



SPECIAL  
COLLECTIONS  
DOUGLAS  
LIBRARY



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY  
AT KINGSTON  
Presented by

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA





A D I A L O G U E

B E T W E E N

A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A N D

A L A Y - G E N T L E M A N :

O C C A S I O N E D

BY THE LATE APPLICATION TO PARLIAMENT

FOR THE REPEAL OF CERTAIN PENAL LAWS

AGAINST ANTI-TRINITARIANS.

---

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR S. BLADON; NO. 13, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

M D C C X C I I .

( PRICE ONE SHILLING. )

1 0 . 11 L 52

“ WHAT bloodshed and confusion have been  
“ occasioned from the reign of Henry the fourth,  
“ when the first penal statutes were enacted,  
“ down to the revolution in this kingdom, by  
“ laws made to force conscience! There is no-  
“ thing certainly more unreasonable, more in-  
“ consistent with the rights of human nature,  
“ more contrary to the spirit and precepts of  
“ the christian religion, more iniquitous and  
“ unjust, more impolitic, than persecution. It  
“ is against natural religion, revealed religion,  
“ and sound policy.”

LORD MANSFIELD.

“ He that hath not a right to strike, hath not a  
“ right to threaten.”

MR. BURKE.

---

P R E F A C E.

---

The late presentation of a petition to parliament from the friends of religious liberty for the repeal of certain penal laws against anti-trinitarians, was the chief subject of debate at a monthly meeting of the members of a book society in the country. Much desultory conversation took place for some time among the company in general; but the subject was more regularly discussed by a clergyman of the established church, and a lay-gentleman of the same neighbourhood, who support very respectable characters in the country in which they reside.

The debate is as accurately taken as circumstances would admit; and without, descending to any further particulars, it is submitted to the deliberate and candid consideration of the reader.

The petition which was lately presented to the house of commons, is inserted at the end of the dialogue, because it recites at length the whole object of the present petitioners, and will leave  
the

## P R E F A C E.

the dispassionate reader, without the aid of any comment, to express his astonishment that a parliament of England in the time of WILLIAM THE THIRD could enact such a law; a measure and procedure which can only be exceeded by a parliament of Great Britain in the time of George the third, in the close of the eighteenth century; refusing to repeal it.

## D I A L O G U E.



---

## D I A L O G U E.

---

CLERGYMAN. The objections against the late application to parliament for the repeal of certain penal laws against anti-trinitarians, but which at this time more particularly affect the UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, as they are called, appear to me to be many, and well-founded, if not insuperable.

GENTLEMAN. This general opinion should more properly have been reserved till such time as you "draw to a conclusion," than delivered as your text. It is, what logicians call a *petitio principii*, or, in plain English, begging the question: and it would indeed be making "short work with the dissenters," first to judge them, and afterwards to try their cause. A mere assertion conveys no proof, but to the mind which receives it with implicit faith. But it should be remembered, that the understandings of men are so nearly upon a level with each other, that, upon a fair statement of the present case, (which has  
by

by much labor and art been made intricate and complex) they are very generally competent to form a right judgment for themselves ; and more particularly in all such matters as immediately respect their duty to God and to each other.

CLERGYMAN. This observation, I presume, is made by you, with a design to destroy all respect for the authority of human laws, and for, what we call, political expediency, in matters of religion. And your latitudinarian allowance of private opinion tends to remove these two chief corner stones of every established church. As few legal regulations have been adopted without great deliberation, they ought to be very cautiously repealed. There is, in every state, such an intimate connection between the religion and the politics of the subject, that the state cannot properly regulate one, without keeping a pretty strict eye upon the other.

GENTLEMAN. When religion is made to be subservient to law and political expediency it is degraded below its proper dignity and importance ; and the state, in proportion as it insults the independence of religion, (and religion is superior to its control,) weakens that security which it would otherwise receive from her. Besides, laws are frequently enacted, notwithstanding the imagined deliberation and wisdom of senates,

senates, in all the heat of party and of passion. And not seldom we have seen the \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\* of \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* , like the mandarins of China, nod the most obsequious and mechanical obedience to one man: if they do not dispense with forms, we have seen them do worse, we have seen them grossly violate the spirit of the constitution of their country, under the sanction of those very forms which they preserve.

