

**SERMONS PREACHED
BY MEMBERS OF THE
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

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Sermons Preached by Members of the Society of Friends by Various

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Society of Friends, though a small, is not an unimportant part of the community. The active benevolence of its members; their correct moral habits, and their general aversion to frivolous pursuits and pleasures, not only give them a great degree of respectability in a worldly point of view, but also a weight and an influence among their fellow citizens which mere wealth is insufficient to command, and which is vastly superior to what they are entitled to from their numerical position in the state.

Though they are not accustomed to obtrude their peculiar opinions upon the notice of their fellow christians, enough is known of their principles to make them the subject of much comparison and reflection in connection with various important topics which claim attention at the present day.

They have existed for nearly two centuries without a regular priesthood; they believe all preaching for hire or gain to be forbidden, and are consequently the determined opposers of the payment of tithes and other ecclesiastical demands, which they invariably refuse to pay, and of course call loudly by their practice for Church Reform. That their mode of testifying against Tithes has not produced relief may perhaps be cause of surprise, but the editor conceives that the Friends have not so uniformly publicly protested before the Magistrates when their property has been about to be forcibly taken from them, and given their reasons for refusing to obey the law,—as those who may wish to see this obnoxious tax abolished could have wished,—and thus their reasons for refusing to pay it, have not become sufficiently known and understood.*

* We have inserted in the Appendix the "Brief Statement of Reasons for Objecting to the Payment of Tithes," which was issued by the Yearly Meeting of London, 1832, and is well worthy the serious attention of the reader.

Viewing the solemnization of Marriage by priests as an interference unwarranted by Scripture, and opposed to the Spirit of christian liberty which the gospel was designed to introduce, they have from the first rise of the society refused to have recourse to them, substituting a plan of their own which they conceive more accordant with Scripture usage. The result of this conscientious adherence to what they thought right, in spite of the inconvenience it might subject them to, has been that the legislature has accorded to them the privilege of solemnizing their own marriages.

The same unbending refusal to take Oaths, under any circumstances, has also obtained for them immunities possessed by no other class of christians in the country, while to the honor of the Society it should be stated, that in no instance has it been known that this confidence has been misplaced. The Friends consider that no true christian is at liberty to disobey the positive injunction of his Master, "Swear not at all."

Indeed the conduct of the Society of Friends

with respect to those things in which they think the laws of man are at variance with the laws of God, cannot be too closely imitated; and at the present time is particularly worthy of attention, as indicating the only way in which reformations are properly to be effected,—not by noisy declamation and vituperation, but by every individual quietly and resolutely acting according to his conscience, without regarding how his interest may be affected, or how unimportant his solitary example may be to the general question: Had every Quaker, when about to marry, satisfied his conscience by protesting against the ceremony, they would not now be allowed to solemnize marriages in their own chapels; and had they taken oaths in courts of justice, while they were petitioning government to respect their scruples of conscience, Quakers' affirmations would not now be legal evidence.

They believe all War, both offensive and defensive, to be unlawful, and resolutely decline to support it in any way, either directly or indirectly: and though happily this scruple does not now occasion them

much inconvenience in this country, yet amidst the most trying scenes of the Irish rebellions and the revolutionary war in America, it was very rarely indeed that a quaker violated this testimony. The annals of the Society abound with well authenticated instances of deliverance in remarkable and imminent scenes of peril, and it is most encouraging to contemplate how their conscientious adherence to what they conceived to be their duty, in the face of danger, was generally made the means of their preservation from danger.

Though but few public converts are made to the Society of Friends, it is impossible to estimate rightly how far the profession of their principles may have influenced the tone of moral feeling in other bodies of christians; for instance their view of war;—though no other society goes to the same length on this subject as the Quakers, it is not unreasonable to attribute the numerous Peace Societies which now exist, both in this country and on the American Continent, to the more enlightened view of it which has been held out by them to the consideration of the world.

Their views of the spirituality of the gospel dispensation, lead them to denounce the use of all ceremonial observances, and they consider the employment of ministers set apart for the service, and preaching at stated times as equally opposed to it; but it would be very erroneous to suppose that they lightly esteem a gospel ministry; indeed they lay claim to one of the very highest order—that which is dictated by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, indiscriminately both to men and women; and this they conceive to be the only ministry which can be rightly exercised in a purely christian church. It is not therefore an uninteresting enquiry to ascertain what is the practical operation of these principles, and how far they are efficient for the edification and instruction of the church.

The following discourses, preached before large congregations, it is presumed will assist the candid enquirer to form an opinion on this important subject, more especially as they were taken down at various times, and altogether without the knowledge of the different ministers.