which was offered thereon, Matt. xxiii. 16—19; and so blind were they, that they counted that most holy which the temple and the altar made to appear such; and the same elsewhere appears, Matt. xv. 3—6; that for all their learning, they taught directly against the mind of God in his word. We may see the same farther explained to us in Barjesus, Acts. xiii. 6; one full of all subtilty, in this kind, but a turner from the faith, and not to it, and a perverter of the strait ways of God. The like is to be observed in those of whom Paul speaks, that would be teachers of the law, and “yet knew not what they said, nor whereof they affirmed,” 1 Tim. i. 7; so wise did their human learning help to make them.

Now, from the word of God, good reasons may be given farther to confirm this.

Reason 1. Because nothing but the Spirit of God can bring any to the true knowledge of the word of God; and so saith the apostle, “We have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God,” 1 Cor. ii. 12; and Peter tells us, “That no scripture is of any private interpretation,” 2 Pet. i. 20, 21; but in opposition to that, the apostle sets the Spirit, opposes it to the will of man, and so declares that the Spirit’s interpretation, where it is, is a public



interpretation, and not a private; and that men, though endued with great learning, having not the Spirit of God, can give but a private interpretation. Let men judge what they will, though it be the Pope, and all his councils of Cardinals and Bishops, and the rest of that learned rabble; yet they, being destitute of the Spirit, can give but a private interpretation, according to the apostle's mind and intent; whereas, if a man have the Spirit of God, though he be but a pedlar, tinker, chimney-sweeper, or cobbler, he may, by the help of God's Spirit, give a more public interpretation than they all; for as Paul saith of love, the same is to be said of the Spirit, "Though men speak with the tongues of men and angels, and know all secrets, and have all knowledge, yet they are but as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals," without the Spirit, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

Reason 2. Another reason is, because it was one end of Jesus Christ's coming into the world, "that they which see might be made blind," John ix. 39; and this clearly appears, in the Pharisees, those learned wise men, that counted the common people accursed, as not knowing the law, and they themselves seeing, blessed ones, therefore, say they, "Do any of the rulers or Pharisees believe in him?" John vii. 48; as though the rulers and Pharisees must needs know the truth; whereas these were blind guides, as our Saviour saith: so little did he esteem their learning, he accounted them blind. On the contrary, those that are blind

in man's account, as was the blind man there spoken of, such see the gift of God, and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation; and yet the Pharisees refused the knowledge and light of that seeing man; and upbraided him as being born in sin, and for going about to teach them, John ix. 34, scorning that such learned men as they were should be taught of such as he was; though Jesus Christ had made him learned, and given himself for him.

Another reason is rendered out of the words:

Reason 3. Because such are unlearned and unstable ones: for, as before we have proved such persons being destitute of the true learning, so they are also in an unsettled and unstable condition; seeing, as the prophet witnesseth, that the Spirit is the establisher, Psal. li. 10, 11; neither can they be rooted, and established in the faith, according to the apostle's saying, Col. ii. 7, because they be not founded on the rock Christ Jesus, but on the sands of human learning, arising from a fleshly mind, destitute of the Spirit of truth, for they have not been taught the truth as it is in Jesus.

Reason 4. Again, it must needs be so, that such must pervert the scriptures, because it is impossible for them to go beyond their principle. Now their principle is error, as the following words declare; and by it they are guided and led, even the whole heap of them, big as it is; and these shall satisfy men's lusts, and turn them from the faith unto fables, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4, as the apostle long ago hath

foretold; for such as are themselves of the flesh, turn all things to fleshliness, being that of which they savour; for to the unclean all things are unclean, their consciences being defiled, as witnesseth the Apostle, Tit. i. 15. Hence it was, that when our Saviour bid the Jews to destroy this temple, meaning his body, they themselves being carnal, understood him to speak of the temple of Jerusalem, John ii. 19. And so the Capernaïtes, when Jesus Christ tells them, he will give them of his flesh to eat, John vi. 52—60; they being carnal cannot understand it; and all because they be destitute of the Spirit, for it was in a spiritual sense that he intended it. And the like is to be seen in Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and so a learned man, being a teacher, and a ruler of the Jews; this man, for all his learning, when Jesus Christ tells him, That he must be born again, otherwise he cannot enter the kingdom of God; he seeing no farther than into a natural birth, demands how that can be, That a man, when he is old, should enter into his mother's womb, and be born again? John iii. 1—5: so destitute was he of the spiritual meaning of Jesus Christ in his word.

