

[GOVERNMENT OF ENGLAND, 1698] [1]

[10 William 3]

[Proclamation for punishing immorality]

[1]

By the King,**A PROCLAMATION,****For Preventing and Punishing Immorality
and Prophaneness.***WILLIAM R.*

Whereas We cannot but be deeply Senſible of the great Goodneſs and Mercy of Almighty God, in putting an End to a Long, Bloody and Expenſive War, by the Concluſion of an Honourable Peace,

ſo We are not leſs touched with a Reſentment, that notwithstanding this and many other great Bleſſings and Deliverances, Impiety, Prophaneneſs and Immorality do ſtill abound in this our Kingdom:

And whereas nothing can prove a greater Diſhonour to a well ordered Government, where the Chriſtian Faith is profeſſed, nor is likelier to provoke God to withdraw His Mercy and Bleſſings from us, and inſtead thereof, to inflict heavy and ſevere Judgments upon this Kingdom, than the open and avowed Practice of Vice, Immorality and Prophaneneſs, which amongſt many Men has too much prevailed in this Our Kingdom of late Years, to the high Diſpleaſure of Almighty God, the great Scandal of Chriſtianity, and the ill and fatal Example of the reſt of Our Loving Subjects, who have been Soberly Educated, and whose Inclinations would lead them to the Exerciſe of Piety and Virtue, did they not daily find ſuch frequent and repeated Inſtances of Diſſolute Living, Prophaneneſs and Impiety, which has in a great Meaſure been occaſioned by the Neglect of the Magiſtrates not putting in Execution thoſe good Laws which have been made for Suppreſſing and Punishing thereof, and by the ill Example of many

in Authority, to the great Diſhonour of God, and Reproach of Our Religion:

Wherefore, and for that We cannot expect Increase or Continuance of the Bleſſings We and Our Subjects Enjoy, without Providing Remedies to prevent the like evils for the future, We think Our Selves bound by the Duty We owe to God, and the Care We have of the People committed to Our Charge, to proceed in taking effectual Courſe, that Religion, Piety and Good Manners may, according to Our hearty Deſire, Flourish and Increase under Our Adminiſtration and Government; and being thereunto moved by the Pious Addreſs of the Commons in Parliament Aſſembled, We have thought fit, by the Advice of Our Privy Council, to Iſſue this Our Royal Proclamation, and do Declare Our Royal Purpoſe and Reſolution to Diſcountenance and Punish all manner of Vice, Immorality and Prophaneneſs in all Perſons from the higheſt to the loweſt Degree within this Our Realm, and particularly in ſuch who are Employed near Our Royal Perſon;

and that for the greater Incouragement of Religion and Morality, We will, upon all occaſions, Diſtinguiſh Men of Piety and Virtue by Marks of Our Royal Fa|vour.

And We do expect that all Perſons of Honour or in Place of Authority, will to their utmoſt contribute to the Diſcountenancing Men of Diſſolute and Debauched Lives, that they being reduced to Shame and Contempt may be enforced the ſooner to Reform their ill Habits and Practices, that the Diſpleaſure of Good Men towards them may ſupply what the Laws (it may be) cannot wholly Prevent.

And for the more Effectual Reforming theſe Men, who are a Diſcredit to Our Kingdom, Our further Pleaſure is, and We do hereby ſtrictly Charge and Command all Our Judges, Mayors, Sheriffs, Juſtices of the Peace, and all other Our Officers and Miniſters, both Eccleſiaſtical and Civil, and other Our Subjects, whom it may Con-

[1] Copied from an image of the original broadside print available in the Internet Archive: ia601301.us.archive.org. The year shown is 1697 but this was the legal year, what we today might call the fiscal year, which had begun on 25 March 1697, and was still 1697 for official purposes. The calendar year that began the previous 1 January was 1698. (Steele 4246, 4247).

cern, to be very Vigilant and Strict in the Discovery and the Effectual Prosecution and Punishment of all Persons who shall be Guilty of Excessive Drinking, Blasphemy, Profane Swearing and Cursing, Lewdness, Prophanation of the Lords Day, or other Dissolute, Immoral or Disorderly Practices, as they will answer it to Almighty God, and upon Pain of Our Highest Displeasure.

And for the more Effectual Proceedings herein, We do hereby Direct and Command Our Judges of Assizes and Justices of Peace, to give strict Charges at the respective Assizes and Sessions, for the due Prosecution and Punishment

of all Persons that shall presume to Offend in any the Kinds aforesaid, and

also of all Persons that, contrary to their Duty, shall be Remiss or Negligent in Putting the said Laws in Execution, and

that they do at their respective Assizes and Quarter Sessions of the Peace, cause this Our Proclamation to be publicly Read in Open Court immediately before the Charge is given.

And We do hereby further Charge and Command every Minister in his respective Parish or Chapel, to Read or cause to be Read this Our Proclamation, at least Four times in every Year, immediately after Divine Service, and to incite and stir up their respective Auditories to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and the Avoiding of all Immorality and Prophaneness.

And to the end that all Vice and Debauchery may be prevented, and Religion and Virtue Practised by all Officers, Private Soldiers, Mariners or others, who are Employed in Our Service, either by Sea or Land, We do hereby strictly Charge and Command all Our Commanders and Officers whatsoever, That they do take Care to Avoid all Prophaneness, Debauchery and other Immoralities, and that by the Piety and Virtue of their own Lives and Conversations they do set good Examples to all such as are under their Authority, and likewise to take Care and Inspect the Behaviour and Manners of all such as are under them, and to Punish all those who shall be Guilty of any the Offences aforesaid.

And whereas several Wicked and Profane Persons have presumed to Print and Publish several Pernicious Books and Pamphlets, which contain in them Impious Doctrines against the Holy Trinity and other Fundamental Articles of Our Faith, tending to the Subversion of the Christian Religion, therefore for the Punishing the Authors and Publishers thereof, and for the Preventing such Impious Books and Pamphlets being Published or Printed for the future, We do hereby strictly Charge and Prohibit all Persons that they do not presume to Write, Print or Publish any such Pernicious Books or Pamphlets under the Pain of Incurring Our High Displeasure, and of being Punished according to the utmost Severity of the Law.

And We do hereby strictly Charge and Require all Our Loving Subjects to Discover and Apprehend such Person and Persons whom they shall know to be the Authors or Publishers of any such Books or Pamphlets, and to bring them before some Justice of Peace or Chief Magistrate, in order that they may be Proceeded against according to Law.

Given at Our Court at *Kennington* the Four and twentieth Day of *February*, 1697. In the Tenth Year of Our Reign. [2]

God save the King.

London, Printed by *Charles Bill*, and the Executrix of *Thomas Newcomb*, deceased, Printers to the Kings most Excellent Majesty. 1697. [2]

[2] 1698. By modern calendar years the tenth regnal year of King William 3 was 13 February 1698 to 12 February 1699.