

## SERMON X.

The second Branch of Christ's Prophetical Office, consisting in the Illumination of the Understanding.

LUKE xxiv. 45.

*Then opened he their understandings, &c.*

**K**NOWLEDGE of spiritual things is well distinguished into intellectual and practical: the first hath its seat in the mind, the latter in the heart. This latter, divines call a knowledge peculiar to saints; and, in the apostle's dialect, it is *υπεργνωσις* της γνωσεως Χριστου Ιησους, Phil. iii. 8. "The eminency, or excellency of the "knowledge of Christ."

And indeed, there is but little excellency in all those petty notions which furnish the lips with discourse, unless by a sweet and powerful influence they draw the conscience and will to the obedience of Christ. Light in the mind is necessarily antecedent to the sweet and heavenly motions and elevations of the affections: For the farther any man stands from the light of truth, the farther he must needs be from the heat of comfort. Heavenly quickenings are begotten in the heart, while the sun of righteousness spreads the beams of truth into the understanding, and the soul sits under those its wings; yet all the light of the gospel spreading and diffusing itself into the mind, can never savingly open and change the heart, without another act of Christ upon it; and what that is, the text informs you; *Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures.*

In which words we have both an act of Christ upon the disciples' understandings, and the immediate end and scope of that act.

1. Christ's act upon their understandings: *He opened their understandings.* By understanding is not here meant the mind only, in opposition to the heart, will, and affections, but these were opened by and with the mind. The mind is to the heart, as the door to the house: what comes in to the heart, comes in at the understanding, which is introductive to it; and although truths sometimes go no farther than the entry, never penetrate the hearts, yet, here, this effect is undoubtedly included.

Expositors make this expression parallel to that in Acts xvi. 14. "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia." And it is well observed, that it is one thing to open the scriptures, that is, to expound them, and give the meaning of them, as Paul is said to do in Acts xviii. 3. and another thing to open the mind or heart, as it is here.

There are, as a learned man truly observes, two doors of the soul barred against Christ; the understanding by ignorance; and the heart by hardness: both these are opened by Christ.\* The former is opened by the preaching of the gospel, the other by the internal operation of the Spirit. The former belongs to the first part of Christ's prophetic office, opened in the foregoing sermon: the latter, to that special internal part of his prophetic office, to be opened in this.

And that it was not a naked act upon their minds only, but that their hearts and minds did work in fellowship, being both touched by this act of Christ, is evident enough by the effects mentioned, ver. 52, 53. "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It is confessed, that before this time Christ had opened their hearts by conversion; and this opening is not to be understood simply, but *secundum quid*, in reference to those particular truths, in which, till now, they were not sufficiently informed, and so their hearts could not be duly affected with them. They were very dark in their apprehensions of the death and resurrection of Christ; and consequently their hearts were sad and dejected about that which had befallen him, ver. 17. But when he opened the scriptures and their understandings and hearts together, then things appeared with another face, and they returned, blessing and praising God.

2. Here is farther to be considered, the design and end of this act upon their understandings: *That they might understand the scriptures*: † Where let it be marked, reader, that the teachings of Christ, and his Spirit, were never designed to take men off from reading, and studying, and searching the scriptures, as some vain notionists, have pretended, opposing those things which are subordinated, but to make their studies and duties the more fruitful, beneficial, and effectual to their souls; or that they might this way receive the end or blessing of all their duties. God never intended to abolish his Word, by giving his Spirit; and they are true fanatics (as Calvin upon this place calls them) that think, or pretend so. By this means he would at once impart more light, and make that they had before operative and useful to them, especially in such a time of need as this was. Hence we observe,

\* It is he who opens our hearts by his law. *Capel. specil. p. 57.*

† God does not give the Spirit to his people, on purpose to abolish his Word, but rather to render the word effectual and profitable to them; and therefore the fanatics falsely, under pretext of revelation, take a liberty to slight the scriptures. *Calvin on this place.*

Doct. *That the opening of the mind and heart, effectually to receive the truths of God, is the peculiar prerogative and office of Jesus Christ.*

One of the great miseries under which lapsed nature labours, is spiritual blindness. \* Jesus Christ brings that eye-salve which only can cure it. Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Those to whom the Spirit hath applied it, can say, as it is 1 John v. 20. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life.

