

John Milton
COMPLETE POEMS
and
MAJOR PROSE

Edited by
MERRITT Y. HUGHES

Notes and Introductions by the Editor

THE ODYSSEY PRESS
The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.
Publishers · Indianapolis · New York

1957

AREOPAGITICA

A SPEECH FOR THE LIBERTY OF UNLICENSED PRINTING,
TO THE PARLIAMENT OF ENGLAND

This is true liberty, when free-born men,
Having to advise the public, may speak free,
Which he who can and will, deserves high praise;
Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
What can be juster in a State than this?

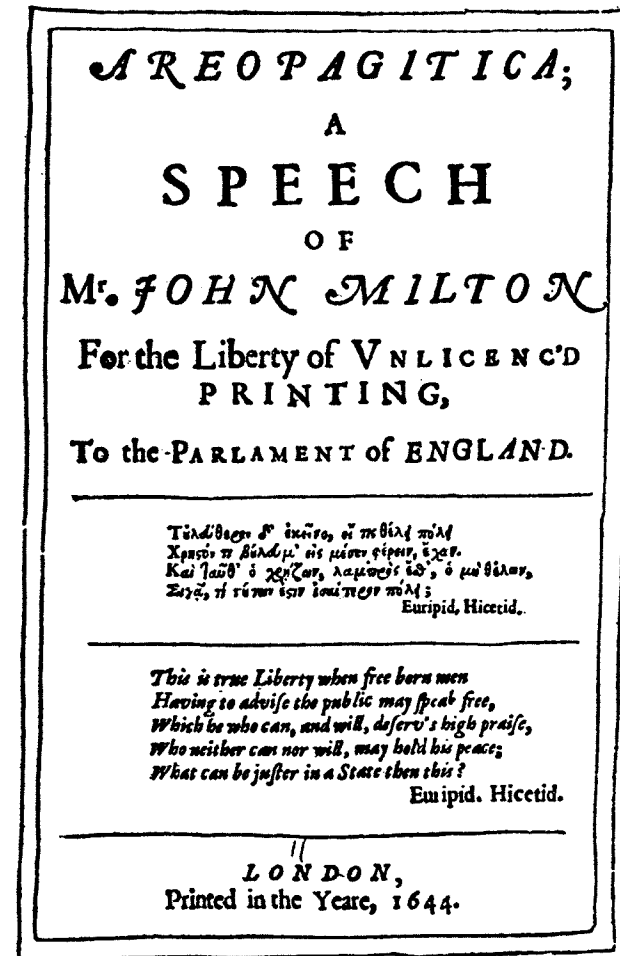
EURIPIDES, *The Suppliants*.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE—"I wrote my *Areopagitica*," said Milton in *Def 2* (p. 831 below), "in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered." He referred to Parliament's ordinance for licensing the press of June 14, 1643, and to the formal demand of the Stationers' Company on August 24 for its strict enforcement. Milton was mentioned by name in that document, as he had been in a sermon before Parliament by the Presbyterian divine, Herbert Palmer, on August 14, 1644, and condemned for the unlicensed publication of *DDD*. But Milton also had in mind the attitude of men like Bishop Hall (see *Apology* Bibliographical Note), who, in *The Peace-Maker* (1624), after observing that the "cunning adversaries" of the Church of England in Italy were wrong to forbid the circulation of the Bible and other unchallengeable books, yet drew from their example the moral that, "If they be thus cautious to forbid the best of books, for their own advantage; what a shame it shall be for us, to be so slack and supine, as not to restrain the worst writings, to the infinite disadvantage of the Gospel!" By a decree of the Court of Star Chamber (see *CG*, n. 110) of July 11, 1637, all licensing authority had been entrusted to the two archbishops, the Bishop of London, and the chancellors of the two universities. The effect was to give Archbishop Laud, who was also Chancellor of the University of Oxford, actual control of every press in England, with power to stop publication of any book "contrary to . . . the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England."

Nominally, *Areopagitica* was an oration addressed to Parliament, although Milton had no more intention of delivering it in person than Isocrates had of public delivery of the speech whose title Milton adopted. Both men regarded the almost prehistoric court which traditionally had sat on the hill of Ares (Mars) in Athens, the Areopagus, as having possessed the almost superhuman probity and prestige which the Dutch Protestant scholar, Jean de Meurs, attributed to it in his *De Areopago, sive de Senatu Areopago liber* (1624). In a chapter on the "dignity and authority" of the Court, de Meurs accumulated a mass of evidence proving that it had always been traditionally venerated. Its nearly three hundred members were elected by vote of all the freedmen in Athens, and in Isocrates' *Panathenaic Oration* it is described as the glory of the democratic constitution of Athens, in contrast to the Oligarchic constitution of Sparta. Milton implies that Parliament should be like the Areopagus, which Robert Burton described in the *Anatomy* as consisting only of such men "as are learned, wise, discreet, and well brought up."

Areopagitica was published in 1644; the copy in the Thomason collection in the British Museum is dated Nov. 24. The present text is based on the copy of the first edition in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

A facsimile reproduction of the edition of 1644 is available in the Noel Douglas Replicas (London, 1927); good annotated editions are available, edited by Laura E. Lockwood in her



Selected Essays of John Milton (Boston, 1911), by J. W. Hales (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1904 and 1917), by William Haller (New York, 1927), and by O. Lutaud (Paris, 1956).

They who to states¹ and governors of the Commonwealth direct their speech, High Court of Parliament, or, wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they foresee may advance the public

¹ *states* is used as it is in Milton's reference to the "States General of Holland" founding a university (CB, C.E. XVIII, 137), or in his reference to the "infernal States" of the devils' parliament in *PL II*, 387. Cf. States General, the ancient parliament of France, consisting of clergy, nobility, and the third estate.

good; I suppose them, as at the beginning of no mean endeavor, not a little altered and moved inwardly in their minds: some with doubt of what will be the success, others with fear of what will be the censure;² some with hope, others with confidence of what they have to speak. And me perhaps each of these dispositions, as the subject was whereon I entered, may

² *censure* is used in a neutral way, to mean judgment either favorable or unfavorable.

have at other times variously affected; and likely might in these foremost expressions now also disclose which of them swayed most, but that the very attempt of this address thus made, and the thought of whom it hath recourse to, hath got the power within me to a passion,³ far more welcome than incidental to a preface.

Which though I stay not to confess ere any ask, I shall be blameless, if it be no other than the joy and gratulation which it brings to all who wish and promote their country's liberty; whereof this whole discourse proposed will be a certain testimony, if not a trophy. For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth—that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for. To which, if I now manifest by the very sound of this which I shall utter, that we are already in good part arrived, and yet from such a steep disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a Roman recovery;⁴ it will be attributed first, as is most due, to the strong assistance of God our deliverer, next, to your faithful guidance and undaunted wisdom, Lords and Commons of England.

Neither is it in God's esteem the diminution of his glory, when honorable things are spoken of good men and worthy magistrates; which if I now first should begin to do, after so fair a progress of your laudable deeds and such a long obligation⁵ upon the whole realm to your indefatigable virtues, I might be justly reckoned among the tardiest and the unwillingest of them that praise ye.

