

# PRETENDER'S DECLARATION

James Stuart (1688–1766), The Old Pretender

23 December 1743

James the Third, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. to all our loving subjects of what degree or quality soever, greeting.

The love and affection we bear to our native country are so natural and inherent to us that they would never be altered or diminished by a long and remote exile, nor the many hardships we have undergone during the whole course of our life, and we almost forget our own misfortunes when we consider the oppression and tyranny under which our country has laboured so long. We have seen our people for many years groaning under the weight of more heavy taxes, and bearing many of the calamities of war, while the rest of Europe enjoys all the blessings of peace. We have seen the treasures of the nation applied to satiate private avarice and lavished for the support of German dominions or for carrying on ambitious views always foreign and often contrary to the true interest of the nation. We have beheld with astonishment an universal corruption and depolution of manners encouraged and countenanced by those whose example and authority should have been employed to repress it, and a more than tacit connivance given to all irreligion and immorality. Bribery and corruption have been openly and universally practised, and no means neglected to seduce the great council of the nation, that it might be the more effectually enslaved by those who ought to be the guardians of its liberty. The manufactures of England are visibly going to decay. Trade has been neglected, even discouraged, and the very honour of the nation made a sacrifice to the passions of those who govern it.

The unhappy state to which our subjects have been reduced by these and many other unjust and violent proceedings, has constantly filled our royal heart with grief and concern, while our whole thoughts and study have been employed towards procuring the most speedy and effectual remedy to them, which we were always sensible should only be compassed by our restoration. This has ever been the principal view of the several attempts we have made for the recovery of our just rights, without being discouraged by the disappointments with which we have hitherto met. But though Providence has permitted that iniquity and injustice should long prevail, we have all reason to hope that the time is at last come in which the Divine Mercy will put a period to these misfortunes. We see with a sensible satisfaction the eyes of the greatest part of our people opened on their present deplorable situation, and that they are convinced they can find no relief but by restoring their natural-born prince whose undoubted title will of course put an end to the many calamities they have suffered during the usurpation. And our satisfaction would be complete could we owe our mutual happiness to ourselves and our subjects alone, without the assistance of any foreign power. But our tender affection for our good subjects would not allow us to expose them without the assistance of some regular troops to the opposition they may receive from the usurper's army in their endeavours to vindicate their rights and liberties. And therefore we have obtained of our most dearest brother His Most Christian Majesty a force sufficient to protect and unite the true lovers of their county and to enable them to join heart and hand for its delivery. With God's blessing and their hearty concurrence we hope this desirable end may be soon and easily attained, and even without effusion of blood. Wherefore to dissipate all fears and jealousies from the hearts and minds of our subjects and to convince them as much as in us lies of the happiness they may enjoy under our government, we have thought fit to unfold to them in this solemn and public manner the sincere sentiments of our royal and truly English heart.

We hereby grant a free, full and general pardon for all offences whatsoever hitherto committed against our royal father or ourselves, to the benefit of which we shall deem justly entitled all such of our subjects as shall after the landing of our auxiliary troops testify their willingness to accept of it either by joining our said troops with all convenient diligence, by setting up our Standard in other places, by repairing to anyplace where it shall be set up, or at least by openly renouncing all pretended allegiance to the usurper and all obedience to his orders or those of any person or persons commissioned or employed by him.

As soon as the public tranquility shall permit, we solemnly promise to call and assemble a free Parliament, wherein no corruption nor undue influences of any kind whatsoever shall be used to bypass the votes of the electors or elected, and with the sincere and impartial advice and concurrence of the said Parliament, we shall be ready to settle all that may relate to the welfare of the Kingdom, both in civil and ecclesiastical matters.

We solemnly promise to protect, support, and maintain the Church of England as by Law established, in all her rights, privileges, possessions and immunities whatsoever, and we shall on all occasions bestow marks of our royal favour on the whole body of the clergy, but more particularly on those whose principals and practices shall best correspond with the dignity of their profession.

We also solemnly promise to grant and allow the benefit of a toleration to all Protestant dissenters in the same manner as they enjoy it at present, being utterly averse to all persecution and animosity on account of conscience and religion.

And as we are desirous to reign chiefly over the affections of our people, we shall be utterly averse to the suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, as well as to the loading our subjects with unnecessary taxes or raising any in a manner burdensome to them, and especially to the introducing of foreign excises, and to all such methods as may have been hitherto devised and pursued to acquire arbitrary power at the expense of the liberty and property of the subject.

It is our fixed resolution and intention to distinguish, recompense and employ men of merit and probity who are true lovers of their country and of the Church of England as by Law established. By such a conduct we hope the native genius and honour of the nation may be soon retrieved and that those party-prejudices, divisions, and distinctions which have so long prevailed and have been so pernicious to the nation, may be buried in perpetual oblivion.

As for the foreign troops designed for the present expedition, effectual care shall be taken to make them observe the strictest discipline while they stay, without offering the least injury to peaceable people, and we solemnly engage to send them home as soon as the public tranquillity shall be judged by Parliament to allow of it and even before a Parliament is assembled if the posture of affairs shall permit it.

In the meantime we strictly charge and require all persons who at the first news of the landing of our troops shall be seized of any sum or sums of money raised in the name or for the use of the usurper, to keep the same in their hands, to be accounted for to us, or to pay it when required into the hands of any person of distinction publicly appearing and acting for our service whose receipt shall be sufficient discharge for the said person or persons their heirs etc. But if they should refuse or neglect to comply with these our orders, we hereby authorize and require all our generals, lieutenant generals, and other officers, and all our faithful adherents, to seize for our use such sum or sums of money, as well as all horses, arms, artillery, accoutrements, and ammunition, forage and provisions, as shall be found in the hands of those who shall not be so willing to employ them in our service.

We also command and require all those who bear any military commission or arms, whether in the fleet or army or militia, to use and employ them for our service, since they cannot but be sensible that no engagements entered into with a foreign usurper can dispense with the allegiance they owe to us their natural sovereign. And as a further encouragement to them to comply with their duty and our commands, we promise to every such officer the same or a higher post in our service that that which they at present enjoy, with full payment of whatever arrears may be due to them at the time of their declaration for us; and to every soldier, trooper, and dragoon who shall join us, as well as to every seamen and marine of the fleet who shall declare for and serve us, all their arrears and a whole years pay to be given such of them as a gratuity as soon as ever the kingdom shall be in a state of tranquillity.

Having thus sincerely and in the presence of Almighty God declared our true sentiments and intentions in this expedition, we once more charge and require all our loving subjects to concur with us to the utmost of their power towards obtaining such desirable ends. For those who shall willfully persist in their unnatural attachment to the usurper and continue to act in consequence of it, they cannot but be sensible that they are to expect no benefit from a pardon so graciously offered them. But we heartily wish none such may be found, but that all may be as ready to accept of an act of grace and oblivion as we are to grant it; it being our earnest desire that the very memory of past misfortunes and sorrows may be effaced, and that no obstacle may remain to a perfect union between King and people which will be the more easily compassed when they compare what they have suffered under the dominion of foreigners with what we here offer to them and are firmly resolved to perform.

Let therefore all true Englishmen join with us on this occasion in their country's cause, and be fully convinced that we neither do nor shall propose to ourselves any other happiness or glory but what shall arise from our effectually providing for the honour and welfare of the nation and maintaining every part of its happy constitution both in Church and State.

Given under our Sign Manual and Privy Signet at our court at Rome, the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 1743, in the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of our reign.