

of God" may stand as an illustration. The self-denying earnestness and genuine sympathy for the poor and unfortunate, displayed by Dominic and by Francis of Assisi, show a social interest. Jakob Spener's influence in Halle, and the founding of the Orphan-House exhibit the vital connection between a deep and spiritual piety and an active benevolence; and form an illuminating exposition of the social message of James. The history of the Quaker movement is probably the most striking evidence of the power of the Gospel of Christ in social reconstruction. Narrow they were, and literal, these Quakers; but the extraordinarily bigoted persecution which they suffered is in itself a testimony to their Christ-likeness; and it may well be that not only the work of men like John Howar^d and Wilberforce, but the whole era of reform in the nineteenth century, are in no small measure due to the influence of Quakerism.

Yet granting the truth of these instances and many more, they are but incidental. The question still remains, Has the Church fulfilled her part as agent in the work of social reconstruction?

THE EARLY CHURCH.

It is clear that in the early periods of Church history there was no such task undertaken. There were many reasons for this. In an age when the speedy return of Christ and the end of this dispensation was expected, it seemed futile to attempt to reorganize society. Paul's counsel was, to the slave to remain a slave, to the married to stay married. It was the inner disposition that was important, not the outward circumstances. That was the reason why Paul was not an anti-slavery man. But even if he had been, there was no opportunity for popular agitation such as made possible the work of Wilberforce or William Lloyd Garrison. The Roman Government did not appreciate a freedom of speech that would threaten the institution of society. Then again, Christianity found its interest not in this world, but in the next. In the eyes of believers the Roman anti-Christian society was ruled by demons rather than by God. Heathen worship was the worship of demons. Moreover, paganism showed itself hostile to Christianity, and persecutions of Christians and the necessity of secrecy and caution tended to make them think of the Church as the only regenerate society possible. They were in the world, but not of it; such was their feeling. It was too hopelessly corrupt to be regenerated save little by little as it should come into the Church. Add to this attitude the fact of the low social status and imperfect intellectual culture of many of the early converts; add the further fact that "religion, by the very reverence which makes it noble, intensifies the conservative instinct," and in this combination of influences we have a historical situation strongly tending to neutralize the revolutionary force inherent in the religion of Christ.