ANGLO-SAXON OATHS OF FIDELITY

This is how a man swears hold-oaths. By the Lord before whom this relic is holy, I will be faithful and true to N., and love all that he loves and avoid (or hate) all that he avoids, according to God's law and secular custom; and never willingly or intentionally, by word or by work, do anything that is hateful to him; on condition that he maintains me as I deserve and fulfills everything just as we agreed when I bowed to him and accepted him [as lord].

[Wessex MS, c. 920, but from a Frankish source]

LAWS OF

III EDMUND

These are the provisions for the preservation of public peace\(^1\) and the swearing of allegiance which have been instituted at Colyton\(^2\) by King Edmund and his bishops, together with his councillors.

1. In the first place, all shall swear in the name of the Lord, before whom that holy thing is holy\(^1\), that they will be faithful to King Edmund\(^2\), even as it behoves a man to be faithful to his lord, without any dispute or dissension\(^3\), openly or in secret\(^4\), favouring what he favours and discountenancing what he discountenances\(^5\). And from the day on which\(^6\) this oath shall be rendered, let no-one conceal the breach of it in a brother or a relation of his, any more than in a stranger.

2\(^1\). Further, it is his will, that where a man is proved to be a thief, nobles and commoners shall unite and seize him, alive or dead, whichever they can. And he who institutes a vendetta against any of those who have been concerned in that pursuit shall incur the hostility of the king and of all his friends\(^6\), and if anyone shall refuse to come forward and lend his assistance, he shall pay 120 shillings to the king\(^2\)—or deny knowledge of the affair by an oath of equivalent value—and 30 shillings to the hundred\(^4\).

3\(^1\). And it is my will that no-one receive [into his service] one who has been in the service of another man, until he be quit [of all charges preferred against him] from any quarter where justice is sought from him; and he who shall support and harbour anyone who perpetrates crime\(^2\) shall see to it that\(^3\) he bring him to make compensation, or shall himself pay what is due from the other.