

‘Let your zeal for doctrines and ordinances appear so conspicuous, that many shall see your religious superiority’—may we not say that here we have fallen upon the true meaning? Although the apostle exhorts to “instruct in meekness those who oppose themselves,” and advises to “be not high minded, but fear,” yet, on the whole, it is so pleasing to the spirit that witnesseth within us, in the absence of a better spirit, that the passage would suit admirably if it allowed the privilege of esteeming ourselves and despising others. To boast is not always profitable; but why not sometimes both lawful and profitable? Fearing, however, that all the learned may not concur in this view of the text, we try again as follows—

‘Let your ability to dispute be so well exhibited, that all may perceive your logical tact and argumentative strength’—this surely, at last, is the signification. Some dull pupils in the school of argument may object: but so long as our Lord himself says, “I came not to bring peace but a sword,” we are encouraged to adhere to this last and best interpretation! The Great Teacher doubtless intended to establish an institution famous for making and exhibiting good logicians and expert critics; and hence, as we speak of shining talents, may we not say with much propriety that our talents as disciples are so to shine, that all may see what proficiency can be made in the Saviour’s debating society!!

But for our own part we endorse none of these renderings of the passage in question. They are too partial and partizan. It is not the light of religious excitement, or of great personal knowledge, or of zeal for sound doctrine, or of critical or logical ability, that the Great Teacher has before him while speaking to his saints. It is rather the light of truth, and all the virtues which truth produces, harmoniously and practically reflected in the lives of truth’s adherents and advocates, that occupies the mind of Jesus in giving utterance to the words, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.” As though he had said—‘Let your behaviour, as my disciples, appear so blameless, consistent, and commendable before the world, that, by your righteous conduct, all shall be constrained to perceive you are a peculiar and divine people, and therefore be desirous of imitating and joining you, and thus glorifying God.’ It was by what the Saviour calls good works that they were to give evidence to others that they were themselves enlightened, and had the light of life. Their good works were to be their light. The **Philippians** were to shine as lights in the world by living blameless