

THE GREAT CASE OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE - 1670

BY WILLIAM PENN

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EXCERPT 1

The Terms explained, and the Question stated.

First, By *Liberty of Conscience*, we understand not only a meer *Liberty of the Mind*, in believing or disbelieving this or that Principle or Doctrine, but the *Exercise of our selves 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 suppos'd to Transgress.

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EXCERPT 2

WE further say, That *Imposition, Restraint, and Persecution* are also destructive of the great Priviledge of Nature and Principle of Reason. *Of Nature in three Instances:*

1. First, If God Almighty has made of one *Blood all Nations*, as himself has declar'd, and that he has given them both *Sences Corporal and Intellectual*, to discern things and their differences, so as to assert or deny from Evidences and Reasons proper to each; then where any Enacts the Belief or Disbelief of any thing upon the rest, or Restrains any from the Exercise of their Faith to *them indispenfible*, such *Exalts himself beyond his Bounds, Enslaves his Fellow-Creatures, Invades their Right of Liberty, and so perverts the whole order of Nature.*

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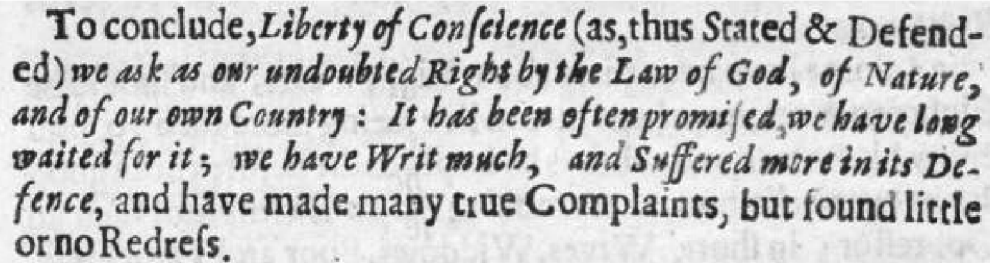
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EXCERPT 3



To conclude, *Liberty of Conscience* (as, thus Stated & 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 more in its Defence, and have made many true Complaints, but found little or no Redress.

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