The proper reverence due to laws, arises from the wisdom and expedience of them; for, as all legislatures are no other than delegations for the common weal, the respect we owe to our agents depends upon the fidelity with which they execute the trust reposed in them. They may discredit themselves by their intemperance, or ignorance, or may become very reprehensible from their wilful abuse and prostitution of their delegated powers.

And the question of political expediency must not be tried by temporary or personal considerations, which would give to every fluctuation of power a right to tyrannize in turn. Political expediency can no otherwise be ascertained than by the principles of justice, and the advancement of the common good. These do not depend upon caprice or party.

CLERGYMAN.

CLERGYMAN. Consider, sir, how few there are among the great mass of the people, who are able to judge for themselves; and the rest can have no better rule than a written law to direct and regulate them. This direction and regulation constitutes political expediency.

GENTLEMAN. It is this very promptness in the state to judge for the multitude, that renders them, by habit, less able to judge for themselves than they otherwise would be. The people of this country would not, at this time of day, hold the belief in ONE GOD, the sole creator and governor of the world, to be a wicked or heretical opinion, if an act of parliament had not called it "blasphemy and profaneness." The clergy themselves would have looked with more christian charity on their unitarian brethren, if they had been left to draw their religion from the bible, instead of the thirty-nine articles, and acts of parliament.

If blasphemy and profaneness can properly be appropriated to any religious creed, they must be applied to the faith of those who degrade the deity by ascribing his attributes to others, and not of the unitarians who pay their religious homage to him, and to him alone, as the one only true God. To call the doctrine of the divine unity blasphemy and profaneness is as contradictory to our reason and our bible, as if we were to denominate the most  
irreverent

irreverent use of the name of God, piety; or every appeal to him in the bitterest imprecations, devotion. To say that the state is tolerant, while there exists a statute that punishes the worshippers of the God and father of the universe, as blasphemers and profane persons, is to contradict every principle of religion and of common sense. To tell me that a state is tolerant, while so unjust and grievous a law subsists, were to add insult to disgrace; and would be as ridiculous, as to bind a man in chains of iron, and then bid him arise and walk.

How much ignorance is oftentimes joined with zeal, we had, I think, sufficiently exemplified in the person of a fox-hunting 'squire in an adjoining county, who, after declaring his firm belief in the doctrine of the trinity, undertook to explain it to some of his friends as a subject perfectly clear and intelligible. This theological sportsman is said to have addressed the following illustration to his company. "There is," said he, "a trinity in unity, and an unity in trinity; that is, there are three gods, and yet there is but one God; there is God the father, that is one; —there is God the son, that makes two, and then," —with an oath, confessed he had forgotten the name of the other.

But to be serious. The proper written law by which we should regulate our opinions is the  
 bible,

bible,—that book is the christian's statute book; and he claims, of common right, the liberty, not only of reading, but of interpreting it for himself. To bring any question of religious opinion before the civil magistrate, is to bring it before one who is wholly unqualified to determine it; and the party accused ought, consistently with his principles as a christian and a protestant, (of whatever denomination he may call himself, whether churchman or dissenter,) to take exception to the jurisdiction of the court. The result, in the present state of the law of England, would be, that his exception would be disregarded and over-ruled, power would overcome right, and a train of consequences would follow which would make the consciences both of judge and jury to lament their fate, in being legally obliged to proceed in the execution of the hateful task appointed to them.

CLERGYMAN. The judge and jury being the creatures of the law, they answer the end of their judicial existence by obeying its directions. They would, therefore, have nothing to reproach themselves with, by finding the verdict and pronouncing the sentence, which under certain circumstances, it has prescribed.

GENTLEMAN. In many cases, where the common law falls heavy, or is defective, or, as Gro-  
tius

tius says, “ where the law (by reason of its universality) becomes deficient ;” \* equity will interpose and relieve the otherwife oppressed individual. But a penal statute seizes, without remorse, the devoted victim. If the forms and pleadings are regular, the conviction proceeds as a thing of course, and all discretion, or mercy, is secluded from the court.

CLERGYMAN. We appear to me, to have gone beside our proper subject.

GENTLEMAN. By no means. Trace back our conversation, and you will find that we have kept in view the general principles which apply to our subject. And I must repeat, that when the state meddles with religion, when civil laws are made to rule and direct the consciences of men, they are entirely misapplied and perverted from their proper functions. An old proverb says, “ a hand saw is a good thing, but not to shave with.” The legislature may act as much out of character as a body, as any individual of which it is composed : and there is no less impropriety in passing an act of parliament to defend the trinity, or any religious faith or opinion whatever, than to shave with a hand saw. They  
are

\* Cited by Blackstone, vol. I. Introd. § 2.

are equally unfit for the purpose to which they are respectively misapplied.

