

Sir Thomas Dale, from The Laws of Virginia (1611-1612)

ARTICLES, LAW, AND ORDERS, DIVINE, POLITIC AND MARTIAL FOR THE COLONY IN VIRGINIA FIRST ESTABLISHED BY SIR THOMAS OATES KNIGHT, LIEUTENANT GENERAL, THE 24 OF MAY, 1610. EXEMPLIFIED AND APPROVED BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR THOMAS WEST KNIGHT, LORD LAWAIR, LORD GOVERNOR AND CAPTAIN GENERAL THE 22 OF JUNE, 1610 AGAIN EXEMPLIFIED AND ENLARGED BY SIR THOMAS DALE KNIGHT, MARSHALL, AND DEPUTY GOVERNOR, THE 22 OF JUNE, 1611.

WHEREAS his Majesty like himself a most zealous Prince has in his own Realm a principal care of true Religion, and reverence to God, and has always strictly commanded his Generals and Governors, with all his forces wherever, to let their ways be like his ends, for the glory of God.

AND FORSOMUCH as no good service can be performed, or war well managed, where military discipline is not observed, and military discipline cannot be kept, where the rules or chief parts thereof, be not certainly set down, and generally known, I have (with the advice and counsel of Sir Thomas Gates Knight, Lieutenant General), adhered unto the laws divine, and orders politic and martial of his Lordship (the same exemplified), an addition of such others, as I have found either the necessity of the present State of the Colony to require, or the infancy, and weakness of the body thereof, as yet able to digest, and do now publish them to all persons in the Colony, that they may as well take knowledge of the Law themselves, as of the penalty and punishment, which without partiality shall be inflicted upon the breakers of the same. [...]

1. First, since we owe our highest and supreme duty, our greatest, and all our allegiance to him from who all power and authority is derived, ...and being especial soldiers impressed in this sacred cause,...I do strictly command and charge all captains and officers, of what quality or nature soever,...to have a care that the Almighty God be duly and daily served and that they call upon their people to hear sermons, and that also they diligently frequent morning and evening prayer themselves by their own exemplar and daily life and duty herein, encouraging others there-unto, and that such who shall often and willfully absent themselves be duly punished according to the martial law in that case provided.
2. That no man speak impiously or maliciously, against the holy and blessed Trinity, or any of the three persons, that is to say, against God the Father, God the Son, and God the holy Ghost, or against the known Articles of the Christian faith, upon pain of death.
3. That no man blaspheme God's holy name upon pain of death, or use unlawful oaths, taking the name of God in vain, curse or bane, upon pain of severe punishment for the first offence so committed; and for the second, to have a bodkin (i.e. needle) thrust through his tongue; and if he continue the blaspheming of God's holy name, for the third time so offending, he shall be brought to a martial court, and there receive censure of death for his offence.
4. No man shall use any traitorous words against his Majesty's Person, or royal authority upon pain of death.
5. No man shall speak any word, or do any act, which may tend to the derision, or despite of God's holy word upon pain of death. Nor shall any man unworthily demean himself unto any Preacher, or Minister of the same, but generally hold them in all reverent regard, and dutiful entreaty, otherwise he the offender shall openly be whipped three times, and ask public forgiveness in the assembly of the congregation three several Sabbath days.
6. Every man and woman duly twice a day upon the first Towing of the Bell shall upon the working days repair unto the Church to hear divine Service upon pain of losing his or her day's allowance for the first omission, for the second to be whipped, and for the third to be condemned to the galleys for six months. Likewise no man or woman shall dare to violate or break the Sabbath by any gaming, public or private abroad, or at home, but duly sanctify and observe the same, both himself and his family, by preparing themselves at home with private prayer, that they may be the better fitted for the public according to the commandments of God, and the orders of our

Church, as also every man and woman shall repair in the morning to the divine service, and sermons preached upon the Sabbath day, and in the afternoon to divine service, and Catechizing, upon pain for the first fault to lose their provision and allowance for the whole week following, for the second to lose the said allowance and also to be whipped, and for the third to suffer death. [...]

7. He that upon pretended malice, shall murder or take away the life of any man, shall be punished with death.
8. No man shall commit the horrible and detestable sins of sodomy upon pain of death; and he or she that can be lawfully convict of adultery shall be punished with death. No man shall ravish or force any woman, maid or Indian, or other, upon pain of death, and know ye that he or she, that shall commit fornication, and evident proof made thereof, for their first fault shall be whipped, for their second they shall be whipped, and for their third shall be whipped three times a week for one month, and ask public forgiveness in the Assembly of the Congregation.
9. No man shall be found guilty of Sacrilege, which is a trespass as well committed in violating and abusing any sacred ministry, duty or office of the Church, irreverently, or profanely, as by being a Church robber, to filch, steal or carry away any thing out of the Church appertaining thereunto, or unto any holy and consecrated place, to the divine Service of God, which no man should do upon pain of death. Likewise he that shall rob the store of any commodities therein, of what quality soever, whether provisions of victuals, or of arms, trucking stuff, apparel, linen or wollen, hose or shoes, hats or caps, Instruments or tools of steels, iron, etc., or shall rob from his fellow soldier or neighbour, any thing that is his, victuals, apparel, household stuff, tool, or what necessary else soever, by water or land, out of boat, house, or knapsack, shall be punished with death.