Another reason, methinks, included in the word, is;

Reason 5. Because such persons are usually vessels of wrath, prepared to destruction; therefore they drive all to the same end to which themselves belong. The gospel is the savour of life unto life in them that are saved, but the savour of death

unto death to them that perish, 2 Cor: ii. 15, 16. Yet would I not from hence have any to conclude, that I deny salvation to learned men, as I hear some in effect have affirmed of me, for the scripture is against it, as is already declared from the apostle, though they be not many. But yet certainly it is the worst work that a carnal man can undertake, to meddle with the scriptures, seeing he abuseth them, and that to his own destruction; for the word is a sword with two edges; which, whosoever that is carnal meddles with, it will run into his heart, to harden it against the day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5. And so I conceive the point is clear and plain, that men, without God's Spirit, though furnished with human learning, do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.

Obj. 1. But here it will then be demanded, how shall we know whether we have the Spirit of God, or the spirit of error?

I answer, That the Spirit of God is a sufficient witness of itself, seeing that the Spirit is truth. Now this agreeing as it doth with the word, needs not any other testimony of itself, because it is the witness of God, and that is the greatest; as saith John, "the Spirit beareth witness," because the Spirit is truth, 1 John v. 6; and again, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, even by the Spirit which he hath given us," 1 John iii. 24.

Next, it is to be known by its operations and works; as first, it savours of spiritual things, "They that are after the flesh," saith the apostle, "savour

the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. And again, the Spirit is life for righteousness sake, therefore it is of a quickening and an enlivening nature for righteousness, ver. 10, 11. The fruits of it are farther manifested in other places. Now these things being found in us, do witness for God against error, though it should set itself up with never so high a hand.

And yet here, methinks, I hear the wordly learned men saying to me as did Zedekiah, 1 Kings xxii. 24, Which way went the Spirit of God from them, to such as I speak of? To this I answer, that, with Zedekiah, such persons do but beg the question, and take for granted, like him, that which they never had, for that could never depart from him which was never with him; therefore, though he were great, and his companions many, as is shewed, and Micaiah but one poor prophet, alone, and hated of the king, yet he had the Spirit of God; whereas all the others were led and ruled by a lying spirit. And though Jesus Christ, and his learned ones, cannot be believed of the great and honourable prophets of the world, but are, by such Zedekiahs, smitten on the cheek, when the question is demanded of the Lord's prophets; yet this answer may be given them, that when such go to hide themselves in secret, and to be ashamed of their vision, and when the seven last plagues come to be fulfilled, spoken of in the Revelations, chap. xv. 1, then they shall find the truth of the testi-

mony that is borne against them : though, in the mean time, the servants of the Lord, like poor Micaiah, be committed to prison, there to eat the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction, because of their testimony.

Object. 3. But though it be granted that human learning is no help to understand the mind of God, yet is it not useful to furnish us with words to express ourselves in the delivery of the gospel?

I answer with Paul, that the whole "scripture is given of God, and is profitable to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work," 2 Tim. iii. 16. Whence I conclude, that if the scripture be perfect and absolute for every good work, then it is so for preaching the gospel, so that there is no need of man's wisdom to help the ministers of God. And farther, the apostle saith, that he preached the gospel, not with wisdom of words; if not with wisdom of words, then I conclude, they were needless; and so much the next words declare; "Lest," saith he, "I should make the cross of Christ of none effect," 1 Cor. i. 17. And again, "I, brethren," saith he, "when I came unto you, came not with the excellency of words, or of man's wisdom; shewing unto you the council of God:" contrarywise, he frees himself from it, declaring that his preaching stood not in the enticing speech of man's wisdom; but, on the contrary, in the plain evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. And afterwards he gives his reason for it, that their

faith should not stand in the wisdom of man; which, it seems, it must be subject to if it were used; and so, indeed, we find it would, instead of the power of God, and the plain demonstration of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 1—5. And though one would think the apostle had here said enough as to the manner of delivering the truth, yet for all this he hath not done with it, but mentions it again, saying, “Which things as we know them, so we also speak, not with words which man’s wisdom teacheth,” ver. 13. And again, slightly passing over the words of the false teachers, as not worth the knowing or regarding, he saith, “When I come I will know, not their speech, but their power,” chap. iv. 19. And hence he condescends to false teachers, so far as to confess that he was rude in speech, according to them, but not so in knowledge, 2 Cor. xi. 6. By all which it plainly appears, that man’s wisdom is to be rejected, even in speaking the word of God, and that none are to affect any excellency that way; but to content themselves even with the use of the natural abilities they have, without any art or skill in learning farther.

Object. 4. But Apollos is said to be “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures,” Acts xviii. 24.

Ans. And so, doubtless, was Paul and Moses, and those manifested in Acts xix. And yet, as I have before mentioned, when these came to receive the faith, they left, forsook, and contemned all