

in every form, is inconsistent with the precepts of Christ and the spirit of the Gospel, for proof of which we have only need to refer to the express language of Christ, who, after averting to the Mosaic prohibition of perjury, adds this emphatic declaration: "But I say unto you, swear not at all. Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." This prohibition is confirmed by the Apostle James, who says, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not by heaven, nor by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation." "The primitive Christians understood and observed this command in a literal sense, as is proved by the writings of many of the early fathers, and being so accepted by the Society of Friends, they felt bound to bear an uncompromising testimony against oaths of every kind."

Their position may be briefly stated as follows:

1st. They have a demoralizing tendency. By making too great a distinction between a falsehood when under oath, and a departure from veracity at other times, the abhorrence which ought to be felt for lying is diminished in public opinion.

2nd. They are unnecessary, for if the same penalties and the same abhorrence which are now attached to perjury were attached to falsehood in judicial cases, a solemn affirmation would answer all the purposes of swearing.

3rd. They lead to irreverence, for it is presumptuous to summon the Most High as a witness on trivial occasions, and a proper sense of His Omnipresence should deter us from invoking His holy name on any occasion except in acts of devotion.

4th. But if no other objection existed the prohibition of our Saviour is sufficient.

Wm. Penn, in a treatise on oaths,

gives the following as reasons why Friends cannot swear:

1st. As oaths were introduced on account of falsehood and distrust, it is reasonable that a religion which establishes truth and confidence should put an end to them.

2nd. They subject truth, and those that love it to the same tests, that have been invented against fraud, thereby effacing the distinction between integrity and perfidiousness.

3rd. By complying with the custom of taking oaths we fear we should be guilty of rebellion against the discoveries God has made to our souls of his ancient holy way of truth.

4th. Oaths have become so familiar among men that they have lost that awful influence which was the reason alleged for using them.

5th. A proper sense of the omnipotence of God renders oaths unnecessary.

6th. They do not afford to the hearer any certain evidence of truth, for the judgments of God are not usually seen to attend false swearing as they did in the ancient law of jealousy.

7th. We consider it presumptuous to summon God as a witness on trivial occasions.

8th. The form of the oath is itself objectionable, being made up of superstition and ceremony.

9th. (Has been previously referred to)

10th. Swearing is contrary to the very nature of Christianity, for this is intended to extirpate those dispositions in man which first led to oaths.

Robert Barclay, in an extended review of this subject, after quoting largely from the early Fathers of the Church to show that they believed oaths of all kinds to be contrary to the Christian profession, closes with these statements: "What need further to doubt, but that since Christ would have his disciples attain the highest pitch of perfection, he abrogated oaths