CLERGYMAN. But, without such security provided by law, every man might plead conscience. The perfection of knavery is hypocrisy; and how shall we be able to distinguish the hypocrite from the honest man who is without guile? Is it not, therefore, more wise and prudent for the guardians of the state to regulate the faith of its subjects by a legal standard than to leave the public faith open to all the crude and fanciful notions of the multitude.

GENTLEMAN. It is a very insufficient reason for the state to tyrannize over the consciences of *all*, because *some* may hypocritically plead their consciences. And, in your admitting this probable hypocrisy of men, you virtually admit that human laws will not reach the present case, upon which we are now conversing, or such similar ones, as you would probably wish to apply to them.

If the state really had, by special revelation, the discernment to know the right faith, and were invested from heaven with the power to regulate the creed of its subjects, it would be its duty to watch over their religious profession with all the provident care of a parent; but, even in that case, it could not impose such right faith, without  
 destroying



destroying the will and judgment of its people; and a religion that is not voluntary can never be acceptable to God, or useful to man. But the truth is, no state has such power, and there are no means by which it can acquire it. The universal consent of all its subjects cannot give it; for they cannot transfer to another that which is inseparable from themselves; they cannot suffer that to be done by proxy, which in its very nature is, and must be, personal. It cannot, therefore, be either wise or prudent to attempt that which it is impossible to accomplish; or to enact penal laws which hypocrisy may elude, and which can only affect the sincere and ingenuous christian inquirer.

The plea of expediency will equally fail you. The state, by assuming the power of determining the religious faith of the community, and, equally, by favoring particular opinions, may make many hypocrites, but will detect none. A temptation to make an outward profession of certain opinions, may prevail over those who have not the virtue to resist the gilded bait that may be laid in their way; so, likewise, penalties may terrify those who have not the fortitude to face them,—but, in both cases, the man remains unconvinced.

How then is the wisdom or policy of the state to be seen, when she is herself the officious instrument of breaking down that very principle of integrity, which would otherwise unite man to man, and the whole community to the common parent of all ; and thereby give to civil government an union, strength, and energy hitherto unknown in the political history of mankind ?

CLERGYMAN. The example of our established church is proof against your observation, and the consequence which you suppose to follow from it.

GENTLEMAN. On the contrary, I think, the example of every established church directly to my purpose. An outward profession of faith in the church of England will, and oftentimes does, conceal and cover a great discordance of opinion ; and, like other established churches, is doubtless the sanctuary and retreat of much infidelity. How little agreed have been some of the most distinguished advocates of its particular constitution and doctrines ? If the counsel retained by Mr. Hastings were to conduct his defence upon as opposite principles and arguments as South and Sherlock, Clarke and Waterland defended the trinity formerly, or as Horsey and Co. have done lately, his noble  
judges

judges would assuredly find him guilty upon some, or all, of the articles of impeachment.

CLERGYMAN. You now appear, my good sir, to express yourself in sentiments of indirect hostility against the doctrine of the trinity. You forget that we were educated at the same university, and have communicated with the same church.

GENTLEMAN. It is very true we were both educated at———, and the recollection of our early friendship is a source of much pleasure; but, the theological information we received there was not particularly calculated to remove difficulties, or detach us from the profession of orthodoxy. I will not insist upon the bigotry which, formerly, both of us have remarked in the general sentiment of the place, and the pains that were taken to suppress religious inquiry.

As a specimen of the value of *our* theological instruction, give me leave to remind you of a story, then current in *a sister* university, of a certain college lecturer on the new Testament, who, when he came to the account, where Paul tells us, among other things relating to his own history, that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, observed to his pupils, by way of illustration, that “Gamaliel was a great mountain in Judea.” And possibly you may remember the  
 remark

remark that was said to have been instantly whispered by one of the pupils into the ear of a class fellow, “ that Mr. \*\*\*, was so short sighted as to mistake a man for a mountain :” and, I think, you cannot forget that, without applying for the king’s leave under his sign manual, the said lecturer was for ever after distinguished by the name of GAMALIEL C\*\*.

