

harmonious brotherhood. As to his religious convictions, he held them with the noble firmness of one who had received his commission from on high; and no threats or dangers could intimidate his fervent zeal. In fearless daring, while engaged in his work, he equalled the fervid Francis Xavier. Oppression and imprisonment did not overawe him, and never awoke the malevolent impulses of his nature, only adding fervor to his plea for the captive and the oppressed. Indeed, in those sad prison experiences of George Fox we can detect the germs of that modern philanthropy in which his followers have distinguished themselves so nobly. Few have been so active as the Quakers in that movement which led to a thorough reform of the prisons of England; and in all efforts to lessen the sum of human suffering they have nobly distinguished themselves.

That Quakerism had a great and important mission, few thoughtful minds will now deny. That it was needed as a witness for some half-forgotten principles of christianity, at the time when it arose, most religious philosophers will admit; though they might add that its mission seems to be accomplished and its work done, and its protest, in its own special form, no longer needed. Like many other systems which have had their day and their history, Quakerism is passing away.

The grand distinctive principle of Quakerism, that which gave it at first such wonderful vitality and force, and touched so many hearts, was what they named "the inner light," or the voice of God in the soul. "The light within"—this was the very centre of the Quaker system and their early watchword. They put forward their belief in this, as the first and central truth of the gospel,—as a sufficient justification for their forsaking all existing Christian societies. The grace of God, said George Fox, must be sought and felt in a man's own heart, if he would be delivered from his sin and his fear by that grace. The true light, he repeated again and again, is within the man himself. With the Quaker, "the inner light" was the principle of salvation and the ground of a church. Still it was to his view, a living light—a Divine Person shining into the soul—not superseding the Bible, but guiding to its truths. Divested of its Quaker drapery, it seems to me that this doctrine did not differ materially from that which is now held by all the evangelical churches, regarding the divine influence in the heart of man,—an influence which extends