

Besides, the Quaker peculiarities of dress and language have had no small effect in discouraging the spread of Quakerism. It is well known that the early Quakers lifted up their voice against all superfluities of dress and language; they objected to the use of all merely complimentary expressions, as well as to the use of the plural pronoun when addressing one individual only. A Quaker costume thus grew up, which the second generation enforced by strict laws and regulations. Soon, however, it became evident that the mere setting up of a form cannot secure the substance, and that any amount of insincerity and deceit may be practised in what is called plain language, and that the Quaker dress neither shuts out expense, fashion, nor vanity.

Their regulations, too, in reference to marriage, have acted most prejudicially in reducing the number of their members. To marry outside the connection is followed by expulsion; and by the operation of this rule great numbers have been cut off. Thus, narrowness of views and blindness to the real wants and tendencies of humanity; rigid adherence to antiquated forms, and a conservatism that admits of no change, innovation or adaptation to varying forms of society have acted to prejudice the minds of men against what is noble and good in Quakerism, and to weaken and overturn the system. The indisposition to change, even in the smallest externals, on the part of the leaders, has led to an ever-widening distance between them and the young members of the Society, who are rapidly throwing aside the distinctive peculiarities of Quakerism.

There seems to be no probability now of a reform and revival of Quakerism, such as would give it fresh life and impetus. Still, though it may become extinct as a system, the good seeds it has scattered will never die; and its leaders will ever be honored as the champions of spiritual religion and humane morality. With Fox for their apostle, Barclay for their theologian, Penn for their legislator, Dymond for their moralist, they need not be ashamed of their history. Spirituality and humanity owe much to the Friends; and among the names worthy of being heard as rallying cries in the conflicts of humanity against oppression, of faith against despair, few names deserve more honorable mention than that of George Fox, the Shepherd-Prophet.

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