The difference which time has made between your opinion and mine, may have arisen from our different interpretations of our bible ; but the influence of the English statute law, probably, has not been without its effect with respect to yourself, though you may not be sensible of it: You have been enjoying the emoluments of a trinitarian church, and lived in the habit of thinking with her, from a great, but unreasonable, deference to her authority, without any particular examination of her pretensions, or of the sense of the scriptures upon the doctrine more immediately in question. You have been insensibly prevented from using your own judgment by observing the tendency of penal laws; though not put in force ; and the very serious loss that would be sustained by destroying all prospect of preferment, if you were even known to inquire whether things were so, or no. Do not these consequences, give me leave to ask, shew the dreadful

dreadful effects of all penal laws, both positive and negative, and whether executed or not?

CLERGYMAN. You now advance from the established church, and apply your arguments to me, personally.

GENTLEMAN. I only intended to represent the state of the clergy in general, as a body, and to shew the pernicious effect of every description of penal laws in matters of religion, which are evidently calculated to stifle, not to promote the truth; to confine, not to enlarge the mind; to make hypocrites, not to encourage honest men; to reward ignorance, not to promote useful learning.

Whether ~~thus~~ <sup>such</sup> laws be positive, by inflicting punishment; or, negative, by creating civil disqualifications, they are equally reprehensible in principle. The present petition is, however, specific: it states an act that has the preference of all other penal statutes in absurdity and intolerance: but the principle upon which the hateful statute in question ought to be repealed, will apply to all penal laws intermeddling with religion.

CLERGYMAN. Do you then seriously think that the laws more immediately in question fail to secure and preserve the doctrine of the trinity.

GENTLEMAN. I must first reply to your question by telling you, that those who think they

can secure or preserve the doctrine of the trinity, by an act of parliament, are no better employed than the wise men of Gotham who attempted to hedge in the cuckoo. And farther, when a person is officiously employed in any business, in which he has no proper concern, it induces a suspicion that all is not right, with respect to his masters, or that the cause in which he is engaged, is somewhat desperate. In like manner, when we see an act of parliament produced to secure and preserve the doctrine of the trinity, it necessarily suggests strong suspicions that it is not to be found in the word of God, which is the only authority to which we can appeal.

When a certain alderman was proposing in the house of commons some wise regulations for the city watch, he is reported to have moved for a clause, in the intended act, to oblige them to sleep six hours in the day time. A very distinguished member is said to have risen instantly to second the worthy alderman, and very shrewdly requested that he might be included in the clause then moved, as he had not known what it was to sleep six hours at one time for several months. But alas; it was no more in the power of the house to procure sleep to the great commoner, than security to the doctrine of the trinity. And in both cases it is equally ridiculous to attempt it.

Indeed

Indeed the great spread of unitarianism is decisive proof of the insufficiency of human laws to prevent its progress. And the minds of men are so much more liberal, (notwithstanding some local and personal exceptions to the contrary) that trinitarians are very generally ashamed of the statutes of king William and queen Mary.

CLERGYMAN. But, do you not apprehend the church to be in danger, when dissenters from its communion are restless under the existing laws enacted for its defence.

GENTLEMAN. Before I answer this question I would wish to understand what you mean by the word "church;" I will then give you my opinion with respect to its safety or danger.

CLERGYMAN. By "the church," I mean the present establishment of the church of England, including its doctrines and constitution, and the revenue set apart for the maintenance of its ministers.

GENTLEMAN. In my humble opinion, all that we ought be zealous for, is the church of Christ, or the simple truth of the gospel. The doctrines of the church of England ought no further to be the object of our care, than as they are the doctrines of the christian scriptures; and, so far as they are built upon the authority of Christ and his apostles, we are told that the gates of the grave shall not prevail against them. The

protestant church of England cannot pretend to infallibility, and at the same time justify her separation from, and protest against, the church of Rome. Indeed its ministers engage at their ordination “to instruct the people committed to their charge, out of the said scriptures, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which they shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the scripture:” but, notwithstanding this solemn engagement, becoming a protestant church to require and a protestant minister to enter into, their judgment and their liberty are grossly violated and infringed by their no less solemn subscription of assent to its liturgy, articles and homilies. Every effort, therefore, to emancipate her from the bondage of prejudice, and from beggarly elements, and from the contradictions, and inconsistencies with which she is encompassed, is rendering her the most distinguished service.

The abuses in the constitution of the established church are no less deserving of attention and reformation, than her doctrines, but they are not immediately connected with our present conversation. Her revenues rather require equalizing than diminishing, unless the whole establishment were to be superseded by a separate provision for the ministers of religion, to be paid to them



them agreeably to the nomination of the different contributors to it respectively.

