

ciety. We request that our simple registers may be deemed sufficient to legalize our marriages and births, and authenticate our deaths, by causing a declaration thereof to be made before a magistrate.

Finally, we request that we may be exempted from all oaths, Christ having expressly forbidden them in these words, "You have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt perform thine oaths; but I say unto you, swear not at all; but let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay."

Wise Legislators, you are persuaded as well as we, that an oath is no assurance of sincerity; that it can give no additional force to the declaration of an honest man, and doth not deter the perjurer. You admit that an oath is but a peculiar way of making a declaration—as it was a peculiar mode of speech. We hope therefore you will not refuse to hear us in ours. It is that of our common master—that of Christ.

We trust that we shall not be suspected of a wish to evade the great purpose of the civic oath. We are earnest to declare it in this place, that we will continue true to the constitution which you have formed; we cherish and respect it; and it is our full purpose to follow its laws in all their purity; on the other hand, if our words, if our evidences are found to be false, we willingly submit to the penalties of false witnesses and perjurers.

Can you, respectable Legislators, hesitate to grant our requests? Cast your eyes on the history of our Society, in the countries in which we are established. More than a century has elapsed, and we have never been found in conspiracy against the government. Our temperate rule of life forbids ambition and luxury, and the purpose of our watchful discipline is to preserve us in the practice of those manners to which we were led by the exhortations and example of our founder.

We esteem employment a duty enjoined to all; and this persuasive renders us active and industrious. In this respect therefore our society may prove useful to France. By favouring us you encourage industry. Industry now seeks those countries where the industrious man will be under no apprehensions of seeing the produce of a century of labour snatched away, in an instant, by the hand of persecution.

Now that France is becoming the Asylum of Liberty, of equal law and brotherly kindness, and add to these sources of prosperity, perfect liberty for every individual to obey the dictates of his conscience, in relation to the Almighty—what prospect of advantage will arise to induce our brethren who inhabit less happy climes to settle in France, a country favoured by nature, as soon as they learn that you have granted the same civil and religious liberty which they enjoy in England and the United States of America.

Such is the respectful petition we have found our hearts disposed to present to you, for the relief of our brethren in France, and for the good of a country which we love. We hope among your important engagements in reforming this great empire, and multiplying the sources of its happiness, you will extend your justice and regard to us and our children: it will bring upon you the reward of the Almighty, and the love of virtuous men.

ANSWER OF THE ASSEMBLY.

QUAKERS, you who have fled from persecutors and tyrants, cannot but address with confidence those Legislators who have, for the first time in France, made the rights of mankind, the basis of law. And France, now reformed, France, in the bosom of peace (which she will always consider herself bound to revere, and which she wishes to all other nations) may become another happy Pennsylvania.

As a system of philanthropy, we admire your principles. They remind us, that the origin of every society was a family united by its manners, its affections, and its wants; and doubtless those would certainly be the most sublime institutions, which would renew the human race, and bring them back to their primitive and virtuous original.

The examination of your principles, as a matter of opinion, no longer concerns us; we have decided on that point. There is a kind of property which no man would put into the common stock; the motions of his soul, the freedom of his thought. In this sacred domain, man is placed in a hierarchy far above the social state. As a citizen, he must adopt a form of government; but, as a thinking being, the universe is his country.

As principles of religion, your doctrines will not be the subject of our deliberation. The relation of every man with the Supreme Being, is independent of all political institutions. Between God and the heart of man, what government would dare to interpose?

As civil maxims, your claims must be submitted to the discussion of the legislative body. We will examine whether the forms you observe in order to ascertain births and marriages, be sufficient to authenticate those descents which the division of property renders indispensable, independently of good customs.

We will consider whether a declaration, subject to the penalties against false witnesses and perjury, be not in fact an oath.

Worthy citizens, you have already taken that civic oath which every man deserving of freedom hath thought a privilege rather than a duty. You have not taken God to witness; but you have appealed to your consciences. And is not a pure conscience a heaven without a cloud? Is not that part of man a ray of the Divinity?