

for such oral service as they might be prompted to offer in sincerity of heart, and willing to remain in silence if they felt no calling to speak. Those meetings are reported to us to have been full of life and weighty with thought. Ministers, filled with ardor for the truth travelled through the country addressing large audiences and also went abroad; Holland, Germany, Russia, France, Turkey, Algiers, and America, all knew and felt their influence. They were fearless in their denunciations of a hireling ministry, as they termed it, and exhorted their hearers not to depend upon a priesthood to save them, nor upon an observance of forms, but to look to the spirit within themselves; not to bow the bodily knee before an altar, but to consider the attitude of their hearts toward God; that it was only as they were led and guided by the spirit of sincerity and truth that any service they performed for God would be accepted by him. The Friends preached that the highest aspirations of the soul were inspirations from a Heavenly Father, that the teachings of those inspirations would lead to Him, and that no ministry consisting of formal repetition of set prayers or conventional sermons could ever take the place of such leadings.

That was the beginning of the ministry in our Society. As early Friends were fearless in doing their duty relating to the ministry in their day, so let us take a fair look at the ministry as it relates to us and do what appears to be our duty, even if it should involve a change or modification of accepted beliefs.

There is in the Society of Friends no more delicate subject to be touched upon in public by non-ministering Friends than that of our ministry. We appreciate the religious exercise under which our ministers speak, the loving regard they have toward us, and their belief that they are performing a religious duty of the highest order in their

public ministrations. We know that they are truth seeking, God fearing, zealous of good works, and endeavoring to speak to us the word of God as it appears to them. With some of us the natural fear of offending those whom we esteem and love stops the mouth from uttering what is felt in the heart, yet I think there is no one who hears me who will not admit that there is a great unrest in the Society in regard to our ministry, and that when Friends' sermons are referred to in private conversations there is frequently more charity expressed than satisfaction. I desire to put this plainly so as to bring it home to each of us, for although such sentiments may not be ours, yet we know that they exist, and it may be that by taking a view cleared of all obstructions we shall see to the roots of the matter, and if there be a false growth, we may pluck it out.

It is not worth while to point out that in all churches there is dissatisfaction of one kind or another. That is a subject for each church to examine for itself and deal with in its own way. Our duty is in our own society. Any organization or community that is fully satisfied with itself, which represses discussion and desires no change, will not progress, and is in danger of death. But I think that there is no danger of our falling into the opposite fault of criticism intended to display a wound without seeking a cure, and that all discussions on this topic should be limited to things, not persons; to our ministry, not our ministers.

Now what is the cause of this unrest in the Society of Friends?

Is it the fault of the members because they demand too much and give too little? I think not.

Is it the fault of the elders, resulting from a neglect of their duties to the ministers and to the members? I do not believe it.

Is it the fault of the ministers? These, least of all, could we condemn. No one who views the history of our