Nevertheless, there being three principal things without which all praising is but courtship and flattery: first, when that only is praised which is solidly worth praise; next, when greatest likelihoods are brought

³ *passion*: enthusiasm (for writing on the subject of *Areop*).

⁴ The contrast is between England's successful revolt against King Charles and the bishops, as opposed to the impotence of Rome to shake off the tyranny into which she fell under the emperors and popes.

⁵ *obligement*: obligation.

that such things are truly and really in those persons to whom they are ascribed; the other, when he who praises, by showing that such his actual persuasion is of whom he writes, can demonstrate that he flatters not; the former two of these I have heretofore endeavored, rescuing the employment from him who went about to impair your merits with a trivial and malignant encomium;⁶ the latter, as belonging chiefly to mine own acquittal, that whom I so extolled I did not flatter, hath been reserved opportunely to this occasion. For he who freely magnifies what hath been nobly done and fears not to declare as freely what might be done better, gives ye the best covenant of his fidelity; and that his loyal-est affection and his hope waits on your proceedings. His highest praising is not flattery, and his plainest advice is a kind of praising; for though I should affirm and hold by argument that it would fare better with truth, with learning, and the Commonwealth, if one of your published orders,⁷ which I should name, were called in; yet at the same time it could not but much redound to the luster of your mild and equal government, whenas private persons are hereby animated to think ye better pleased with public advice than other statist⁸ have been delighted heretofore with public flattery. And men will then see what difference there is between the unanimity of a triennial parliament⁹ and that jealous haughtiness of prelates and cabin counsellors¹⁰ that usurped of late, whenas they shall observe ye in the midst

⁶ Milton refers to Bishop Hall's *Modest Confutation* (see the Bibliographical Note to *Apology*), which had made its bow to Parliament on the first page with the assurance that, "The sun looks not on a braver, nobler Convocation than is that of King, Peers, and Commons, whose equal justice and moderation shall eternally triumph. . . ."

⁷ See the Bibliographical Note to *Areop*.

⁸ *statists*: statesmen. Cf. PR IV, 354.

⁹ By an act of 15 February, 1641, Parliament provided that it should be summoned at least once every three years.

¹⁰ *cabin*: cabinet or council chamber. The "cabin counsellors" of Charles I were the little groups of intimate advisers, most of whom held offices of the highest trust and prominence, with whose aid the king governed without summoning Parliament between 1626 and 1628 and between 1629 and 1640. From 1603 until 1640 "parliamentary sessions totalled less than four-and-a-half in thirty-seven years," and "the centre of government . . . lay in the royal council." D. L. Keir,

of your victories and successes more gently brooking written exceptions against a voted order than other courts, which had produced nothing worth memory but the weak ostentation of wealth, would have endured the least signified dislike at any sudden proclamation.

If I should thus far presume upon the meek demeanor of your civil¹¹ and gentle greatness, Lords and Commons, as what your published order hath directly said, that to gainsay, I might defend myself with ease, if any should accuse me of being new or insolent, did they but know how much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece than the barbaric pride of a Hunnish¹² and Norwegian stateliness. And out of those ages, to whose polite wisdom and letters we owe that we are not yet Goths and Jutlanders, I could name him¹³ who from his private house wrote that discourse to the parliament of Athens that persuades them to change the form of democracy which was then established. Such honor was done in those days to men who professed the study of wisdom and eloquence, not only in their own country, but in other lands, that cities and seignories¹⁴ heard them gladly and with great respect, if they had aught in public to admonish the state. Thus did Dion Prusæus,¹⁵ a stranger and

The Constitutional History of Modern Britain, London (1938), pp. 162-3.

¹¹ *civil*: civilized, polite. Cf. its use as synonymous with "generous" in SA 1467.

¹² Milton thought both of the contemporary reputation of the Scandinavians and of their share in the Danish invasions of England from the fifth to the tenth centuries. In *Britain I* (C.E. X, 15) he noted the invasion of Scotland by "Humber, King of the Huns, who with a fleet invaded that land, was slain in fight, and his people driven back." Danish arrogance was proverbial, as Donne implied in describing a proud courtier as,

"One, who for a Dane,

In the Danes Massacre had sure been slaine."

(*Satire IV*, 23-24)

¹³ *him*: Isocrates. Cf. the Bibliographical Note to *Areop*.

¹⁴ "A Monarch Signorial is he who by force of Arms and just War is made owner of Mens Bodies and Goods, and governeth them as a Master of a Family governeth base Servants and Slaves." *The Arts of Empire and Mysteries of States Discabinated*, by Sir Walter Raleigh, published by John Milton (Edition of 1692, p. 5). Turkey and the West Indies are mentioned as typical signories.

¹⁵ Dion Chrysostomos (the "Golden-mouthed")

a private orator, counsel the Rhodians against a former edict; and I abound with other like examples, which to set here would be superfluous. But if from the industry of a life wholly dedicated to studious labors and those natural endowments haply not the worst for two and fifty degrees of northern latitude,¹⁶ so much must be derogated as to count me not equal to any of those who had this privilege, I would obtain to be thought not so inferior as yourselves are superior to the most of them who received their counsel: and how far you excel them, be assured, Lords and Commons, there can no greater testimony appear than when your prudent spirit acknowledges and obeys the voice of reason from what quarter soever it be heard speaking; and renders ye as willing to repeal any act of your own setting forth, as any set forth by your predecessors.

If ye be thus resolved, as it were injury to think ye were not, I know not what should withhold me from presenting ye with a fit instance wherein to show both that love of truth which ye eminently profess, and that uprightness of your judgment which is not wont to be partial to yourselves; by judging over again that Order which ye have ordained to *regulate Printing: that no book, pamphlet, or paper shall be henceforth printed, unless the same be first approved and licensed by such*, or at least one of such as shall be thereto appointed. For that part which preserves justly every man's copy¹⁷ to himself, or provides for the poor, I touch not, only wish they be not made pretenses to abuse and persecute honest and painful¹⁸ men, who offend not in either of these particulars. But that other clause of licensing books, which we thought had died with his

was born in Prusa but was famous as a spokesman of republican ideals in Rome in speeches advising the Emperor Vespasian to restore the Republic and condemning the tyranny of Domitian. He was influential in placing the "worthy emperor" Trajan (see TKM, n. 65) on the throne, under whom he returned to his native Asia to encourage liberal studies. The law against which he counselled the Rhodians permitted the erasure of names standing on public monuments to make room for those of contemporary public men (*Thirty-first Discourse*, 8-10).

¹⁶ Cf. *Manso*, 28, PL IX, 45, and *CG*, n. 168.

¹⁷ *copy*: copyright.

¹⁸ *painful*: diligent, willing to take pains.

brother *quadragesimal*¹⁹ and *matrimonial*²⁰ when the prelates expired, I shall now attend with such a homily as shall lay before ye, first, the inventors of it to be those whom ye will be loth to own; next, what is to be thought in general of reading, whatever sort the books be; and that this Order avails nothing to the suppressing of scandalous, seditious, and libellous books, which were mainly intended to be suppressed. Last, that it will be primely to the discouragement of all learning and the stop of truth, not only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindering and cropping the discovery that might be yet further made both in religious and civil wisdom.

