

Fourteenth Thesis

*Concerning the power of the Civil Magistrate,
in matters purely religious,
and pertaining to the conscience*

God has claimed* for himself the power and rule over the conscience, and only he can rightly instruct and govern it. Therefore it is not lawful for anyone to force the consciences of other people, by virtue of any authority or sovereignty they may hold in the government of this world. All executions, banishments, fines, imprisonments, and other similar things which are inflicted only because of the exercise of the conscience or difference in opinion or form of worship, come from the spirit of Cain the murderer and are contrary to the Truth. At the same time no one may endanger his neighbor in his life or property, or do anything destructive to, or inconsistent with human society, using conscience as a pretext. In such cases, the law is for the transgressor, and justice should be administered to everyone without respect of persons.¹

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 407-408 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) p. 314.

¹ [Luke 9:55-56; Matthew 7:12,29; Titus 3:10 RB](#)