

LETTING YOUR LIGHT SHINE.

PASTOR A. J. GORDON.

“LET your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.” Why did he not say, “that they may see *your* light.” That is what we should have expected. But what a practical turn Christ gives to this exhortation, “that men may see *your* good works.”

Good works are the *fruit* of light. Light is sound doctrine, pure truth, the clear testimony of the Scriptures. But a man may have all these and yet exhibit no good works. And men must have something tangible in order to be impressed. We say of a person who has intelligent convictions and clear views of truth that he has great light. And that is true. But the mass of people will not see the light which consists simply of convictions and ideas. They must have something more practical.

Suppose a learned man should give a lecture on light and optics to a company of farmers. Solar rays, prismatic hues, waves of light, radiation, transmission, reflection, etc.—what would all these scientific terms signify to them? But the light comes down from the sun, and slowly transmutes itself into grass and fruits, into the strawberry, the peach, the grape, and the corn. Ah, I can understand that, says the farmer. That is something practical, something that can be weighed and priced.

Now it is the great work of nature to transmute sunlight into life. So it is the great end of Christian living to transmute the light of truth into the fruits of holy living. These are practical things. Men who cannot appreciate clear views of truth and sound theological convictions can appreciate a good life. Hence the inimitable wisdom of Christ's words, “Let your light so shine before men *that they may see your good works.*” The light is necessary, indispensable, in order to

works, as the sunlight is to fruit. 3 That have grown in dark cellars, 1 Jo. 1 from the sun, are colorless, without 1 Th. 1 or fruit. And that is a type of is the without religion. There is the confid structure, but no bloom. There at lea, the light of God before godly

works can appear. But where there is the true light then there must be the good works, as the exponent and manifestation of that light.

In the thirteenth of 1st Corinthians Paul presents the three cardinal graces: “And now abideth faith, hope and love.” These are the threefold beams of the divine life which Christ brought into the world—the triple rays of that life which is the light of men. But faith, hope and charity are abstract ideas, spiritual graces. To the Thessalonians, when Paul is writing a practical epistle about their service and devotion and zeal, he clothes these graces with the flesh and blood of good works—*your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope.* It is grace blossoming out into life; it is doctrine clothed with practical works. I am a great believer in strong doctrinal convictions. I do not believe that a stalwart Christian life is any more possible without them than a vigorous body is possible without bones. But a man that is all convictions and no sympathy and humanity, is a kind of theological skeleton,—good to study anatomy by, but good for nothing to reach out a helping hand to the lost.

And then notice another unexpected turn to the thought: “That others, seeing your good works,” may praise them or commend you? No! That is what might be expected; but instead, how striking is the heavenly uplift and direction that is instantly given to the command, “Let *your* light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The light that seemed about to strike us and gild us with its glory has suddenly glanced and thrown its radiance upward into the face of God from whence it came.

And here comes out the certain test of a genuine faith. A religion whose root is in self will bear only the fruits of self-glorifying. But that is not Christianity. Paul, how is a man saved? “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” And for what is he saved? Not for self-glorifying. “He that glorieth let him *glory in the Lord,*” is his answer. Can there be anything more indicative of a hollow, spurious Christianity, than *egotism*? A

Christian writing capital *I* ten times where he writes Christ once! Alas for the effrontery of human nature, that undertakes to preach, or to pray, or to work for the praise of self! And the worst of it is that such pride seems utterly unconscious of the indignity which it casts upon God.

Egotism and humility are alike in one aspect; they are each insensible of their own existence. They are vastly unlike in another; while humility is unconscious of self, egotism is unconscious of God. The one stoops so low as to get out of its own sight; the other soars so high that it loses sight of God.

If we are going to let our lights shine simply to illumine our own faces, we might quite as well let them go out. What Christ enjoins is the exhibition of a life of sacrifice and service, for the sake of the honor that it may reflect on God. The best argument for Christ is a Christian life, because it is a manifestation and commendation of the indwelling life and grace of God.

Dr. Joseph Parker recently said in a public address. Christians must not hobnob with the unbeliever, or catch the measles of the infidel's folly; it is their duty to love the Lord with all their hearts, minds, and strength. People sometimes talk as if they were forced to be Christians. There is no force except the greatest of all forces, the compulsion of the love of Christ. Our choice is voluntary; we have the chance of being infidels, and do not accept it; of seeing all the infidelities which had ever strutted across the stage of life, and one by one we reject them. Many of us know something of doubt and fear, of infidelity, and possibly of atheism. We have seen what those things could do, and summarily renounce the whole of them. Our cry is "Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God." Ministers have no right to take their doubts and fears, their spiritual indigestions, into the pulpit. He heard young men boasting that they would go through fire and water for their mothers, but refused to gratify them as much as to go home an hour earlier at night. There are people everywhere waiting for some great opportunity, and failing the while in the fulfilment of daily duties. They

want the sound of trumpets and the beating of drums. He did not believe in genius if it were not translatable into some deeds of every-day kindness, and the sweet civilities of life. We must not be content with great demonstrations and the waving of banners; but see also to the little simple tasks of household life on the lines laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS.

BY ALEXANDER MCLAREN, D. D.

WE hold to the universal priesthood of all believers. This means:

(a) *Direct access to God.* (b)

A priest must have something to offer—our offering must be ourselves—daily surrender of heart and will, and all else to his blessed service. (c) *Brotherly mediation.* We have not any priests, but there are a great many of us Christian men and women that have not realized that our priesthood means that we should be heralds of Christ's work in our own persons. What is the use of our taking up this great truth of the universal priesthood of all believers, using it as a stick to shake in the face of the sacerdotal tendencies in other churches, if it is not regulating the lives of our own churches. For all these principals have got a double edge. They cut against those who do not recognize them; they cut still deeper into those that do, and my best wish dear brethren, of all churches, and for all communions, is that, having these great truths, we may be worthy of them. We have a great heritage. *Noblesse oblige.* Seeing that we have to witness to these truths, let us see that they penetrate, ennoble, sweeten our lives; and, by the elevation of the character and the beauty of the type of the religious life which they produce in us, commend them to the world.

After all, more souls are won for Jesus Christ by saintly conduct than by any argument. And let us beware of falling into the error of idolizing our principles. Principles may be very good, the foundation may be strong, the building may be very mean. Churches can corrupt and become stagnant; and, for all their high principles, can become but a bit of the world under another name, which suits the world's purpose exactly, and gains immense applause.