

[GOVERNMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN, 1787] [1]

[27 George 3]

[Proclamation for encouraging virtue and punishing immorality]

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By the KING,

A PROCLAMATION,

For the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality.

GEORGE R.

WHEREAS We cannot but observe, with inexpressible Concern, the rapid Progress of Impiety and Licentiousness, and that Deluge of Profaneness, Immorality, and every Kind of Vice, which, to the Scandal of Our Holy Religion, and to the evil Example of Our loving Subjects, hath broken in upon this Nation;

We therefore esteeming it Our indispensable Duty to exert the Authority committed to Us for the Suppression of these spreading Evils, fearing lest they should provoke God's Wrath and Indignation against Us, and humbly acknowledging that We cannot expect the Blessing and Goodness of Almighty God, (by whom Kings reign, and on which We entirely rely) to make Our Reign happy and prosperous to Ourselves and Our People, without a religious Observance of God's Holy Laws, to the Intent that Religion, Piety and Good Manners may (according to Our most hearty Desire) flourish and increase under Our Administration and Government, have thought fit, by the Advice of Our Privy Council, to issue this Our Royal Proclamation, and do hereby declare Our Royal Purpose and Resolution to discountenance and punish all manner of Vice, Profaneness and Immorality in all Persons, of whatsoever Degree or Quality, within this Our Realm, and particularly in such as are employed near Our Royal Person;

and that, for the Encouragement of Religion and Morality, We will, upon all Occasions, distinguish Persons of Piety and Virtue by Marks of Our Royal Favour.

And We do expect and require that all Persons of Honour, or in Place of Authority, will give good Example by their own Piety and Virtue, and, to their utmost, contribute to the discountenancing Persons of dissolute and debauched Lives, that they being reduced by that Means to Shame and Contempt for their loose and evil Actions and Behaviour, may be thereby also enforced the sooner to reform their ill Habits and Practices, and that the visible Displeasure of good Men towards them, may (as far as it is possible) supply what the Laws (probably) cannot altogether prevent.

And We do hereby strictly enjoin and prohibit all Our loving Subjects, of what Degree or Quality soever, from playing on the Lord's Day at Dice, Cards, or any other Game whatsoever, either in Publick or Private Houses, or other Place or Places whatsoever;

and We do hereby require and command them, and every of them, decently and reverently to attend the Worship of God on the Lord's Day, on Pain of Our highest Displeasure, and of being proceeded against, with the utmost Rigour that may be, by Law.

And for the more effectual reforming all such Persons who, by Reason of their dissolute Lives and Conversation, are a Scandal 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 all other Our Subjects, 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, Profanation of the Lord's Day, or other dissolute, immoral or disorderly Practices;

and that they take Care also effectually

[1] *London Gazette*, no. 12890, 29 May to 2 June 1787, pp 262-263.

to suppress all publick Gaming Houses, and other loose and disorderly Houses; and also all unlicensed publick Shews, Interludes, and Places of Entertainment, using the utmost Caution in licensing the same;

also to suppress all loose and licentious Prints, Books and Publications, dispersing Poison to the Minds of the Young and Unwary, and to punish the Publishers and Venders thereof;

and to put in Execution

the Statute made in the Twenty-ninth Year of the Reign of the late King Charles the Second, intituled, "*An Act for the better Observation of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday*"; and

also an Act of Parliament made in the Ninth Year of the Reign of the late King William the Third, intituled, "*An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness*;" and

also an Act passed in the Twenty-first Year of Our Reign, intituled, "*An Act for preventing certain Abuses and Profanations on the Lord's Day, called Sunday*," and

all other Laws now in Force for the punishing and suppressing any of the Vices aforesaid; and also to suppress and prevent all Gaming whatsoever in Publick or Private Houses on the Lord's Day;

and likewise that they take effectual Care to prevent all Persons keeping Taverns, Chocolate-Houses, Coffee-Houses, or other Publick-Houses whatsoever, from selling Wine, Chocolate, Coffee, Ale, Beer, or other Liquors, or receiving or permitting Guests to be or remain in such their Houses, in the Time of Divine Service on the Lord's Day, as they will answer it to Almighty God, and upon Pain of Our highest Displeasure.

And for the more effectual proceeding herein, We do hereby direct and command all Our Judges of Assize, and Justices of the Peace, to give strict Charge, at their respective Assizes and Sessions, for the due Prosecution and Punishment

of all Persons that shall presume to Offend in any of 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 Royal 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 Church 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 Auditors to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and the avoiding of all Immorality and Profaneness.

And to the End that all Vice and Debauchery may be prevented, and Religion and Virtue practised by all Officers, Private Soldiers, Mariners and others, who are employed in Our Service by Sea and Land, We do hereby strictly charge and command all Our Commanders and Officers whatsoever, that they do take Care to avoid all Profaneness, Debauchery and other Immoralities, and that, by their own good and virtuous Lives and Conversation, they do set good Examples to all such as are under their Care and Authority, and likewise take Care of, and inspect the Behaviour of all such as are under them, and punish all those who shall be guilty of any of the Offences aforesaid, as they will be answerable for the ill Consequences of their Neglect herein.

Given at Our Court at St. James, the First Day of June, One thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, in the Twenty-seventh Year of Our Reign.

GOD Save the KING.