Now the church of Christ, founded, as I presume it to be, in TRUTH, can never be endangered by inquiry, but may be considerably injured by the intermeddling of the state, and the imposition of laws, with which it has no proper connection.

I will further add, in answer to your inquiry into my opinion of the danger of the established church, that nothing seems more likely to contribute to its permanency than for its governors gradually and judiciously to relinquish the most offensive and least tenable parts of it, as occasion shall suggest and require. Otherwise resistance to the remonstrances of its members, and the complaints of dissenters may overturn it in the moment of its imagined security.

With this view, you should always distinguish between laws which only concern the regulation of the church, as a distinct society; and laws which have been made, and are retained in the statute book, only to annoy, harass, and oppress persons of different religious persuasions.

CLERGYMAN. You will observe, I hope, that though the corporation and test acts, inflicting certain disabilities and incapacities, do indeed take effect, those which are made to secure the doctrine of the trinity, and of which the late petitioners complained, are never executed.

GENTLEMAN,

GENTLEMAN. The observation which you have just now made is conclusive for the repeal of the laws more immediately in question: if they are not executed, it is more than presumption that it is more just, wise, and politic, that they should lie dormant; and if not proper and expedient to be carried into execution, they ought not to be suffered to remain until another session among our statutes. And, admitting that they are now judged improper to be executed, (and every sect and party are united in that sentiment,) the present is the most proper time to apply for their repeal. The same disposition which prevents the execution of these sanguinary laws, should, consistently with itself, concur in repealing them. For, were they to be suffered to remain in force, under the pretence that they were a dead letter, they might be called forth into operation by the basest of men and for the basest of purposes, to gratify personal pique and resentment; or, on any unhappy change of principle in our governors, might be converted into a most grievous engine of intolerance.

It was a wise observation of a great and discerning judge, that he wished to see every obsolete law, every law that circumstances had rendered nugatory and useless, or which the better spirit of the times would not suffer to be  
 executed,

executed, to be expunged from the statutes of the realm.

In the best light we can view these penal statutes they appear offensive to every good mind, as well among trinitarians as anti-trinitarians. For there is no honest trinitarian who does not derive his faith from the scriptures, and consequently is ashamed to see it supported by an act of parliament. To claim any assistance from human councils or legislatures, is to weaken and set aside that authority which is paramount; and is, at the same time, the very worst means to attempt to make converts. Such a law is also a most dreadful instrument of oppression held over the heads of anti-trinitarians, which may be directed, at pleasure, against those who have an equal and common right publicly to profess and maintain their faith. Penal laws in matters of religion in protestant countries are like the rack and the wheel in popish ones; they are only different names for the same thing, and originating from the same spirit; they may terrify the timid, preserve an exterior conformity, and extort a similar profession of faith—in hypocrisy; but they will never convince the understanding, or make one sincere convert.

Toleration, at the best, and in its fullest extent, is less than what every man has a right to claim and enjoy in common with his fellow-citizens; but, a  
toleration

toleration dependent upon the caprice of another, is not only no security, but invites persecution: so far from affording protection, it may become the means of the destruction of the best men and best citizens in a state. Such puny and equivocal toleration is nothing better than a trap to tempt and decoy the hot-headed and the wrong-headed to persecute the rational believers in, and worshippers of, the only living and true God.

CLERGYMAN. Do you then mean to insist that church-of-England-men ought to concur in the intended application, which it is confidently said, and from good authority, will be renewed the next session of parliament, if it should fail in the present.

GENTLEMAN. It is, indeed, my decided opinion, that however firmly a man may be persuaded of the truth of the doctrine of the trinity, and however strongly attached he may be to the church of England, which maintains it, he is under still higher obligations as a christian, as a protestant, and as a man, to apply for a repeal of the very reprehensible and very obnoxious statutes. Many, both of the clergy, and the laity of the church of England did concur with the petitioners, and many more will concur with them in the repeated application. They find, or think they find, their faith in the scriptures, and do not wish to see it disgraced by such unchristian

christian protection as penal laws, which are still more offensive to unitarian christians; laws which were obtained by a party, and have been continued in force, as much from inattention, as from design.

CLERGYMAN. You will not fail to observe, that neither of us have attempted to discuss, in the course of our present conversation, the proper proofs and evidences which trinitarians and anti-trinitarians have severally produced for their respective doctrines.

