

shall be unable to judge of the adaptation of the Church of to-day to fulfil the purpose of its existence.

### III.

The fierce and protracted disputes that have been waged in all ages, over the constitution and methods of the Church, however unfruitful they may have been in useful, practical results, attest the high estimate that has been cherished, by eminent theologians of all denominations, of the importance of right and Scriptural views respecting the organization and discipline of the Church. Doubtless, these discussions between the representatives of different Church polities have shown an exaggerated estimate of the value of external arrangements and ordinances; but the underlying assumption, that Scriptural views of the Church were a matter of primary importance was, in the main, correct. It is one of the questions that is old, but ever new. What are the characteristic marks of a true Scriptural Church? is a question of as much practical interest to the Christians of to-day as to those of any former period. Because each Church is bound to prove its conformity to the Scriptural ideal, in order to vindicate its claims to be a branch of the Divine society of which Christ is the Head. Churches, as well as individuals, are bound to neglect not self-examination. It is of vital importance to a military commander to know the condition, resources, and discipline of his own army, as well as the strength of the enemy. The same is true of Churches. They should compare themselves with the Church of the apostolic age. Not for the purpose of being satisfied that they are fashioned and organized after any unalterable pattern or form of government, but to see whether they possess those signs of spiritual power, life, and fruitfulness that are an essential qualification for doing successfully the work of Christ in the world. No form of organization can secure a Church against feebleness and death. Yet, upon the qualifications of the Church for the work of testifying for Christ in the world, it depends whether the result shall be success or failure.

This consideration makes the condition of the human instrumentality, in some respects, a more important consideration to us than the Divine agency. Not that it is really more essential