

a necessary intermediary between man and his God, is the church. This latter idea, it may be well to say, does not so strongly prevail in many of the dissenting bodies of Christians, in Quakerism least of all, and as an institution absolutely not at all. As the church has been a great exciting cause to virtue on the one side and to cruelty and bondage on the other, its progress must be of profound interest to the devout, the humanitarian, and the critical.

Were we to ask what makes a true Christian church? the reader would probably reply, "Christian men and women!" But who are Christian men and women? Many sects have been formed to answer this. To my mind, and I think to the Quaker mind it will be safe to say—they are those who love, follow and reflect the same Christ that Jesus did. They must be measurably like Him—well anointed (Christos) sons of God. And whether man was made for the church or the church for man; whether it was by Divine appointment, or assumes to be such, extending or withholding salvation to man; or whether it is the outgrowth of Christian character to fill a social need, one thing is certain—that as the especial exponent of Christianity it ought in all respects to be Christ-like; to teach and consistently reflect the practical virtues of Jesus Christ. That it has not always done so is certain. At the same time it is well to remember that it, like all organizations, possesses the difficulty of eliminating the selfish and unduly ambitious; and affording to more or less extent in its construction the opportunity for such natures. Young Friends should study and compare our religious organization, note its similarity to the Primitive Christian Church, its great opportunities, and help to make it partake of a genuine Christian character.

Now, before considering the Primitive Christian Church, we will briefly review the circumstances which gave rise to it, the First Reformation. The Jewish

Church taught the commandments of Moses. It observed the rites, and celebrated the events connected with the long history of the people of Israel. Nothing was more splendid than its appointments, unless it was the dignity and authority of the Imperial City and the Roman Empire. Its age carried with it respect and veneration. Time had stamped upon it the impress of authority. Its objects were worthy, but its service became largely a performance. It was rich with mental imagery and well calculated to fasten the allegiance of the simple, the superficial and the selfish. The Temple had become through its sacrificial rites a temptation to the mercenary. It had, in fact, become a "den of thieves." The priesthood was largely vain and jealous. Philosophy and sophistry was developing a cold intellectuality. Immorality throughout the Roman Empire was alarmingly general. The touching up of the heart with "a live coal from off God's altar" was wanted. A reformation was never more needed, and a reformation was at hand. John saw it coming when his call to repentance was as yet "the voice of one crying in the wilderness"—such was the state of these unhallowed times. The abuses, the corruption, the hypocrisy, his single-heartedness and simple devotion perceived, and he opened the way and heralded the day-dawn of the great reformation. What he was to this, such as Erasmus and Melancthon were to the Protestant Reformation, it may be said. He pursued the priestly function of baptism, one of the symbols of the Jewish Church, but realized how shadowy, how insignificant was his performance beside "the baptism of the Spirit and of fire" by Him whose shoe-latchet he considered himself unworthy to unloose. This virtue of humility, Jesus, it is well to note in passing, emphasized when He himself washed the feet of the disciples, and symbolized for all time to come, the attitude of the truly great towards the weak, viz: that of loving helpfulness and comfort, that