

William Penn, *The Great Case of Liberty of Conscience*, 1670

First, By Liberty of Conscience, we understand not only a mere Liberty of the Mind, in believing or disbelieving this or that Principle or Doctrine, but the Exercise of ourselves in a visible Way of Worship, upon our believing it to be indispensibly required at our Hands, that if we neglect it for Fear or Favour of any Mortal Man, we Sin, and incur Divine Wrath: Yet we would be so understood to extend and justify the Lawfulness of our so meeting to worship God, as not to contrive, or abet any Contrivance destructive of the Government and Laws of the Land, tending to Matters of an external Nature, directly, or indirectly; but so far only, as it may refer to religious Matters, and a Life to come, and consequently wholly independent of the secular Affairs of this, wherein we are supposed to Transgress.

Secondly, By Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution, we don't only mean, the strict Requiring of us to believe this to be true, or that to be false; and upon Refusal, to incur the Penalties enacted in such Cases; but by those Terms we mean thus much, any coercive Law or Hindrance to us, from meeting together to perform those Religious Exercises which are according to our Faith and Persuasion.

[W]e say that Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution, for Matters relating to Conscience, directly invade the Divine Prerogative.

First, If we do allow the Honour of our Creation, due to God only, and that no other besides himself has endowed us with those excellent Gifts of Understanding, Reason, Judgment, and Faith, and consequently that he only is the Object as well as Author, both of our Faith, Worship, and Service, then whosoever shall interpose their Authority to enact Faith and Worship, in a Way that seems not to us congruous with what he has discovered to us to be Faith and Worship (whose alone Property it is to do it) or to restrain us from what we are persuaded is our indispensable Duty, they evidently usurp this Authority and invade his incommunicable Right of Government over Conscience: For the Inspiration of the Almighty gives Understanding: And Faith is the Gift of God, says the Divine Writ.

Secondly. Such magisterial Determinations carry an evident Claim to that Infallibility, which Protestants have been hitherto so jealous of owning, that to avoid the Papists, they have denied it to all, but God himself.

Fourthly, It defeats God's Work of Grace, and the invisible Operation of his Eternal Spirit, which can alone beget Faith, and is only to be obeyed, in and about Religion and Worship, and attributes Men's Conformity to outward Force and Corporal Punishments. A Faith subject to as many Revolutions as the Powers that enact it.

Fifthly and Lastly, Such Persons assume the Judgment of the great Tribunal unto themselves; for to whomsoever Men are imposedly or restrictively subject and accountable in Matters of Faith, Worship and Conscience; in them alone must the Power of Judgment reside; but it is equally true that God shall judge all by Jesus Christ, and that no Man is so accountable to his fellow Creatures, as to be imposed upon, restrained, or persecuted for any Matter of Conscience whatever.

To conclude, Liberty of Conscience (as thus stated and defended) we ask as our undoubted Right by the Law of God, of Nature, and of our own Country: it has been often promised, we have long waited for it, we have writ much, and suffered in its Defense, and have made many true Complaints, but found little or no Redress.

Frame of Government of Pennsylvania
May 5, 1682

I. That the charter of liberties, declared, granted and confirmed. the five and twentieth day of the second month, called April, 1682, before divers witnesses, by William Penn, Governor and chief Proprietor of Pennsylvania, to all the freemen and planters of the said province, is hereby declared and approved, and shall be forever held for fundamental in the government thereof, according to the limitations mentioned in the said charter.

XXXV. That all persons living in this province, who confess and acknowledge the one Almighty and eternal God, to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the world; and that hold themselves obliged in conscience to live peaceably and justly in civil society, shall, in no ways, be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion, or practice, in matters of faith and worship, nor shall they be compelled, at any time, to frequent or maintain any religious worship, place or ministry whatever.

XXXVI. That, according to the good example of the primitive Christians, and the case of the creation, every first day of the week, called the Lord's day, people shall abstain from their common daily labour, that they may the better dispose themselves to worship God according to their understandings.

Charter of Privileges Granted by William Penn, esq.,
to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Territories, October 28, 1701

FIRST: Because no People can be truly happy, though under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties, if abridged of the Freedom of their Consciences, as to their Religious Profession and Worship: And Almighty God being the only Lord of Conscience, Father of Lights and Spirits; and the Author as well as Object of all divine Knowledge, Faith and Worship, who only doth enlighten the Minds, and persuade and convince the Understandings of People, I do hereby grant and declare, That no Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World; and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any Case molested or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or super any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious Persuasion.

AND that all Persons who also profess to believe in *Jesus Christ*, the Saviour of the World, shall be capable (notwithstanding their other Persuasions and Practices in Point of Conscience and Religion) to serve this Government in any Capacity.