† "To the spiritual illumination of a soul, it suffices not that the object be revealed, nor yet that man, the subject of that knowledge, have a due use of his own reason; but it is further necessary that the grace and special assistance of the holy Spirit be superadded, to open and mollify the heart, and so give it a due taste and relish of the sweetness of spiritual truth." By opening the gospel, he reveals truth to us, and, by opening the heart, in us. Now, though this cannot be without that, yet it is much more excellent to have truth revealed in us, than to us. This divines call *præcipuum illud ἀποτέλεσμα muneris prophetici*; "the principal perfective effect of the prophetic office," the special blessing promised in the new covenant, Heb. viii. 10. "I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts."

For explication of this part of Christ's prophetic office, I shall as in the former, shew what is included in the opening of their understanding, and by what acts Christ performs it. And,

*First*, Give you a brief account of what is included in this act of Christ; take it in the following particulars.

1. It implies the transcendent nature of spiritual things, far exceeding the highest flight and reach of natural reason. Jesus Christ must by his Spirit open the understandings of men, or they can never comprehend such mysteries. Some men have strong natural parts, and by improvement of them are become eagle-eyed in the mysteries of nature. Who more acute than the heathen

\* The eyes of the blind must be anointed with eye-salve, by which man, being cured of his blindness, is restored to spiritual sight. *Glas. Phil. 2 part. p. 340.*

† *Ad perfectam et propriam rerum supernaturalium cognitionem, non sufficere ex parte objecti revelationem, nec ex parte subjecti debitum usum rationis, sed insuper requiri gratiam Christi, et speciale adjutorium Spiritus Sancti quo cor aperiatur, emolliatur, et supernaturalis veritatis dulcedinis recte habeat proportionam εἰς<sup>iv</sup> et gustum spiritualis iudicii.* Reynold. *Animal. Homo. p. 23.*

sages? Yet, to them the gospel seemed foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 20. Austin confesses, that before his conversion, he often felt his spirit swell with offence and contempt of the gospel; and he despising it, said *dedignabar esse parvulus*; “he scorned to become a child again.” Bradwardine, that profound doctor, learned *usque ad stuporem*, even to a wonder, professes that when he read Paul’s epistles, he contemned them, because in them he found not a metaphysical wit. Surely, it is possible a man may, with *Berengarius*, be able to dispute *de omni scibili*, of every point of knowledge; to unravel nature from the cedar in *Lebanon*, to the hyssop on the wall; and yet be as blind as a bat in the knowledge of Christ. \* Yes, it is possible a man’s understanding may be improved by the gospel, to a great ability in the literal knowledge of it, so as to be able to expound the scriptures orthodoxly, and enlighten others by them, as it is Mat. vii. 22. The Scribes and Pharisees were well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament; yea, such were their abilities, and esteem among the people for them, that the apostle stiles them the *princes of this world*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. And yet notwithstanding Christ truly calls them *blind guides*, Mat. xxiii. Till Christ open the heart, we can know nothing of him, or of his will, as we ought to know it. So experimentally true is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man.” The spiritual man can judge and discern the carnal man, but the carnal man wants a faculty to judge of the spiritual man: as a man that carries a dark lanthorn, can see another by its light, but the other cannot discern him. Such is the difference betwixt persons whose hearts Christ hath, or hath not opened.

