

to all men—christian and heathen—and is called by different names. The same Lord was teaching the early Quakers as is now teaching living Christians. They felt themselves struggling with an evil nature, and welcomed that divine light which aided them in overcoming their spiritual darkness. At that period, the testimony borne by the Quakers to the spirituality of all true worship was greatly needed, and has borne rich and abundant fruit since.

But now arises the inquiry, how, with so much of divine truth in it, so much enthusiasm, devotedness and energy among its early propagators, has Quakerism failed and become a declining system. That it is a declining cause, and that its extinction, as an organization, is not very distant, is admitted on all hands, even by the most enlightened Quakers themselves. At the death of George Fox, the numerical strength of the Quakers in Great Britain and Ireland was about sixty thousand people. Estimating the entire population of the kingdom then at eight and a half millions, one person in one hundred and thirty professed Quakerism, in the latter part of the 17th century. In the year 1800, the numbers of the sect were only one-half what they had been a hundred and twenty years previously—that is about thirty-two thousand persons, or one Friend to every four hundred and seventy of the general population. In the year 1856, the total number of Quakers in the United Kingdom was twenty-six thousand persons—equivalent to about one person in every eleven hundred of the general population, as contrasted with one in one hundred and thirty, in the year 1680.

This decline of Quakerism is very remarkable. How are we to account for it? Fifty years after its first ardent propagators had passed away from the scene of their labors, the prospects which the opening dawn of Quakerism held forth were clouded; it had ceased to be aggressive, and the spirit of the early Friends had entirely left the body. In fact, Quakerism had its missionary age, which came to a close. Its first love abated, and its early zeal grew into formality or coldness. There seems to be a law that one generation of religious reformers cannot bequeath to the next the same measure of zeal with which they themselves were inspired. In the case of Quakerism, with much that was noble and good about it, the views which it inculcated regarding a stated ministry, the mode of worship, church membership and marriage, music, the fine arts and amusements, were so stereotyped and