

[STATUTES OF ENGLAND, 1698] [1]

9° GUL. A. D. 1697-98.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN ACT for the more effectual suppressing of
Blasphemy and Profaneness.

Rot. Parl. 9
Gul. III.
p. 6. n. 4. [1]

WHEREAS many Persons have of late Years openly avowed and published many blasphemous and impious Opinions contrary to the Doctrines and Principles of the Christian Religion greatly tending to the Dishonour of Almighty God and may prove destructive to the Peace and Welfare of this Kingdom

Wherefore for the more effectual suppressing of the said detestable Crimes Be it enacted by the Kings most Excellent Majesty by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled and by the Authority of the same That if any Person or Persons having been educated in or at any time having made Profession of the Christian Religion within this Realm

[1.]

Denying
the Holy
Trinity,
&c.

shal by writing printing teaching or advised speaking
deny any one of the Persons in the Holy Trinity to be God or
shal assert or maintain there are more Gods than One or
shal deny
the Christian Religion to be true or

the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of Divine Authority and

shal upon Indictment or Information in any of His Majesties Courts at Westminster or at the Assizes be thereof lawfully convicted by the Oath of Two or more credible Witnesses

on Conviction by
Two Witnesses,

such Person or Persons for the First Offence shal be adjudged incapable and disabled in Law to all Intents and Purposes whatsoever to have or enjoy any Office or Offices Employment or Employments. Ecclesiastical Civil or Military or any Part in them or any Profit or Advantage appertaining to them or any of them

Disability
or

And if any Person or Persons so convicted as aforesaid shal at the Time of his or their Conviction enjoy or possess any Office Place or Employment such Office Place or Employment shal be voyd and is hereby declared void

Deprivation of Office

And if such Person or Persons shall be a Second Time lawfully convicted as aforesaid of all or any the aforesaid Crime or Crimes that then he or they shal from thenceforth be disabled

Second Offence,

to sue prosecute plead or use any Action or Information in any Court of Law or Equity or to be

Disability

to be
Guardian,
&c.

Guardian of any Child or

Executor or Administrator of any Person or capable of any Legacie or Deed of Gift or to bear any Office Civil or Military or Benefice Ecclesiastical

for ever within this Realm and

shall also suffer Imprisonment for the Space of Three Years without Bail or Mainprize from the Time of such Conviction.

and Imprisonment for
Three
Years.

[1] [Statutes of the Realm vol 7 p 409. Also (under a different chapter number) Statutes at Large, Ruffhead (1763), 9 & 10 W 3 c 32, vol 3 pp 715-716; Pickering (1764), 9 & 10 W 3 c 32, vol 9 pp 177-178; Raithby (1811), 9 & 10 W 3 c 32, vol 6 pp 135-136. Given the short title *The Blasphemy Act, 1697* by the *Statute Law Revision Act, 1948*; though it was in fact passed in 1698. From the Journal of the House of Lords, the bill was introduced on 24 February 1698, and received royal assent on 5 July 1698. Under the legal doctrine of the time, it would have been deemed to have come into force retroactively on 3 December 1697, the date of commencement of the session. However, a variety of authors insist that no prosecutions were ever made under this act—although prosecutions under the common law offence of blasphemy (which this act did not alter) continued sporadically over the following two centuries. This act was amended by the Unitarian relief act of 1813 (53 G 3 c 160 s 2) repealing the offence of denying the Holy Trinity; and the whole act was finally repealed as obsolete by the *Criminal Law 1967*.]

II. No Prosecution except PROVIDED always and be it enacted by the Authority aforesaid That no Person shall be prosecuted by virtue of this Act for any Words spoken unless

on Information before Justice upon Oath within Four Days. the Information of such Words shall be given upon Oath before One or more Justice or Justices of the Peace within Four Days after such Words spoken and the Prosecution of such Offence be within Three Months after such Information.

III. On Renunciation of First Offence discharged of Penalties. PROVIDED also and be it enacted by the Authority aforesaid That any Person or Persons convicted of all or any of the aforesaid Crime or Crimes in Manner aforesaid shall for the First Offence (upon his her or their Acknowledgement and Renunciation of such Offence or erroneous Opinions in the same Court where such Person or Persons was or were convicted as aforesaid within the Space of Four Months after his her or their Conviction) be discharged from all Penalties and Disabilities incurred by such Conviction Any Thing in this Act contained to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding.