2. Christ’s opening the understanding, implies the insufficiency of all external means, how excellent soever they are in themselves, to operate savingly upon men, till Christ by his power opens the soul, and so makes them effectual. † What excellent preachers

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\* The most refined and ingenious sort of unregenerate men have nothing in them which is more excellent than common grace; and common grace leaves them in the state of nature, under the power of sin, and in the very suburbs of hell, wholly at the command of Satan. And if any man think otherwise, let him take heed that every thought doth not nail him fast to that unregenerate and cursed state for evermore. *Dr. Chynelles Divin. Trin. p. 410, &c.*

† We maintain a twofold manner of prophetic teaching, the one immediate, the other mediate; by the former, with some help of the latter, men’s minds may be enlightened, and their hearts inclined to the obedience of faith: by the latter neither of these effects can be produced without the help of the former. *Synopsis purior. Theol. disp. XXVI. 518.*

were Isaiah and Jeremiah to the Jews? The former spake of Christ more like an Evangelist of the New than a Prophet of the Old Testament; the latter was a most convictive and pathetic preacher: yet the one complains, Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The other laments the successlessness of his ministry, Jer. vi. 18. "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain." Under the New Testament, what people ever enjoyed such choice helps and means, as those that lived under the ministry of Christ and the apostles? Yet how many remained still in darkness? Matt. xi. 27. "We have piped to you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented." Neither the delightful airs of mercy, nor the doleful ditties of judgment, could affect or move their hearts.

And indeed if you search into the reason of it, you will be satisfied, that the choicest of means can do nothing upon the heart, until Christ by his Spirit open it, because ordinances work not as natural causes do: for then the effect would always follow unless miraculously hindered; and it would be equally wonderful, that all that hear should not be converted, as that the three children should be in the fiery furnace so long, and yet not be burned: no, it works not as a natural, but as a moral cause, whose efficacy depends on the gracious and arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," John iii. 8. The ordinances are like the pool of Bethesda, John v. 4. At a certain time an angel came down and troubled the waters, and then they had a healing virtue in them. So the Spirit comes down at certain times in the word, and opens the heart; and then it becomes the power of God to salvation. So that when you see souls daily sitting under excellent and choice means, and remain dead still, you may say as Martha did to Christ of her brother Lazarus, Lord, if thou hadst been here they had not remained dead. If thou hadst been in this sermon, it had not been so ineffectual to them.

3. It implies the utter impotency of man to open his own heart, and thereby make the word effectual to his own conversion and salvation. He that at first said, "let there be light," and it was so, must shine into our hearts, or they will never be savingly enlightened. \* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. A double misery lies upon a great part of mankind, *viz. Impotency and Pride*. They have not only lost the liberty and freedom of their wills, but with it have so far lost their understanding and humility as not to own it. But, alas!

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\* It must therefore be acknowledged, that such is our insufficiency of ourselves in all respects that the heavenly doctrine cannot be unprofitable to us, or have its due effect, except so far as the Spirit both forms our minds to understand it, and our hearts to submit to it. *Calvin* on this place.

Man is become a most impotent creature by the fall ; so far from being able to open his own heart, that he cannot know the things of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 14. cannot believe, John vi. 44. cannot obey, Rom. viii. 7. cannot speak one good word, Matt. xii. 34. cannot think one good thought, 2 Cor. iii. 5. cannot do one good act, John xv. 5. O what a helpless, shiftless thing is a poor sinner ! Suitably to this state of impotence, conversion is in scripture called regeneration, John iii. 3. a resurrection from the dead, Eph. ii. 5. a creation, Eph. ii. 10. a victory, 2 Cor. x. 5. Which doth not only imply man to be purely passive in his conversion to God, but a renitency, and opposition made to that power which goes forth from God to recover him.

*Lastly*, Christ's opening the understanding imports his divine power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Who but God knows the heart ? \* Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure ? No mere creature, no not the angels themselves, who for their large understandings are called intelligencies, can command or open the heart. We may stand and knock at men's hearts, till our own ake ; but no opening till Christ come. He can fit a key to all the cross wards of the will, and with sweet efficacy open it, and that without any force or violence to it. These things are carried in this part of his office, consisting in opening the heart : which was the first thing propounded for explication.

*Secondly*, In the next place, let us see by what acts Jesus Christ performs this work of his, and what way and method he takes to open the hearts of sinners.