I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice to them as malefactors. For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.²¹ I know they are as lively and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men.²² And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's

¹⁹ *quadragesimal*: pertaining to the forty days of Lent. The Puritans had relaxed the traditional, Anglican restrictions on diet during Lent.

²⁰ In *Hirelings* (p. 868) Milton approved of Parliament's act securing the "civil liberty of marriage; transferring the ratifying, and registering of marriage to the civil magistrates."

²¹ Several parallels to Milton's thought can be found—none of them perhaps likelier to have influenced the present passage than Bacon's saying in the *Advancement* (W. A. Wright's ed., Oxford, 1900), I, viii, 6, p. 72; "But the images of men's wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages."

²² Milton had in mind the almost complete mutual slaughter of the warriors who sprang from the teeth of the dragon which Ovid says (*Met.* III, 95-126) were sown by its slayer, Cadmus, King of Thebes in Boeotia.

image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.²³ 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labors of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence,²⁴ the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life. But lest I should be condemned of introducing license, while I oppose licensing, I refuse not the pains to be so much historical as will serve to show what hath been done by ancient and famous commonwealths against this disorder, till the very time that this project of licensing crept out of the Inquisition,²⁵ was caught up by our prelates, and hath caught some of our presbyters.

In Athens, where books and wits were ever busier than in any other part of Greece, I find but only two sorts of writings which the magistrate cared to take notice of; those either blasphemous and atheistical, or libellous. Thus the books of Protagoras²⁶ were

²³ Cf. Henry Vaughan, *To his Books*:
Bright books! the *perspectives* to our weak sights:
The clear *projections* of discerning lights.
Burning and shining *Thoughts*; man's posthume
day:

The *track* of fled souls, and their *Milkie-way*.
The dead *alive* and *busie*, the still *voice*
Of inlarg'd Spirits, . . .

²⁴ Cf. *PL* III, 713-19, n.

²⁵ Milton referred not only to the Spanish *Inquisition* which was instituted in Spain in 1480 and took strong measures against heresy in Holland in the sixteenth century, but also to the whole inquisitorial movement which was first instituted by the Council of Toulouse in 1229.

²⁶ *Protagoras* (? 480-411 B.C.) of Abdera, in Thrace, was the first of the great sophists or professional teachers of rhetoric. In 411 he was impeached for a theological treatise which began by

by the judges of Areopagus²⁷ commanded to be burnt, and himself banished the territory for a discourse begun with his confessing not to know whether there were gods, or whether not. And against defaming, it was decreed that none should be traduced by name, as was the manner of *Vetus Comædia*,²⁸ whereby we may guess how they censured libelling; and this course was quick enough, as Cicero²⁹ writes, to quell both the desperate wits of other atheists and the open way of defaming, as the event showed. Of other sects and opinions, though tending to voluptuousness and the denying of divine providence, they took no heed. Therefore we do not read that either Epicurus,³⁰ or that libertine school of Cyrene,³¹ or what the Cynic impudence uttered,³² was ever questioned by the laws. Neither is it recorded that the writings of those old comedians were suppressed, though the acting of them were forbid; and that Plato³³ commended the reading of Aristophanes, the loosest of them all, to his royal scholar Dionysius, is disclaiming all knowledge on his part as to whether or not the gods existed. The book was burned and Protagoras is said to have been banished from Athens.

²⁷ "Scorners or Despisers of the gods," wrote Thomas Heywood in *The Hierarchie of the blessed Angels* (1635), p. 32, were "convented before the Areopagitae; and being convicted, their goods were sold at a publique out-cry, and their irreligions grauen upon pillars, to make their persons odible."

²⁸ *Vetus Comædia*: in the Old Comedy of Athens, says Gilbert Norwood in *Greek Comedy* (1931), p. 28, "we know certainly of but one law restraining" comic freedom of personal reference, and that "endured from 440-39 till 438-7, less than three years."

²⁹ The reference is to Cicero's treatise *On the Nature of the Gods* I, xxiii, where the punishment of Protagoras is regarded as having done much to repress open atheism, "inasmuch as even doubt" of the existence of the gods "was punished."

³⁰ Cf. *CG*, n. 265.

³¹ The life of the founder of the Cyrenaic school, Aristippus, as told by Diogenes Laertius, contains many scandalous stories of his libertinism.

³² The stories of Diogenes' search in open daylight with a lantern for an honest man, and of his contempt for Alexander's invitation to live at court in preference to his tub or shack, illustrate the severity and unconventionality of the *Cynics*, whose most famous representative he was.

³³ The tradition that Plato recommended Aristophanes' comedies to Dionysius (the Elder?), Tyrant of Syracuse from 367 to 356 B.C. and from 346 to 343 B.C., goes back to the short, ancient life of Aristophanes which is to be found in the Teubner edition of his plays.

only known and may be excused, if holy Chrysostom,³⁴ as is reported, nightly studied so much the same author and had the art to cleanse a scurrilous vehemence into the style of a rousing sermon.

That other leading city of Greece, Lacedæmon, considering that Lycurgus³⁵ their lawgiver was so addicted to elegant learning as to have been the first that brought out of Ionia the scattered works of Homer, and sent the poet Thales³⁶ from Crete to prepare and mollify the Spartan surliness with his smooth songs and odes, the better to plant among them law and civility, it is to be wondered how museless³⁷ and unbookish they were, minding nought but the feats of war. There needed no licensing of books among them, for they disliked all but their own laconic apothegms and took a slight occasion to chase Archilochus³⁸ out of their city, perhaps for composing in a higher strain than their own soldierly ballads and roundels could reach to; or if it were for his broad verses, they were not therein so cautious, but they were as dissolute in their promiscuous conversing; whence Euripi-

³⁴ An interest in Aristophanes on the part of John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) would seem noteworthy to Puritans who honored him most because (according to Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* VI, xvi) he was banished from his see for opposing the idolatrous honor paid to the empress Eudoxia and the "common plays and shows" that she approved. (Meredith Hanmer's translation, 1585.) In the first printed edition of Aristophanes' plays (1498) "Aldo Manuzio says that St. John Chrysostom was so fond of (them) that he constantly had with him a copy of (them), that he always put them beneath his pillow at night, . . . and that to his constant study of this poet he owed his unmatched eloquence and his hatred of vice." Louis E. Lord, *Aristophanes, his Plays and Influence*, Boston (1925), p. 97.

³⁵ Cf. *Educ.*, n. 63.

³⁶ *Thales*, one of the earliest Ionian poets, is mentioned in Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* (IV, v) as having been persuaded by Lycurgus to leave his home in Crete and settle in Sparta. "His odes," says Plutarch, "were so many persuasives to obedience and unanimity, and . . . they softened insensibly the manners of the audience, drew them often from the animosities which then prevailed, and united them in zeal for . . . virtue."

