

## **The Second Charter of Liberties of Stephen, 1136**

I, Stephen, by the grace of God with the assent of the clergy and people elected king of the English, consecrated by William archbishop of Canterbury and legate of the Holy Roman church, and confirmed by Innocent, pontiff of the holy Roman see, out of respect and love of God do grant freedom to the holy church and confirm the reverence due to her.

I promise that I shall neither do, nor permit to be done, anything by simony in the church or in ecclesiastical affairs. I allow and confirm that jurisdiction and authority over ecclesiastical persons and over all clerks and their property and the disposal of ecclesiastical honours will be in the hands of the bishops. I grant and concede that the liberties of the church confirmed by their charters, and their customs that have been observed from antiquity, will remain inviolate. I concede that all ecclesiastical possessions and tenures which were held on the day when king William my Grandfather was alive and dead, will be free and absolved from all dues, without any recovery from claimants. But if the church hereafter seeks to recover possessions which it held before the death of the said king but of which it is now deprived, I reserve to my own pleasure and dispensation whether the property should be restored or the matter discussed. I confirm whatever has been bestowed since the death of the said king by the liberality of kings or the munificence of princes whether in alms, by purchase or by any other grant of the faithful. I promise that I shall keep the peace and do justice in all things, and maintain them as far as I am able.

I reserve for myself the forests which William my Grandfather and William my uncle established and maintained. All the others, which Henry added, I restore and concede intact to the churches and to the kingdom.

If any bishop or abbot or other ecclesiastical person makes reasonable distribution of his property before his death or makes arrangements for its distribution, I allow this to be firmly maintained. If he should be forestalled by death, let such distribution be made for the salvation of his soul by the counsel of the church. But while sees are vacant without their own pastors, I shall commit them and their possessions into the hand and keeping of clerks or upright men of the said church, until a pastor is appointed canonically.

I wholly abolish all exactions, injustices and miskennings wrongfully imposed either by the sheriffs or by anyone else.

I shall observe good laws and ancient and lawful customs relating to murder fines, pleas and other suits, and I command and ordain that they be observed. All these things I grant and confirm saving my regal and rightful dignity.

Witness William archbishop of Canterbury.....at Oxford in the year of my incarnation of our Lord 1136, in the first year of my reign.