GENTLEMAN. We have not entered upon any argument which affects the credibility of the doctrine of the trinity,—for the justice and propriety, the wisdom and humanity of the application to parliament, stand entirely independent of the truth or falsehood of the faith at present contended for by the church of England. The question immediately before us is, Whether human laws ought to punish conscientious and good citizens for their religious opinions, which as christians they believe to be taught in the scriptures? The situation of unitarians is truly alarming to every serious and candid person. And, as it is more particularly in the power of the members of the church of England, so it is more immediately their duty to repeal the laws which would disgrace any state, and any church that affected to claim alliance with it.

CLERGYMAN.

CLERGYMAN. As some proof that I have attended to your arguments, I must confess that they have had so much weight in my mind, as to induce me to come to a resolution to sign the petition, if it be again sent into the country. I will no longer forbear to contribute the concurrence and assistance of my signature towards relieving many thousands of my christian brethren from the terror of impending and intolerant penal laws; and myself and my name from the reproach of favouring so unchristian a procedure against the fellow disciples of our common master, and fellow servants of the same God.

T H E   E N D.

TO THE HONOURABLE

THE COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN

IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Humble PETITION of the Persons whose Names are hereunto subscribed\*

S H E W E T H,

THAT WE, being persons educated in, and professing the christian religion within the realm of England, conceiving it to be our duty to examine into and interpret the holy scriptures for ourselves, and our right publicly to declare the result of our inquiries, are aggrieved by the Statute 9 and 10 Wm. III. c. 32. intituled, “ An Act for the more effectual suppressing of blasphemy and profaneness,” by which it is enacted, “ That if any person having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of the christian religion within this realm, shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the holy trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain there are more Gods than one, or shall deny the christian religion to be true, or

“ the

\* Presented Thursday, March 8, 1792.

“ the holy scriptures of the old and new Testa-  
 “ ment to be of divine authority, or shall upon  
 “ indictment or information in any of his ma-  
 “ jesty’s courts at Westminster, or at the assizes,  
 “ be thereof lawfully convicted by the oath of  
 “ two or more credible witnesses; such person  
 “ for the first offence shall be adjudged inca-  
 “ pable and disabled in law, to all intents and  
 “ purposes, to have or enjoy any office or  
 “ offices, employment or employments, ec-  
 “ clesiastical, civil, or military, or any part in  
 “ them, or any profit or advantage appertain-  
 “ ing to them, or any of them: and if any  
 “ person so convicted as aforesaid shall at the  
 “ time of his conviction enjoy or possess any  
 “ office, place, or employment, such office,  
 “ place, or employment shall be void, and is  
 “ thereby declared void: and if such person  
 “ shall be a second time lawfully convicted as  
 “ aforesaid of all or any the aforesaid crime or  
 “ crimes, that then he shall from thenceforth be  
 “ disabled to sue, prosecute, plead or use any  
 “ action or information in any court of law  
 “ or equity, or to be guardian of any child,  
 “ or executor or administrator of any person,  
 “ or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or  
 “ to bear any office, civil or military, or bene-  
 “ fice ecclesiastical for ever within this realm,  
 and



“ and shall also suffer imprisonment for the space  
 “ of three years, without bail or mainprize,  
 “ from the time of such conviction.” And  
 we apprehend, that religious liberty is infringed,  
 and even an imperfect toleration rendered more  
 incomplete by the seventeenth section of the  
 Statute 1 Wm. and Mary, Session I. c. 18. in-  
 titled, “ An Act for exempting their majesties  
 “ protestant subjects, dissenting from the church  
 “ of England from the penalties of certain  
 “ laws,” by which section it is provided and  
 enacted, “ That neither that act, nor any clause,  
 “ article, or thing therein contained shall extend  
 “ or be construed to extend to give any ease,  
 “ benefit, or advantage to any papist or popish  
 “ recusant, or to any person that shall deny in his  
 “ preaching or writing the doctrine of the blessed  
 “ trinity, as it is declared in the aforesaid articles  
 “ of religion;” meaning the thirty nine articles  
 of the church of England.

We, therefore, in behalf of ourselves, and  
 many others our fellow-citizens, humbly pray  
 that leave may be given for bringing into this  
 honourable house a bill to repeal the statute first  
 above mentioned, and the said seventeenth sec-  
 tion of the statute secondly above mentioned.

---