³⁷ *muselless*: unfamiliar with the Muses, goddesses of poetry and the other arts.

³⁸ *Archilochus* (early seventh century B.C.) "took delight in flouting the conventions of the aristocracy" (H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature*, p. 89) and may have earned his traditional banishment from Sparta for his supposedly licentious verses or for his poem boasting of his own cowardice in throwing away his shield in a retreat.

des⁸⁹ affirms in *Andromache* that their women were all unchaste. Thus much may give us light after what sort books were prohibited among the Greeks.

The Romans also, for many ages trained up only to a military roughness, resembling most the Lacedæmonian guise, knew of learning little but what their twelve tables⁴⁰ and the Pontific College with their augurs and flamens⁴¹ taught them in religion and law, so unacquainted with other learning that when Carneades⁴² and Critolaus⁴³ with the Stoic Diogenes⁴⁴ coming ambassadors to Rome, took thereby occasion to give the city a taste of their philosophy, they were suspected for seducers by no less a man than Cato⁴⁵ the Censor, who moved

⁸⁹ Opinion in the ancient world differed about the Spartan practice of encouraging girls to exercise naked as men did in the gymnasia, publicly. Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* justified the practice, but Plato mentioned (*Laus*, 806a) Sparta as a scandalous example of the effects of bad discipline among women, and Aristotle (*Politics* II, vi, 5) says that the Spartan women lived in every kind of intemperance and self-indulgence. In *Andromache*, 590-3, Euripides wrote: "No! a Spartan maid could not be chaste, e'en if she would, who leaves her home and bares her limbs and lets her robe float free, to share with youths their races and their sports." (Coleridge's translation.)

⁴⁰ Cf. *Educ.*, n. 65.

⁴¹ The Pontific College went back to the most revered of the half-legendary Roman kings, Numa, and its president, the Pontifex Maximus, was the greatest religious dignitary in republican Rome. The flamens were priests subordinate to the pontifices, and the augurs, whose business it was to consult the omens before public acts such as battles, treaties and holidays, composed another priestly college. Cf. "the flamens at their service quaint" (*Nat.*, 194).

⁴² Carneades (?213-129 B.C.), the founder of the Third or New Academy at Athens, was a sceptic and an opponent of Stoicism. In 155 B.C. he was sent from Athens to Rome with Diogenes and Critolaus to protest against a fine which had been assessed against the Athenians for destroying Oropus. In Rome he shocked public opinion by first defending and then attacking the principle of justice in two formal addresses.

⁴³ Critolaus was the head of the Peripatetic or Aristotelian School of philosophy in Athens in the middle of the second century B.C.

⁴⁴ Diogenes succeeded Zeno as head of the Stoic School at Athens. He must not be confused with Diogenes the Cynic, to whom n. 32 above refers.

⁴⁵ One of Plutarch's final anecdotes in his life of Cato the Censor (Marcus Porcius Cato, 234?-149 B.C.) is the story of Cato's gruff scepticism about the influence of Carneades and even of the Socratic philosophical tradition upon the young men of Rome. "For his blasphemy against learning," said Bacon in the *Advancement* I, ii, 9; p. 17, "... he

it in the senate to dismiss them speedily, and to banish all such Attic babblers out of Italy. But Scipio⁴⁶ and others of the noblest senators withstood him and his old Sabine austerly; honored and admired the men; and the censor himself at last, in his old age, fell to the study of that whereof before he was so scrupulous. And yet at the same time, Nævius⁴⁷ and Plautus⁴⁸, the first Latin comedians, had filled the city with all the borrowed scenes of Menander⁴⁹ and Philemon.⁵⁰

Then began to be considered there also what was to be done to libellous books and authors; for Nævius was quickly cast into prison for his unbridled pen and released by the tribunes upon his recantation; we read also that libels were burnt, and the makers punished by Augustus.⁵¹ The like severity, no doubt, was used, if aught were impiously written against their esteemed gods. Except in these two points, how the world went in books, the magistrate kept no reckoning. And therefore Lucretius⁵²

was well punished, . . . for when he was past threescore years old, he was taken with an extreme desire to go to school again, and to learn the Greek tongue, to the end to peruse the Greek authors, which doth well demonstrate that his former censure of the Grecian learning was rather an affected gravity than according to the inward sense of his own opinion."

⁴⁶ Scipio the Younger (?185-129 B.C.), who captured Carthage in 146, was friendly with Terence and Polybius and other writers. In Cicero's dialogue *On Friendship* his geniality and his esteem for the virtues that Cato practised on his Sabine farm were familiar to every schoolboy.

⁴⁷ Nævius produced the first of his satiric plays about 235 B.C. He was imprisoned for attacking Scipio the younger and the aristocratic party in his plays and obliged to recant. He died in exile in Utica ?202 B.C.

⁴⁸ Plautus (?254-184 B.C.) was the most popular of Roman writers of comedy.

⁴⁹ Menander (342-291 B.C.) wrote over one hundred comedies, the surviving portions of seven of which are almost our only representation of the Athenian New Comedy, upon which Plautus' plays were modelled. Cf. note 28 above.

⁵⁰ Philemon (?361-263 B.C.) was a rival of Menander. Only a few short fragments of his plays survive, but two of them are suggested as sources which Plautus followed closely in his *Mercator* and *Trinummus*.

⁵¹ Tacitus declared (*Annals* I, lxxii) that Augustus so resented the damage done to the best people in Rome by the insolent libels of Cassius Severus that he urged the passage of a law against libel.

⁵² Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, a frank defense of Epicurean views about the gods and the human soul, was dedicated to Gaius Memmius Gemellus

without impeachment versifies his Epicurism to Memmius, and had the honor to be set forth the second time by Cicero, so great a father of the commonwealth; although himself disputes against that opinion in his own writings. Nor was the satirical sharpness or naked plainness of Lucilius⁵³ or Catullus⁵⁴ or Flaccus⁵⁵ by any order prohibited.

And for matters of state, the story of Titus Livius⁵⁶ though it extolled that part which Pompey held, was not therefore suppressed by Octavius Cæsar of the other faction. But that Naso⁵⁷ was by him banished in his old age for the wanton poems of his youth, was but a mere covert of state over some secret cause: and besides, the books were neither banished nor called in. From hence we shall meet with little else but tyranny in the Roman empire,⁵⁸ that we may not marvel, if not so often bad as good books were silenced. I shall therefore deem to have been large enough in producing what among the ancients was punishable to write, save only which, all other arguments were free to treat on.

By this time the emperors were become Christians, whose discipline in this point I

(Praetor in 58 B.C.). The belief that Cicero edited Lucretius rests upon a vague statement of St. Jerome in his additions to Eusebius' *Chronicon* and is hardly consistent with Cicero's attacks on Epicureanism in the *Tusculan Disputations* II and III, and in the *De finibus* I and II.

⁵³ Lucilius (148-103 B.C.) is usually recognized as the founder of the Roman satire.

⁵⁴ Among the vivid lyrics of Catullus (87-47? B.C.) were some lampoons of Caesar and his partisans.

