

as a rudiment of infirmity, and in place thereof established the use of truth. Who can any more think that the holy martyrs and ancient fathers of the first three hundred years, and many others since that time have so opposed themselves to oaths that they might only rebuke vain and rash oaths by the creatures or heathen idols, which were also prohibited under the Mosaical law, and not also swearing by the true God,—and who, believing that they were against all oaths, can bring so great an indignity to the name of Christ as to seek to subject again his followers to so great an indignity. Is it not rather time that all good men should labor to remove this abuse and infamy from Christians. There are two things which oblige a man to speak the truth—either the fear of God in his heart and love of truth, for where this is there is no need of oaths to speak the truth, or secondly the fear of punishment from the judge. Therefore let there be the same, or rather greater punishment appointed to those who pretend to so great truth in words, and so great simplicity in heart that they cannot lie, and so great reverence towards the law of Christ, that for conscience sake they deny to swear in any wise *if they fail*; and so there shall be the same good order, yea, greater security against deceivers, than if oaths were continued; and, also, by that more severe punishment, to which these false dissemblers shall be liable. Hence wicked men shall be more terrified, and good men delivered from all oppression.”

The following from a prominent British statesman is corroborative of the same thing: “Probably there is nothing in the New Testament more especially condemned and forbidden than oaths. The practice of swearing to the truth of anything makes two kinds of truth and truthfulness. If oaths are of any avail by so much as they make truth more certain, by so much they lessen the value of any or-

dinary statement and diminish the probability of its truth. I think oaths and oath taking have done more than any other thing to impair and destroy a regard for the truth.”

After suffering from many years of persecution and bodily suffering for their refusal to comply with the requisition of law on this subject, on the accession of William and Mary in 1689, Parliament passed an Act allowing Protestant dissenters to hold public meetings unmolested, on condition of their taking the oath of allegiance, and to adapt this to the people called Quakers, who, for conscience sake, scrupled to take any oath, this Act enjoined that they should subscribe the following declaration:

“I do sincerely promise and solemnly declare before God and the world that I will be true and faithful to King William and Queen Mary, and I solemnly profess and declare that I do, from my heart, abhor, detest and renounce as impious and heretical, that damnable doctrine and position that princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other whatever; and I declare that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate, hath or ought to have any power, jurisdiction, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm.”

Besides this they were obliged to subscribe the following in regard to their orthodoxy, etc.:

“I profess faith in God, the Father, and in Jesus Christ, his eternal Son, the true God, and in the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed for evermore, and do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.” The question of oaths in general remained the same until 1696, when Parliament, in order to ease the heavy burden on the Quakers, in regard to swearing, passed an act, making the following