

ever much they may have been revered and cherished as precious.

Our Light, the light of to-day as it is shed on and illuminates the inquiring mind, must be our guide, and not the less luminous effulgence of a past generation or of past centuries, no matter with what authority it has been recorded or how much sanctified by its antiquity. If we have not this courage and conviction, then our Light is not the true Light, nor are we as Light-bearers adequate to maintain the Truth, nor to sustain in prosperity a Society or organization established for the special purpose of letting our Light shine before men.

The letter or literal meaning, the forms, the traditions, and even the faith and works of the past must be subjected to the crucible, and tested by the "Light" of to-day, and where found wanting or inadequate for present needs, rejected and supplanted by the new and later revelations. We certainly have as much right as the fathers had to originate and construct what we believe necessary to supply our wants, as they exercised in supplying theirs. We must keep the Spirit above the letter which killeth. In all our teachings of the lessons, we may derive from either ancient or modern Quaker literature, no matter how highly it may be valued for the "Light" it may profess to reveal, as it can be no standard for any one but the authors.

It is true in our Young Friends' Association there is the promise of a religious revival, but even in them the tendency is more to become acquainted with the letter, with the history, with the origin of the forms, the peculiarities and traditions, than with the Spirit, and intelligent enthusiasm that inspired and impelled to their adoption. Two centuries ago there was greater need for examples of this extreme plainness to make more vivid and impressive the demands of the new religious departure. The true Friend of to-day should cultivate the spirit and enthusiasm of the

fathers rather than to precisely imitate their acts. Our opportunities for greater light should be the guide for the spirit, irrespective of what they saw as duty.

The Spirit, the Light, the Truth, in a rational, intelligent, scientific sense represented the best factors and forces for developing the highest type of character and manhood. These were the principles of the leading teachers, preachers and writers in the Society. It was professedly organized to represent, maintain and defend them as the vital evidences of a genuine religion. If the Society is to continue to exist on its original basis, these cardinal principles must be adhered to tenaciously in its educational work. The revelations resulting from scientific research and from scholarship in Biblical literature must supplant any empirical or unscientific views that early Friends may have held as sacred, and blasphemy for any one to question.

Covenants and Dispensation, Codes and Confessions of Faith, Creeds and Catechisms, Doctrines and Disciplines, may be external agencies to help keep the weak and vicious in the practices of certain forms and observances established by the sect, and to restrain them from gross immoralities; yet they are all in the letter, and as such too often at war with the Spirit of Truth, and instigate to intolerance, bigotry and persecution of the unbelievers.

The experience of early Friends furnishes us a striking example of this fact, and not a few of us have felt it within our own fold. If our Young Friends' Associations are imbued with a distinct sense of the essential difference between the letter and the spirit, and always place the spirit paramount, they may help to restore the Society to its original vigor, and preserve it from returning to the letter, as some of its branches seem to have already conspicuously done by abandoning the original ground.

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