⁵⁵ Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace, 65-8 B.C.) hardly challenged censorship of any kind by his *Satires*.

⁵⁶ In his *History of Rome* Livy (*Titus Livius*, 59 B.C.-17 A.D.) is said by Tacitus (*Annals* IV, 34) to have praised Augustus' great rival for power, Pompey, very highly, and to have had Augustus' approval for so doing.

⁵⁷ Naso: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) was banished to Tomi near the mouth of the Danube; tradition says less on account of his licentious poems than for an intrigue with the granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus, Julia. He died at Tomi in 18 A.D.

⁵⁸ So in the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Liberty of Prophecy* Jeremy Taylor quoted Tacitus' *Agricola* to prove that under the more tyrannous Roman emperors books were suppressed by "an illiterate policy" which supposed that "such indirect and uningenious proceedings can, among wise and free men, disgrace the authors and disrepute their discourses."

do not find to have been more severe than what was formerly in practice. The books of those whom they took to be grand heretics were examined, refuted, and condemned in the general councils;⁵⁹ and not till then were prohibited, or burnt, by authority of the emperor. As for the writings of heathen authors, unless they were plain invectives against Christianity, as those of Porphyrius⁶⁰ and Proclus,⁶¹ they met with no interdict that can be cited till about the year 400 in a Carthaginian Council⁶² wherein bishops themselves were forbid to read the books of Gentiles, but heresies they might read: while others long before them, on the contrary, scrupled more the books of heretics than of Gentiles. And that the primitive councils and bishops were wont only to declare what books were not commendable, passing no further, but leaving it to each one's conscience to read or to lay by, till after the year 800, is observed already by Padre Paolo, the great unmasker of the Trentine Council.⁶³ After which time the Popes of Rome, engrossing what they

⁵⁹ In the following survey of the attempts of some of the general councils and popes to suppress heresy Milton is mainly following Padre Paolo Sarpi's *Historie of the Council of Trent* (as it was entitled in Nathaniel Brent's translation, 1620). In *MP*, L (1953), 226-31, E. Sirluck exhaustively traces the extent of Milton's indebtedness to Sarpi and finds that he checked Sarpi's statements about Porphyry and Proclus, and that he corrected the former of them from Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*. For another and more important such correction see n. 64 below.

⁶⁰ Porphyry (233-305? A.D.) is said to have been a pupil of Origen and to have apostatized under the influence of Plotinus in Rome. His book against Christianity was publicly destroyed by order of the emperor Theodosius.

⁶¹ Proclus (412-485 A.D.) was a lifelong enemy of Christianity.

⁶² Sirluck observes that Milton follows Sarpi's statement that a council at Carthage burned heretical books "about the year 400," without identifying any of the four councils held there between 397 and 412 as the responsible one.

⁶³ The Council of Trent (in the Tyrol) met frequently between Dec. 13, 1545, and Dec. 4, 1563, and ended its efforts to reconcile Protestant with Catholic Europe by reaffirming most of the great doctrines of Roman Catholicism, and by affirming that in matters of faith and morals the tradition of the Church ranked with the Bible as an authority. In describing Sarpi (1552-1623) as its "unmasker," Milton does not misrepresent the spirit of his *History*, which was first published in 1619. He wrote as a Catholic, but also from the point of view of a supporter of the Venetian Republic in its struggle with the popes. Cf. n. 59 above.

pleased of political rule into their own hands, extended their dominion over men's eyes as they had before over their judgments, burning and prohibiting to be read what they fancied not; yet sparing in their censures, and the books not many which they so dealt with; till Martin V,⁶⁴ by his bull, not only prohibited, but was the first that excommunicated the reading of heretical books; for about that time Wycliffe and Huss⁶⁵ growing terrible, were they who first drove the papal court to a stricter policy of prohibiting. Which course Leo X⁶⁶ and his successors followed, until the Council of Trent and the Spanish Inquisition,⁶⁷ engendering together, brought forth, or perfected those catalogs and expurging indexes⁶⁸ that rake through the entrails of worse than any could be offered to his tomb.

Nor did they stay in matters heretical, but any subject that was not to their palate they either condemned in a prohibition, or had it straight into the new purgatory of an Index. To fill up the measure of encroachment, their last invention was to ordain that no book, pamphlet, or paper should be printed (as if St. Peter had bequeathed them the keys of the press also out of paradise) unless it were approved and licensed under the hands of two or three glutton friars. For example:

Let the Chancellor Cini be pleased to see if in this present work be contained aught that may withstand the printing. Vincent Rabbatta, Vicar of Florence.

I have seen this present work, and find nothing athwart the Catholic faith and good manners: in witness whereof I have given, &c.

Nicolo Cini, Chancellor of Florence.

Attending the precedent relation, it is allowed that this present work of

Davanzati⁶⁹ may be printed.

Vincent Rabbatta, &c.

It may be printed, July 15.

Friar Simon Mompei d'Amelia, Chancellor of the holy office in Florence.

Sure they have a conceit, if he of the bottomless pit had not long since brok't prison, that this quadruple exorcism would bar him down. I fear their next design will be to get into their custody the licensing of that which they say Claudius* intended but went not through with. Vouchsafe to see another of their forms, the Roman stamp:

Imprimatur, If it seem good to the reverend Master of the holy Palace, Belcastro, Vicegerent.

Imprimatur,

Friar Nicolo Rodolphi, Master of the holy Palace.

Sometimes five Imprimatur's are seen together, dialoguewise, in the piazza of one titlepage, complimenting and ducking each to other with their shaven reverences, whether the author, who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his epistle, shall to the press or to the sponge. These are the pretty responsories,⁷⁰ these are the dear antiphonies⁷¹ that so bewitched of late our prelates and their chaplains with the goodly echo they made; and besotted us to the gay imitation of a lordly Imprimatur,⁷² one from Lambeth House,⁷³ another from the

⁶⁹ The little book *On the English Schism (Lo Scisma d'Inghilterra)* by Bernardo Davanzati (1529-1606) was reissued in Florence in 1638 in an edition which may have been published while Milton was there, and which has been identified by A. Allodoli in *Giovanni Milton e l'Italia*, p. 82, as having been used by him in writing *Areop.* Cf. n. 118 below.

* In the Milton text the following was printed in the margin: *Quo veniam daret flatum crepitumque ventris in convivio emittendi. Suetonius in Claudio.*

⁷⁰ *responsories*: sections of the Psalms sung interspersed between readings from the missal in the mass.

⁷¹ *antiphonies*: hymns or anthems sung in responsive parts by two choirs.

⁷² *Imprimatur*: "let it be printed," the order stamped on manuscripts which are permitted by ecclesiastical authority to be sent to the press. "To the sponge"—meaning, to have the contents wiped off—has been applied to manuscripts unworthy of publication since Suetonius helped to popularize the expression in the *Life of Augustus*, 85.

