

TOLERATION ACT, 1689  
(Statutes of the Realm, VI, pp. 74-76)  
AN ACT FOR EXEMPTING THEIR MAJESTIES' PROTESTANT SUBJECTS  
DISSENTING FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FROM THE PENALTIES  
OF CERTAIN LAWS (1 Gul. & Mar., cap. 18)

Forasmuch as some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion may be an effectual means to unite their Majesties' Protestant subjects in interest and affection, be it enacted . . . that neither the statute made in the three and twentieth year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth entitled, An Act to retain the queen's Majesty's subjects in their due obedience, nor the statute made in the twenty-ninth year of the said queen entitled, An Act for the more speedy and due execution of certain branches of the statute made in the three and twentieth year of the queen's Majesty's reign, viz., the aforesaid Act, nor that branch or clause of a statute made in the first year of the reign of said queen entitled, An Act for the uniformity of common prayer and service in the Church and administration of the sacraments, whereby all persons having no lawful or reasonable excuse to be absent are required to resort to their parish church or chapel or some usual place where the common prayer shall be used, upon pain of punishment by the censures of the Church and also upon pain that every person so offending shall forfeit for every such offence twelve pence, nor the statute made in the third year of the reign of the late King James the First entitled, An Act for the better discovering and repressing popish recusants, nor that any other statute made in the same year entitled, An Act to prevent and avoid dangers which may grow by popish recusants, nor any other law or statute of this realm made against papists or popish recusants, except the statute made in the five and twentieth year of King Charles the Second entitled, An Act for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants, and except also the statute made in the thirtieth year of said King Charles the Second entitled, An Act for the more effectual preserving of the king's person and government by disabling papists from sitting in either House of Parliament, shall be construed to extend to any person or persons dissenting from the Church of England that shall take the oaths mentioned in a statute made this present Parliament entitled, An Act for removing and preventing all questions and disputes concerning the assembling and sitting of this present Parliament, and shall make and subscribe the declaration mentioned in a statute made in the thirtieth year of the King Charles the Second entitled, An Act to prevent papists from sitting in either House of Parliament, which oaths and declaration the justices of peace at the general sessions of the peace to be held for the country or place where such person shall live are hereby required to tender and administer to such persons as shall offer themselves to take, make and subscribe the same, and thereof to keep a register. . . .

III. And be it further enacted . . . that all and every person and persons that shall as aforesaid take the said oaths, and make and subscribe the declaration aforesaid, shall not be liable to any pains, penalties or forfeitures mentioned in an Act made in the five and thirtieth year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth entitled, An Act to retain the queen's Majesty's subjects in their due obedience, nor in an Act made in the two and

twentieth year of the reign of the late King Charles the Second entitled, An Act to prevent and suppress seditious conventicles; nor shall any of the said persons be prosecuted in any ecclesiastical court for or by reason of their nonconforming to the Church of England.

IV. Provided always, and be it enacted . . . that any assembly of persons dissenting from the Church of England shall be had in any place of religious worship with the doors locked, barred or bolted during any time of such meeting together, all and every person or persons that shall come to and be at such meeting shall not receive any benefit from this law, but be liable to all the pains and penalties of all the aforesaid laws recited in this Act for such their meeting, notwithstanding his taking the oaths and making and subscribing the declaration aforesaid; provided always, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to exempt any of the persons aforesaid from paying of tithes or other parochial duties, or any other duties to the church or minister, nor from any prosecution in any ecclesiastical court or elsewhere for the same. . .

VI. And be it further enacted. . . that no person dissenting from the Church of England in Holy Orders or pretended Holy Orders or pretending to Holy Orders, nor any preacher or teacher of any congregation of dissenting Protestants, that shall make and subscribe the declaration aforesaid, and take the said oaths at the general or quarter-sessions of the peace to be held for the country, town, parts or division where such person lives (which court is hereby empowered to administer the same), and shall also declare his approbation of and subscribe the articles of religion mentioned in the statute made in the thirteenth year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth, except the thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth, and thirty-sixth, and these words of the twentieth article, viz. "the Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith, and yet", shall be liable to any of the pains or penalties mentioned in an Act made in the seventeenth year of the reign of King Charles the Second entitled, An Act for restraining nonconformists from inhabiting in corporations, nor the penalties mentioned in the aforesaid Act made in the two and twentieth year of his said late Majesty's reign, for or by reason of such persons preaching at any meeting for the exercise of religion, nor to the penalty of one hundred pounds mentioned in an Act made in the thirteenth and fourteenth of King Charles the Second entitled, An Act for the uniformity of public prayers and administration of sacraments and other rites and ceremonies, and for establishing the form of making, ordaining and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons in the Church of England, for officiating in any congregation for the exercise of religion permitted and allowed by this Act; . . . provided that such person shall not at any time preach in any place but with the doors not locked, barred or bolted as aforesaid.

VII. And whereas some dissenting Protestants scruple the baptizing of infants, be it enacted. . . that every person in pretended Holy Orders, or pretending to Holy Order, or preacher or teacher, that shall subscribe the aforesaid articles of religion except before excepted, and also except part of the seven and twentieth article touching infant baptism, and shall take the said oaths and make and subscribe the declaration aforesaid in manner aforesaid, every such person shall enjoy all the privileges, benefits, and advantages which any other dissenting minister as aforesaid might have or enjoy by virtue of this Act. . . .

X. And whereas there are certain other persons, dissenters from the Church of England, who scruple the taking of any oath, be it enacted . . . that every such person shall make and subscribe the aforesaid declaration and also this declaration of fidelity following, viz.,

I, A.B., 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 do 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 whatsoever, and I do 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.

And shall subscribe a profession of their Christian belief in these words,

I, A.B., 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.

And every such person that shall make and subscribe the two declarations and profession aforesaid, being thereunto required, shall be exempted from all the pains and penalties of all and every the aforementioned statutes made against popish recusants or Protestant nonconformists, and also from the penalties of an Act made in the fifth year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth entitled, An Act for the assurance of the queen's royal power over all estates and subjects within her dominions, for or by reason of such persons not taking or refusing to take the oath mentioned in the said Act, and also from the penalties of an Act made in the thirteenth and fourteenth years of the reign of King Charles the second entitled, An Act for preventing mischiefs that may arise by certain persons called Quakers refusing to take lawful oaths, and enjoy all other the benefits, privileges and advantages under the like limitations, provisos and conditions which any other dissenters shall or ought to enjoy by virtue of this Act. . . .

XIII. Provided always, and it is the true intent and meaning of this Act, that all the laws made and provided for the frequenting of divine service on the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, shall be still in force and executed against all persons that offend against the said laws, except such persons come to some congregation or assembly of religious worship allowed or permitted by this Act.

XIV. Provided always, and be it further enacted. . . that neither this Act nor any clause, article or thing herein contained shall extend or be construed to extend to give any ease, benefit or advantage to any papist or popish recusant whatsoever, or any person that shall

deny in his preaching or writing the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity as is declared in the aforesaid articles of religion.

XVI. Provided always, that no congregation or assembly for religious worship shall be permitted or allowed by this Act until the place of such meeting shall be certified to the bishop of the diocese, or to the archdeacon of that archdeaconry, or to the justice of the peace at the general or quarter-sessions of the peace for the county, city or place in which such meeting shall be held, and registered in the said bishop's or archdeacon's court respectively, or recorded at the said general or quarter-sessions. . . .

source: Andrew Browning, ed., *English Historical Documents*, 12 vols.,  
vol. 8: *1660-1714* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 400-03.