And there are two principal ways, by which Christ opens the understandings and hearts of men, *viz.* by his Word and Spirit.

1. By his word ; to this end was Paul commissioned and sent to preach the gospel, Acts xxvi. 18. " To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to " God." The Lord can, if he pleases, accomplish this immediately ; but though he can do it, he will not do it ordinarily without means, because he will honour his own institutions. Therefore you may observe, that when Lydia's heart was to be opened, " there appeared unto Paul a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, " saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us," Acts xix. 9. God will keep up his ordinances among men : and though he hath not tied himself, yet he hath tied us, to them. Cornelius must send for Peter : God can make the earth produce corn, as it did at first, without cultivation and labour ; but he that shall now expect it in the neglect of means, may perish for want of bread.

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\* He alone, whose throne is in heaven, has access into, and can instruct the heart.

2. But the ordinances in themselves cannot do it, as I noted before; and therefore Jesus Christ hath sent forth the Spirit, who is his *Prorex*, his vicegerent, to carry on this work upon the hearts of his elect. And when the Spirit comes down upon the souls in the administration of the ordinances, he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the hearing of faith. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions? so much that word, John xvi. 8. imports, "He shall convince the world of sin;" convince by clear demonstration\*, such as inforces assent, so that the soul cannot but yield it to be so; and yet the door of the heart is not opened, till he has also put forth his power upon the will, and, by a sweet and secret efficacy, overcome all its reluctions, and the soul be made willing in the day of his power. When this is done, the heart is opened: saving light now shines in it; and this light set up, the Spirit in the soul is,

1, A *new light* in which all things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names *Christ* and *sin*, the words *heaven* and *hell* have another sound in that man's ears, than formerly they had. When he comes to read the same scriptures, which possibly he had read a hundred times before, he wonders he should be so blind as he was, to overlook such great, weighty, and concerning things as he now beholds in them; and saith, Where were mine eyes, that I could never see these things before?

2. It is a very *affecting light*; a light that hath heat and powerful influences with it, which makes deep impressions on the heart. Hence they whose eyes the great Prophet opens, are said to be "brought out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. The soul is greatly affected with what it sees. The beams of light are contracted and twisted together in the mind; and being reflected on the heart and affections, soon cause them to smoke and burn. "Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures?"

3. And it is a *growing light*, like the light of the morning which "shines more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. When the Spirit first opens the understanding, he doth not give it at once a full sight of all truths, or a full sense of the power, sweetness and goodness of any truth; but the soul in the use of means grows up to a greater clearness day by day: its knowledge grows *extensively* in measure, and *intensively* in power and efficacy.

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\* Το μη δυνατον αλλως εχειν αλλ' ετω λεγομεν. Demonstration is an argument shewing the impossibility of a thing's being otherwise than as we affirm.—*Arist.*

And thus the Lord Jesus by his Spirit opens the understanding. Now the use of this follows in five practical deductions.

*Inference 1.* If this be the work and office of Jesus Christ, to open the understandings of men; hence we infer *the miseries that lie upon those men, whose understandings, to this day, Jesus Christ hath not opened*; of whom we may say, as it is, Deut. xxix. 4. "To this day Christ hath not given them eyes to see." Natural blindness, whereby we are deprived of the light of this world, is sad; but spiritual blindness is much more so. See how dolefully their case is represented, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: whose eyes the God of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them:" he means a total and final concealment of the saving power of the word from them. Why, what if Jesus Christ withhold it, and will not be a prophet to them, what is their condition? Truly no better than lost men. It is hid *τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*, to them that are to perish, or be destroyed. This blindness, like the covering of the face, or tying the handkerchief over the eyes, is in order to their turning off into hell. More particularly, because the point is of deep concernment, let us consider,

1. *The judgment inflicted*, and that is spiritual blindness. A sore misery indeed! Not an universal ignorance of all truths, O no! in natural and moral truths they are oftentimes acute, and sharp-sighted men; but in that part of knowledge which wraps up eternal life, John xvii. 2. there they are utterly blinded: as it is said of the Jews, upon whom this misery lies, that *blindness in part is happened to Israel*. They are learned and knowing persons in other matters, but they know not Jesus Christ; there is the grand and sad defect.

