

most emphatically the protest of Quakerism against formality, even when it is formality justified by an appearance of righteousness.

Pharisaical formality was abhorrent to Fox as it was to Him in whose foot steps Fox desired to be found walking. Uniformity of speech and apparel were not to be assumed as a symbol of the sect,—far from it,—such a custom would prevent the very idea of Quakerism that every man should be led and guided by the Spirit of God, and not by the dictates of man.

It is true that all the followers of Geo. Fox did not thus clearly discern the groundwork of the principle of plainness inaugurated by their great leader. We find Samuel Fothergill thus writing to a young man who had laid aside the dress of the Society, and with it some of the moral restrictions which the Society imposed: "If thou hadst appeared like a religious, sober Friend, those companions who have exceedingly wounded thee, durst not have attempted to frequent thy company. If thou hadst no other inducement to alter thy dress, I beseech thee to do it to keep the distinction our principles lead to, and to separate thee from fools and fops. At the same time that by a prudent distinction in appearance thou scatterest away those that are the bane of youth, thou wilt engage the attention of those whose company will be profitable and honorable to thee."

Here we have a notable instance of the degradation of a righteous principle into a mere external formality, assumed for appearance sake, or at most to protect its wearer against the dangers of vicious associations. Fox took the exalted ground made memorable by the prayer of Jesus: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." Fox said to the one who asked him what he should wear, "Ask thy conscience; let it guide thee in all thy habits." Fothergill volunteered the advice to the young man he

had to deal with, "Put on plain clothes, they will serve as a hedge to keep thee from evil." With Fox the clothes were the habiliments of the soul, with Fothergill they might be a disguise hiding the real nature of the man. Doubtless this was not the thought of Fothergill, as it has not been that of many a well-meaning Friend since his day, who has used the same argument to prove the value of wearing the plain dress, but it was a grievous blunder which, being repeated, has led to very disastrous consequences to the Society of Friends. It was one of the steps leading to the putting of Quakerism off its sure foundation, the rock of revelation, upon a sandy foundation of formalism and sectarian usage. The argument used by Fothergill is an argument against Quakerism, for it advises placing one's dependence for spiritual strength upon an outward symbol."

It is the tree that is tossed by storms that grows strong; it is the child that is not always carried that learns to walk; it is the soul that is tempted that may grow strong. Put artificial supports about any of these and they remain always weak. "Take them not from the world, oh Father, but do *Thou* preserve them from the evil that is in the world," said our great spiritual leader.

"Let the single man plant himself on his instincts," says Emerson, "and the huge world will come round to him." Let the Friend plant himself upon the rock of revelation, turning to the voice of God in his own soul, and do whatsoever that directs, and the world will at length conform to his religion, though it may not acknowledge all his traditions, nor adopt all his peculiarities.

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DOES GOD SPEAK TO US TO-DAY?

Most people are ready to admit that God has made his will known to men in past ages by immediate inspiration.