

claim superiority over him who goes to excess in other directions. We are by no means alone in opposing extravagance in language or excess in apparel, nor are we alone in our theory that the ministry of the gospel should be free, though we differ from many as to the means of making it free. While we consider the constant crucial tests of a laborious life necessary to prove the pure gold, others regard the choice of the ministry for a life work, together with the official stamp of those in authority over the church, as sufficient evidence of a divine call. We must be careful not to do injustice to other denominations in this matter. There may be much said in favor of their view, and in very many cases the results are excellent. But, on the other hand, we think the ends of truth best reached, not by paying one man to do its work, or rather to superintend its work, but by each feeling the responsibility of the work incumbent upon him. Let me repeat that these things are not sufficient for the foundation of a separate sect.

In my opinion, however, so far from being in practical accord with other religious organizations, our Society differs fundamentally, in theory at least, from all other religious bodies. We do not oppose them, except incidentally, but we do assert another truth entirely. I think I am fair in asserting that the evangelical churches consider some formal belief as an essential thing. While a moral life is necessary also, a certain statement must be affirmed and the belief in it adhered to. This fact is illustrated in numerous cases where ministers have been expelled from this or that denomination for preaching doctrines opposed to these primary doctrines. On the other hand, the Society of Friends, so far from requiring any formulated belief, does not under any circumstances disown for differences in doctrinal matters. Its members do not feel that the organization has a right to interfere with a man's thoughts so long as he "does justly, loves mercy and walks humbly with his God." We see that education, heredity and surroundings shape the opinions of men, and that the workings of our minds are by no means wholly under our control. Furthermore, a mind pre-possessed with some form of belief is not in the

best condition for arriving at the highest truth and therefore we should not make any *belief* a finality, but always keep our minds open to conviction and be ready when the call comes to go up higher. Our religious organization, then, is not a body with certain doctrines to promulgate, but one for the purpose of assisting its members in living true lives. It is for wrong doing not for wrong thinking that we disown. It is only, therefore, to the extent that our association makes of us better men and women, makes our possibilities higher, gives us greater chances to help others, that it is successful. But this object of the Society of Friends entails upon its members, responsibilities greater than any other aim could give. As the Society of Friends only exist to help men in this life, if it fails in that, what does it profit us. Theoretically its members are banded together for the purpose of helping mankind to a higher plane of life and thought. There can be no question that formerly the Society succeeded, in great measure, in doing this. But that does not concern us except as an incentive to prove ourselves worthy of our ancestry. Many of the wrongs they opposed have been conquered, but are there no wrongs left? No good cause within our reach should lack the strength of our organization, whether the work be in temperance or in labor matters, whether it be education or public morals there is no excuse for inactivity on the part of our members. We should have no drones in our hive. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If the work especially chosen by our Society be undone, how great is its failure. I must say, and with sorrow, that it seems to me that we have failed very much of late years in our self-assumed work. A spirit of worldliness, a love of money and of the comforts of life have in too many cases crowded out even the desire for a higher life and taken the place of self-denial and the patient bearing of whatever cross is ours. Yet the way is straight before us and none need fail in walking therein. The patient, often faltering but never failing footprints of our Elder Brother of Nazareth leave no doubt as to the way of life. Across eighteen centuries comes the echo of his trusting words. "I have over-