2. *The subject of this judgment*, the mind, which is the eye of the soul. If it were put upon the body, it would not be so considerable; this falls immediately upon the soul, the noblest part of man, and upon the mind, the highest and noblest faculty of the soul, whereby we understand, think, and reason. This in scripture is called *πνεῦμα* the spirit, the intellectual, rational faculty, which the philosophers call *το ηγεμονικον*, the leading directive faculty; which is to the soul what the natural eye is to the body. Now the soul being the most active and restless thing in the world, always working, and its leading, directive power blind, judge what a sad and dangerous state such a soul is in; just like a fiery, high-mettled horse, whose eyes are out, furiously carrying his rider upon rocks, pits and dangerous precipices. I remember Chrysostom, speaking of the loss of a soul, saith that the loss of a member of the body is nothing to it; for, saith he, If a man lose an eye, ear,

hand or foot, there is another to supply its want: *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, "God hath given us those members double;" *animam vero unam*, "but he hath not given us two souls," that if one be lost, yet the other may be saved. Surely it were better for thee, reader, to have every member of thy body made the seat and subject of the most exquisite racking torments, than for spiritual blindness to befall thy soul. Moreover,

3. Consider *the indiscernableness of this judgment* to the soul on whom it lies: they know it not, no more than a man knows that he is asleep. Indeed it is "the spirit of a deep sleep poured out upon them from the Lord," Isa. xxix. 10. like that which befel Adam when God opened his side, and took out a rib. This renders their misery the more remediless: "Because ye say you see, therefore your sin remaineth," John ix. 41. Once more,

4. Consider *the tendency and effects of it*. What doth this tend to but eternal ruin? for hereby we are cut off from the only remedy. The soul that is so blinded, can never see sin, nor a Saviour; but, like the *Egyptians*, during the palpable darkness, sits still, and moves not after its own recovery. And as ruin is that to which it tends, so in order thereto, it renders all the ordinances and duties under which that soul comes, altogether useless and ineffectual to its salvation. He comes to the word, and sees others melted by it, but to him it signifies nothing. O what a heavy stroke of God is this! Most wretched is their case, to whom Jesus Christ will not apply this eye-salve, that they may see. Did you but understand the misery of such a state, if Christ should say to you, as he did to the blind man, Mat. xx. 33. "What wilt thou that I should do for thee?" You would return as he did, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened."

*Infer. 2* If Jesus Christ be the great Prophet of the church, then surely he will take special care both of the church and the under shepherds appointed by him to feed them: else both the objects and instruments upon and by which he executes his office, must fail and consequently this glorious office be in vain. Hence he is said "to walk among the golden candlesticks," Rev. i. 13. and Rev. ii. 1. "to hold the stars in his right hand." Jesus Christ instrumentally opens the understandings of men by preaching of the gospel; and whilst there is an elect soul to be converted, or a convert to be farther illuminated, means shall not fail to accomplish it by.

*Infer. 3.* Hence you that are yet in darkness, may be directed to whom to apply yourselves for saving knowledge. It is Christ that hath the sovereign eye-salve, that can cure your blindness\*;

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\* So thick is that cataract which is grown over the eye of our understanding that none but God can remove it. Christ was sent to be a light to the Gentiles.

he only hath the key of the house of David; he opens, and no man shutteth. O that I might persuade you to set yourselves in his way, under the ordinances, and cry to him, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened." Three things are marvellously encouraging to you so to do.

1. God the Father hath put him into this office, for the cure of such as you be, Isa. xlix. 6. "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth." This may furnish you with an argument to plead for a cure. Why do you not go to God, and say, Lord, didst thou give Jesus Christ a commission to open the blind eyes? Behold me, Lord, such a one am I, a poor, dark, ignorant soul. Didst thou give him to be thy salvation to the ends of the earth? No place nor people excluded from the benefit of that right; and shall I still remain in the shadow of death? O that unto me he might be a saving light also? The best and most excellent work that ever thou wroughtest, brings thee no glory till it comes into the light! O let me see and admire it!