⁷³ *Lambeth Palace* is still the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the south bank of the Thames.

west end of Paul's,⁷⁴ so apishly Romanizing that the word of command still was set down in Latin; as if the learned grammatical pen that wrote it would cast no ink without Latin; or perhaps, as they thought, because no vulgar tongue was worthy to express the pure conceit of an Imprimatur; but rather, as I hope, for that our English, the language of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements of liberty, will not easily find servile letters enough to spell such a dictatory presumption English.

And thus ye have the inventors and the original of book-licensing ripped up and drawn as lineally as any pedigree. We have it not, that can be heard of, from any ancient state, or polity, or church, nor by any statute left us by our ancestors elder or later; nor from the modern custom of any reformed city or church abroad; but from the most antichristian council and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired.

Till then books were ever as freely admitted into the world as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifled than the issue of the womb; no envious Juno⁷⁵ sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring; but if it proved a monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the sea? But that a book, in worse condition than a peccant soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be born to the world and undergo yet in darkness the judgment of Rhadamanth⁷⁶ and his colleagues, ere it can pass the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity, provoked and troubled at the first entrance of reformation, sought out new limbos⁷⁷ and

new hells wherein they might include our books also within the number of their damned. And this was the rare morsel so officiously snatched up, and so ill-favoredly imitated by our inquisitorial bishops and the attendant minorites,⁷⁸ their chaplains. That ye like not now these most certain authors of this licensing order, and that all sinister intention was far distant from your thoughts, when ye were importuned the passing it, all men who know the integrity of your actions, and how ye honor truth, will clear ye readily.

But some will say, what though the inventors were bad, the thing for all that may be good. It may so; yet if that thing be no such deep invention, but obvious and easy for any man to light on, and yet best and wisest commonwealths through all ages and occasions have forborne to use it, and falsest seducers and oppressors of men were the first who took it up, and to no other purpose but to obstruct and hinder the first approach of reformation; I am of those who believe it will be a harder alchemy than Lullius⁷⁹ ever knew to sublimate⁸⁰ any good use out of such an invention. Yet this only is what I request to gain from this reason, that it may be held a dangerous and suspicious fruit, as certainly it deserves, for the tree that bore it, until I can dissect one by one the properties it has. But I have first to finish, as was proposed, what is to be thought in general of reading books, whatever sort they be, and whether be more the benefit or the harm that thence proceeds?

417, J. Horrell compares *PL* III, 440-7, and notes that "the sombre associations of the word might easily come from Virgil's *limen*, or threshold to Hades, . . . where the souls of infants weep, and with them come the suicides." Milton refers to the charge which Jeremy Taylor repeated in his *Dissuasive from Popery*, II, vi: "Of the Expurgatory Indices in the Roman Church," viz.: "1. That the king of Spain gave a commission to the inquisitors to purge all catholic authors, but with a clause of secrecy. 2. That they purged the indices of the fathers' works. 3. That they did also purge the works of the fathers themselves."

⁷⁸ *minorites*: the Franciscans, traditionally the humblest of the monastic orders.

⁷⁹ *Lullius*: Raymond Lully (1234?-1315) was traditionally better known for his writings on alchemy and medicine than for the missionary ardor that took him to north Africa three times and finally ended his life by martyrdom in Mauritania.

⁸⁰ *sublimate*: in alchemy, to transform a base into a precious metal. Cf. *PL* V, 483.

⁷⁴ *St. Paul's* is the cathedral church of the Bishop of London. Cf. the Bibliographical Note above.

⁷⁵ In *Metamorphoses* IX, 285-319, Ovid tells the story of Juno's cruelty to Alcmena in placing the goddess of childbirth cross-legged beside her, muttering charms to prevent her delivery of the infant Hercules. On the seventh night of labor the wit of Alcmena's maid tricked the cross-legged goddess into rising and so breaking the charm that closed her mistress's womb.

⁷⁶ According to Plato in *Gorgias*, 524a, the Cretan king *Rhadamanthus*, together with Minos and Aeacus, was made a judge of the dead by Zeus, and had power to strip every soul naked of its body for examination. Cf. *CG*, n. 24.

⁷⁷ *limbos*: purlieus of hell, such as the *limbus puerorum* or limbo of babes, and *limbus patrum* or limbo of the patriarchs, who were delivered in Christ's harrowing of hell. In *RES*, XVIII (1942),

⁶⁴ *Martin V* (Otto Colonna) was Pope from 1417 to 1431. Sirluck notes that Milton wrote from knowledge of the full text of Martin's bull of 1418, *Inter cunctas*, when he declared that the bull definitely excommunicated contumacious heretics. Sarpi, knowing the bull only in an abridged form, was unaware of its full severity. Cf. n. 59 above.

⁶⁵ Cf. *CG*, n. 119.

⁶⁶ *Leo X* (Giovanni dei Medici) was Pope from 1513 to 1521.

⁶⁷ Sirluck notes that the *Inquisition* was reorganized by a bull of Paul III on July 21, 1542.

⁶⁸ The first *Index Expurgatorius* was issued by Paul IV in 1559.

Not to insist upon the examples of Moses, Daniel,⁸¹ and Paul,⁸² who were skilful in all the learning of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Greeks, which could not probably be without reading their books of all sorts; in Paul especially, who thought it no defilement to insert into holy scripture the sentences of three Greek poets, and one of them a tragedian; the question was notwithstanding sometimes controverted among the primitive doctors, but with great odds on that side which affirmed it both lawful and profitable, as was then evidently perceived when Julian the Apostate⁸³ and subtlest enemy to our faith, made a decree forbidding Christians the study of heathen learning; for, said he, they wound us with our own weapons, and with our own arts and sciences they overcome us. And indeed the Christians were put so to their shifts by this crafty means, and so much in danger to decline into all ignorance, that the two Apollinarii⁸⁴ were fain, as a man may say, to coin all the seven liberal sciences⁸⁵ out of the Bible, reducing it into

divers forms of orations, poems, dialogues, even to the calculating of a new Christian grammar. But, saith the historian Socrates, the providence of God provided better than the industry of Apollinarius and his son, by taking away that illiterate law with the life of him who devised it.⁸⁶

So great an injury they then held it to be deprived of Hellenic learning; and thought it a persecution more undermining, and secretly decaying the Church, than the open cruelty of Decius⁸⁷ or Diocletian.⁸⁸ And perhaps it was the same politic drift that the devil whipped St. Jerome⁸⁹ in a Lenten dream, for reading Cicero; or else it was a phantasm bred by the fever which had then seized him. For had an angel been his discipliner, unless it were for dwelling too much upon Ciceronianisms, and had chastised the reading, not the vanity, it had been plainly partial; first to correct him for grave Cicero, and not for scurril Plautus, whom he confesses to have been reading not long before; next to correct him only, and let so many more ancient fathers wax old in those pleasant and florid studies without the lash of such a tutoring apparition; inasmuch that Basil⁹⁰ teaches how some good use may be made of *Margites*, a sportful poem not now extant writ by Homer; and why not then of *Morgante*,⁹¹ an Italian romance much to the same purpose?

⁸¹ Cf. *Educ.*, n. 12.

⁸² Socrates' eighteenth chapter tells the story of Julian's perhaps providential taking-off in battle with the Persians, and chapter nineteen celebrates the restoration of full cultural rights to the Christians by his Christian successor, Jovian.

