

painful necessity, at intervals, for someone to remind us of these facts. If it were only the truer and better things, of which all societies have a portion, that were imbibed, it would be well. But very often it makes of our new creed a series of contradictions. We think we are holding on to our ancient religion, and all the while we are adding inconsistency after inconsistency — "hewing out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." We lose sight of the fundamental and eternal truths that would shape all individual facts to themselves, and build up one symmetric whole, holier than the Tabernacle, and grander than the temple of Solomon.

Could we but read the tendency of the age, we would not so easily give up our simple but pure faith and our lofty principles. Friends in their rise were called heretics. The so-called churches of to-day are arraigning their best and brightest intellects before their synods and passing upon them the sentence of heresy, or in other words the advanced thought in the religious world is towards the purer light of Quakerism. Let us then not be backsliders when we have so great a hope. If Friends are indifferent to their great mission, or negligent in performing, they will be dispossessed by those into whom their faith and light have been transplanted. We should rather advance. We have encamped here long enough. Let us move on or the divine presence will be withdrawn, and we be left to perish in the wilderness.

We have spent so much time with the preamble I do not know as we will be permitted to enter into the subject proper. We shall however take up a few points illustrative of what I mean.

Our text book is the bible. One of the readiest questions that comes up is, "How do we estimate the bible?" Now there are some denominations who believe that every sentence found in the bible was inspired by God, and they call it the "Word of God," and esteem it the only ground-work of faith

and rule of life. This view makes a nonentity of God so far as this generation is concerned. If this was the case, it would not matter to us whether there be a God now or not. Do we wonder that there are so many professional unbelievers in the world when professional christianity contains the very elements of unbelief. Infidelity is the inevitable result of some of the doctrines of some of the churches of to-day. So-called christianity is, to a large extent, accountable for the so-called atheism of these modern times. But atheism outside the church is more honorable and pardonable than atheism in the church, for if God despises any trait of human character the most it is hypocrisy. I believe I voice forth the opinions of our most noted Friends all the way down from Fox when I say that our Society does not believe in the plenary inspiration of the bible, neither will it permit it to be characterized as the "Word of God," nor does it esteem it the groundwork of its faith or the highest rule of life. God speaking through Jesus prewarns us against this error. "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; they but testify of me, and ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

When we come to read the Old Testament with discrimination, with freedom to receive or reject according as the Spirit of Truth which is promised us dictates, it will relieve us from many a perplexing problem that theologians have endeavored to solve in vain. We will see the necessity of this position further in treating some of our other points.

In regard to war, Friends believe it is never justifiable, under any circumstance, in any age. But in reading the ancient records we find it in some places stated as if God sanctioned wars, and delighted in wholesale carnage of heathen tribes. Now the spirit that could authorize, delight in, or even sanction such atrocities can have no part in the Quaker God; it could have no part in the God that Jesus Christ