2. It is encouraging to think, that *Jesus Christ hath actually opened the eyes of them that were as dark and ignorant as you are.* He hath revealed those things to babes, that have been hid from the wise and prudent, Mat. xi. 25. "The law of the Lord is perfect, making wise the simple," Psal. xix. 7. And if you look among those whom Christ hath enlightened, you will not find "many wise after the flesh, many mighty or noble; but the foolish, weak, base, and despised; these are they on whom he hath glorified the riches of his grace," 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

3. And is it not yet farther encouraging to you that *hitherto he hath mercifully continued you under the means of light?* Why is not the light of the gospel put out? Why are times and seasons of grace continued to you, if God have no farther design of good to your souls? Be not therefore discouraged, but wait on the Lord in the use of means, that you may yet be healed.

*Quest.* If you ask, What can we do to put ourselves into the way of the Spirit, in order to such a cure?

*Sol.* I say, though you cannot do any thing, that can make the gospel effectual, yet the Spirit of God can make those means you are capable of using effectual, if he please to concur with them. And it is a certain truth, that your inability to do what is above your power, doth no ways excuse you from doing what is within the compass of your power to do. I know no act that is saving, can be done without the concurrence of spiritual grace; yea, and no act that hath a remote order and tendency thereto, without a

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so he enlightens the medium; and to open the eyes of the blind, so he heals the organ; he is the only oculist: *Firmin's Real Christian*, p. 30.

more general concourse of God's assistance: but herein he is not behind-hand with you. Let me therefore advise,

1. That you *diligently attend upon an able, faithful, and searching ministry*. Neglect no opportunity God affords you; for how know you but that may be the time of mercy to your soul? If he that lay so many years at the pool of *Bethesda*, had been wanting but that hour when the angel came down and troubled the waters, he had not been healed.

2. Satisfy not yourselves with hearing, but *consider what you hear*. Allow time to reflect upon what God hath spoken to you. What power is there in man more excellent, or more appropriate to the reasonable nature, than its reflective and self-considering power? There is little hope of any good to be done upon your souls, till you begin to go alone, and become thinking men and women: Here all conversion begins. I know, a severer task can hardly be imposed upon a carnal heart. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together upon this account: but this must be, if ever the Lord do your souls good. Psal. iv. 4. "Commune with your own hearts."

3. *Labour to see, and ingenuously confess the insufficiency of all your other knowledge to do you good*. What if you had never so much skill and knowledge in other mysteries? What if you be never so well acquainted with the letter of the scripture? What if you had an angelical illumination? This can never save thy soul. No, all thy knowledge signifies nothing till the Lord shew thee by special light the deplorable sight of thy own heart, and a saving sight of Jesus Christ, thy only remedy.

*Inf.* 4. Since then there is a common light, and special saving light, which none but Christ can give, *it is therefore the concernment, of every one of you to try what your light is*. "We know, (saith the apostle, 1 Cor. viii. 1.) that we all have knowledge." O but what, and whence is it? Is it the light of life springing from Jesus Christ, that bright and morning star, or only such as the devils and damned have? These lights differ,

1. In their very *kind and natures*. The one is heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual; the other earthly, and natural, the effect of a better constitution or education, James iii. 15, 17.

2. They differ most apparently in their *effects and operations*. The light that comes in a special way from Christ, is humbling, abasing, and soul-emptying light: by it a man sees the vileness of his own nature and practice, which begets self-loathing in him; but natural light, on the contrary, puffs up, exalts, and makes the heart swell with self-conceitedness, 1 Cor. viii. 1.