⁸³ Decius was emperor from 249 until 251.

⁸⁴ The persecutions under Decius and Diocletian, who reigned from 284 to 305, were particularly severe.

⁸⁵ The story of *St. Jerome's* dream of being brought by an angel before a tribunal in heaven and accused of being a Ciceronian because he had Cicero's works by heart, goes back to Jerome's *Epistle* XVIII, "To Eustochius on Virginity." Milton's interpretation of it goes back as far as Gratian's *Decretum*, Prima Pars, Distinctio XXXVII, vii, where the saint is said to have replied to his heavenly judge by asking whether clergyman ought not to have skill in secular literature.

⁸⁶ Basil the Great, Bishop of Cappadocia, 370-379 A.D., is described in the *Ecclesiastical History* (IV, xxi) of Socrates Scholasticus as preparing for a career as a Christian apologist by reading pagan philosophy in Athens in his youth. Milton is quoting Basil's *The Right Use of Greek Literature* (Padelford's Ed., p. 102).

⁸⁷ The mock-heroic romance of Luigi Pulci

But if it be agreed we shall be tried by visions, there is a vision recorded by Eusebius,⁹² far ancients than this tale of Jerome to the nun Eustochium, and, besides, has nothing of a fever in it. Dionysius Alexandrinus was, about the year 240, a person of great name in the church for piety and learning, who had wont to avail himself much against heretics by being conversant in their books; until a certain presbyter laid it scrupulously to his conscience, how he durst venture himself among those defiling volumes. The worthy man, loth to give offense, fell into a new debate with himself what was to be thought; when suddenly a vision sent from God (it is his own *Epistle* that so avers it) confirmed him in these words: "Read any books whatever come to thy hands, for thou art sufficient both to judge aright and to examine each matter." To this revelation he assented the sooner, as he confesses, because it was answerable to that of the apostle to the Thessalonians: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."⁹³

And he might have added another remarkable saying of the same author: "To the pure, all things are pure";⁹⁴ not only meats and drinks, but all kind of knowledge whether of good or evil; the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience be not defiled. For books are as meats and viands are—some of good, some of evil substance, and yet God in that unapocryphal vision said without exception, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat,"⁹⁵ leaving the choice to each man's discretion. Wholesome meats to a vitiated

(1431-1487), the *Morgante Maggiore* (published in 1488), was coarser than Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, of which it was one of the main sources of inspiration. As Homer's *Margites* was traditionally regarded as the first great humorous poem in the ancient world, the *Morgante* was accepted as having founded its type in Renaissance Europe.

⁹² Milton quoted loosely from the summary of Dionysius' (Bishop of Alexandria, 247-65) letter to Philemon in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* VII, vi, confessing that he had "read over the traditions and commentaries of the hereticks" because a vision had commanded him to "Reade all whatsoever come into thy handes; thou shalt be able to weye, to prove, and trye all" (Mercedith Hanmer's translation, p. 127).

⁹³ I Thess. v, 21.

⁹⁴ Titus i, 15.

⁹⁵ Cf. CG, n. 232.

stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome, and best books to a naughty mind are not unapplicable to occasions of evil. Bad meats will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction; but herein the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate.

Whereof what better witness can ye expect I should produce than one of your own now sitting in parliament, the chief of learned men reputed in this land, Mr. Selden,⁹⁶ whose volume of natural and national laws proves, not only by great authorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest.

I conceive, therefore, that when God did enlarge the universal diet of man's body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds; as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his own leading capacity. How great a virtue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man! Yet God commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the demeanor of every grown man. And therefore, when he himself tabled the Jews from heaven, that omer⁹⁷ which was every man's daily portion of manna, is computed to have been more than might have well sufficed the heartiest feeder thrice as many meals. For those actions which enter into a man, rather than issue out of him, and therefore defile not, God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription, but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser; there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which heretofore were governed only by exhortation.

⁹⁶ John Selden (1584-1654) published his *De Jure Naturali et Gentium iuxta Disciplinam Hebraeorum* in 1640. Sirluck indicates that Milton is paraphrasing Selden's Preface. Cf. n. 59 above.

⁹⁷ The omer was the measure of manna which Moses was commanded in Exod. xvi, 16, to ration to the Israelites daily. The account lays stress on the abundance of the supply.

Solomon⁹⁸ informs us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but neither he nor other inspired author tells us that such or such reading is unlawful; yet certainly had God thought good to limit us herein, it had been much more expedient to have told us what was unlawful than what was wearisome.

As for the burning of those Ephesian books by St. Paul's converts;⁹⁹ 'tis replied the books were magic, the Syriac so renders them. It was a private act, a voluntary act, and leaves us to a voluntary imitation: the men in remorse burnt those books which were their own; the magistrate by this example is not appointed; these men practised the books, another might perhaps have read them in some sort usefully.

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed on Psyche¹⁰⁰ as an incessant labor to cull out and sort asunder, were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say, of knowing good by evil.¹⁰¹

As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring¹⁰² Christian.

⁹⁸ Eccles. xii, 12. Mark vii, 15: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man."

⁹⁹ The story is found in Acts xix, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Milton would know the story of Psyche best in *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius IV-VI. Anger because Psyche has won Cupid's love makes Venus doom her to sort the various kinds of grain out of a vast, mixed pile, but the work is done for her by the sympathetic ants.

¹⁰¹ Again in *CD I, x*, Milton reaffirms this interpretation of the meaning of the fall of man in Gen. iii.

¹⁰² *wayfaring*, the reading of the first edition,

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland¹⁰³ is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank¹⁰⁴ virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental¹⁰⁵ whiteness; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser,¹⁰⁶ whom I dare be known to think a

has the weight of priority, but *wayfaring* is suggested by the fact that the entire passage seems to echo Lactantius' repeated stress in *Institutes* III, xxix; V, vii; and VI, *passim*, upon a Christian ethic "ex quo fit ut virtus nulla sit, si adversarius desit." (See Miss K. Hartwell, *Milton and Lactantius*, pp. 21-35, for Milton's echo of the Lactantian passages in his *Commonplace Book* and for the relation of Lactantius to Seneca's *De Ira*.) In the background is St. Paul's Christian soldier in Ephes. vi, a conception popularized by Erasmus' *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* and by Puritan books like John Downe's *The Christian Warfare* which went into four editions from 1604 to 1618. In three extant copies of the first edition of *Areopagitica* the "y" in *Wayfaring* is changed to "r" in a hand that may be Milton's.

¹⁰³ *that*: like the Latin *ille*, the word is used to refer to something well known. Milton is perhaps thinking of that prize for which St. Paul described himself as pressing forward in Philippians iii, 14, or of the crown of righteousness in II Timothy iv, 8, or of the crown of life that is promised in James i, 12, to him "that endureth temptation" and "is tried." Cf. *TKM*, note 50.

¹⁰⁴ *blank*: pale or colorless. Cf. its force in *PL* III, 48: "a universal blank Of nature's works," where the substantial meaning is the darkness or indiscriminate grayness of the blind Milton's world.

