The Vicar of Bray

In good King Charles' golden days, when loyalty no harm meant,
A zealous high churchman was I, and so I gained preferment.
   To teach my flock, I never missed
   Kings are by God appointed
And damned be he who dare resist or touch the Lord's annointed.

cho: And this be law, I shall maintain
   Until my dying day, sir
   That whatsoever king may reign,
   Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir.

When royal James usurped the throne, and popery came in fashion,
The penal laws I hooted down, and read the Declaration.
   The Church of Rome, I found, did fit
   Full well my constitution
And I had been a Jesuit, but for the Revolution.

cho:

When William was our King declared, to ease the nation's grievance,
With this new wind about I steered, and swore to him allegiance.
   Old principles I did revoke
   Set conscience at a distance,
Passive obedience was a joke, a jest was non-resistance.

cho:

When Royal Anne became our queen, the Church of England's glory,
Another face of things was seen, and I became a Tory.
   Occasional conformists base
   I blamed their moderation;
And thought the Church in danger was from such prevarication.

cho:

When George in pudding time came o'er, and moderate men looked big, sir
My principles I changed once more, and I became a Whig, sir.
   And thus preferment I procured
   From our new Faith's Defender,
And almost every day abjured the Pope and the Pretender.
The illustrious house of Hanover and Protestant succession
To these I do allegiance swear --- while they can hold possession.
   For in my faith and loyalty
   I never more will falter,
And George my lawful king shall be --- until the times do alter.

cho:

Recorded by Dyer-Bennett