The light of Christ is *practical and operative*, still urging the soul, yet lovingly constraining it to obedience. No sooner did it shine

into Paul's heart, but presently he asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. It brought forth fruit on the Colossians, from the first day it came to them, Col. i. 6; but the other spends itself in impractical notions, and is detained in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. The light of Christ is powerfully *transformative* of its subjects, changing the man, in whom it is, into the same image, from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. But common light leaves the heart as dead, as carnal and sensual, as if no light at all were in it.

In a word, All saving light *endears* Jesus Christ to the soul; and as it could not value him before it saw him, so when once he appears to the soul in his own light, he is appreciated and endeared unspeakably: then none but Christ; all is but dung, that he may win Christ: none in heaven but him, nor in earth desirable in comparison of him. But no such effect flows from natural common knowledge.

3. They differ in their *issues*. Natural common knowledge vanisheth, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. It is but a *May-flower*, and dies in its month. "Doth not their excellency that is in them go away?" Job iv. 21. But this that springs from Christ is perfected, not destroyed by death: it springs up into everlasting life. The soul in which it is subjected, carries it away with it into glory. John xvii. 2. this light is life eternal. Now turn in, and compare yourselves with these rules: let not false light deceive you.

*Inf. 5.* Lastly, *How are they obliged to love, serve, and honour Jesus Christ, whom he hath enlightened with the saving knowledge of himself?* O that with hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, ye would adore the free grace of Jesus Christ to your souls? How many round about you have their eyes closed, and their hearts shut up! How many are in darkness, and there are like to remain, till they come to the blackness of darkness, which is reserved for them? O what a pleasant thing is it for your eyes to see the light of this world! But what is it for the eye of your mind to see God in Christ? To see such ravishing sights as the objects of faith are? and to have such a pledge as this given you of the blessed visions of glory? for *in this light you shall see light*. Bless God, and boast not: rejoice in your light, but be proud of it; and beware ye sin not against the best and highest light in this world. If God were so incensed against the Heathens for disobeying the light of nature, what is it in you to sin with eyes clearly illuminated with the purest light that shines in this world? You know, God charges it upon Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 9. that he turned from the way of obedience *after the Lord had appeared to him twice*. Jesus Christ

intended when he opened your eyes, that your eyes should direct your feet. Light is a special help to obedience, and obedience is a singular help to increase your light.

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## SERMON XI.

### The Nature and necessity of the Priesthood of CHRIST.

HEB. ix. 23.

*It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the Heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

**S**ALVATION (as to the actual dispensation of it) is *revealed* by Christ as a *Prophet*, *procured* by him as a *Priest*, *applied* by him as a *King*. In vain it is revealed, if not purchased; in vain revealed and purchased, if not applied. How is it revealed, both to us, and in us, by our great Prophet, hath been declared. And now, from the prophetic office, we pass on to the priestly office of Jesus Christ, who as our Priest, purchased our salvation. In this office is contained the grand relief for a soul distressed by the guilt of sin. When all other reliefs have been essayed, it is the blood of this great sacrifice, sprinkled by faith upon the trembling conscience, that must cool, refresh, and sweetly compose and settle it. Now, seeing so great a weight hangs upon this office, the apostle industriously confirms and commends it in this epistle, and more especially in this ninth chapter; shewing how it was figured to the world by the typical blood of the sacrifices, but infinitely excels them all: and as in many other most weighty respects, so principally in this, that the blood of these sacrifices did but purify the types or patterns of the heavenly things; but the blood of this sacrifice purified or consecrated the heavenly things themselves, signified by those types.

The words read, contains an argument to prove the necessity of the offering up of Christ, the great sacrifice, drawn from the proportion betwixt the types, and the things typified\*. If the sanc-

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\* He concludes the foregoing argument on the necessity of redemption, from the proportion between the types and the heavenly things: for, if the things typically sacred, behoved to be purified with typical blood; surely, the heavenly things behoved to be purified by blood so much more excelling that other, as these things themselves excel their earthly types. The reason is plain: because, what proportion there is between the types and the things typified, must likewise take place as to the blood that consecrates them. *Parcus* on this place.