¹⁰⁵ *excremental*: excremental, external.

¹⁰⁶ In the account of Guyon's temptation in *F.O.* II, viii, as E. Sirluck observes in *MP*, XLVIII (1950), 90-96, the Palmer does not accompany Guyon into the Cave of Mammon. In Spenser's Aristotelian allegory the Knight of Temperance represents the "firm and unchangeable character" of Aristotle's truly temperate man, and in the cave of Mammon he does not need the support of the Palmer who, in Spenser's allegory, objectifies the "rational principle" which restrains passion when the settled habits of character fail to do so. But in many passages Milton disapproves of virtue which is a matter of settled habit, or at least reserves his admiration for the kind that is constantly won "with dust and heat." Cf. n. 150 below.

better teacher than Scotus¹⁰⁷ or Aquinas,¹⁰⁸ describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain.

Since therefore, the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely and with less danger scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tracts and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.

But of the harm that may result hence, three kinds are usually reckoned. First is feared the infection that may spread; but then all human learning and controversy in religious points must remove out of the world, yea the Bible itself; for that oftentimes relates blasphemy not nicely, it describes the carnal sense of wicked men not unelegantly, it brings in holiest men passionately murmuring against providence through all the arguments of Epicurus;¹⁰⁹ in other great disputes it answers dubiously and darkly to the common reader; and ask a Talmudist what ails the modesty of his marginal Keri,¹¹⁰ that Moses and all the prophets

¹⁰⁷ John Duns Scotus (1265?-1308), the Subtle Doctor in the Scholastic tradition, was born in Scotland but taught at Paris and Oxford and died in Cologne. He was a Franciscan, and in several important ways his teaching was opposed to that of his great Dominican predecessor, St. Thomas. The prejudice against Scholastic logic which Milton illustrates here was responsible for the quite unfair development of the word *dunce* from Duns Scotus' name.

¹⁰⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274), the Seraphic Doctor, in his *Summa Theologica* left the greatest monument of Scholastic thought, and in his *Summa contra Gentiles*, the greatest medieval compendium of Christian doctrine.

¹⁰⁹ Solomon's recommendation of "mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry" (Eccl. viii, 15), was often compared with the supposedly similar advice of Epicurus. Cf. *CG*, n. 265.

¹¹⁰ *Keri*: what is read, opposed to *Chetiv*: what is written. Milton explains the terms when he says in the *Apology*, that "rabbinical scholiasts, not well attending, have often used to blur the margin with Keri instead of Ketiv, and gave us this insulserule out of their Talmud, 'That all words which in the law are written obscenely, must be changed to more civil words: fools, who would teach men to read more decently than God thought fit to write'" (*C.E.* III, 316).

cannot persuade him to pronounce the textual Chetiv. For these causes we all know the Bible itself put by the papist into the first rank of prohibited books. The ancientest fathers must be next removed, as Clement of Alexandria,¹¹¹ and that Eusebian¹¹² book of Evangelic preparation transmitting our ears through a hoard of heathenish obscenities to receive the Gospel. Who finds not that Irenæus,¹¹³ Epiphanius,¹¹⁴ Jerome,¹¹⁵ and others discover more heresies than they well confute, and that oft for heresy which is the truer opinion?

Nor boots it to say for these and all the heathen writers of greatest infection, if it must be thought so, with whom is bound up the life of human learning, that they writ in an unknown tongue, so long as we are sure those languages are known as well to the worst of men, who are both most able and most diligent to instil the poison they suck, first into the courts of princes, acquainting them with the choicest delights and criticisms of sin. As perhaps did that Petronius¹¹⁶ whom Nero called his Arbiter, the master of his revels; and that notorious

¹¹¹ *Clement of Alexandria* (150?-? A.D.) was the first great Christian apologist to make intimate use of Greek philosophy. Sirluck sees Milton "thinking of Clement's *Horatory Address to the Greeks*, in which, to dissuade his hearers from . . . certain pagan rites, he describes them with much emphasis on their lewdness and obscenity." See n. 59 above.

¹¹² Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica* is well described by Milton's words in the text. Many patristic books exhibited the worst features of pagan thought and religious practice to turn their readers to Christianity.

¹¹³ *Irenæus* (140?-202? A.D.) became Bishop of Lyons in 177. He wrote *Against Heresies* to combat Gnosticism.

¹¹⁴ Milton may have been interested in the *Panarion* or general refutation of heresies which was written by Epiphanius (315-403), who became Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus in 367. He was certainly familiar with Socrates' story in the *Ecclesiastical History* VI, ix and xiii, of Epiphanius' quarrel with John, Bishop of Constantinople, and of his seeming prostitution of his position as a controversialist in a struggle for power.

¹¹⁵ Traditionally, *St. Jerome* (c.340-420 A.D.) has been almost as famous as a controversialist—especially against Rufinus and other champions of Origen's teaching—as he has been for his Old Testament translations and commentaries.

¹¹⁶ In *Def.* 1.4 Milton refers rather differently to Tacitus' description of Petronius in *Annals* 16.18-19 as Nero's *arbiter elegantiarum* or adviser in matters of taste—hardly a playboy master of the royal revels. Like Tacitus, Milton does not refer to Petronius as a satirist or author of the *Satyricon*.

ribald of Arezzo,¹¹⁷ dreaded, and yet dear to the Italian courtiers. I name not him for posterity's sake, whom Harry VIII named in merriment his Vicar of hell.¹¹⁸ By which compendious way all the contagion that foreign books can infuse, will find a passage to the people far easier and shorter than an Indian voyage, though it could be sailed either by the north of Cathay¹¹⁹ eastward, or of Canada westward, while our Spanish licensing gags the English press never so severely.

But, on the other side, that infection which is from books of controversy in religion, is more doubtful and dangerous to the learned than to the ignorant; and yet those books must be permitted untouched by the licenser. It will be hard to instance where any ignorant man hath been ever seduced by papistical book in English, unless it were commended and expounded to him by some of that clergy; and indeed all such tractates, whether false or true, are as the prophecy of Isaiah was to the eunuch, not to be "understood without a guide."¹²⁰ But of our priests and doctors how many have been corrupted by studying the comments of Jesuits and Sorbonists,¹²¹ and how fast they could transfuse that corruption into the people, our experience is both late and sad. It is not forgot, since the acute and distinct Arminius¹²² was perverted

¹¹⁷ Pietro Aretino (1492-1557), by practising a kind of magnificent literary blackmail and by exploiting the aristocratic taste for indecency, achieved banishment from Rome as well as from Arezzo, won a European reputation, and left some revealing records of his times behind him.

¹¹⁸ The *Vicar of hell* is Sir Francis Brian, to whom Henry VIII's minister Thomas Cromwell often referred in that way. The nickname was "popular," says R. B. Merriman in his edition of *The Letters of Thomas Cromwell* (Oxford, 1902), Vol. II, 296, presumably on account of his cynical betrayal of his niece Anne Boleyn to Henry when the royal suspicion of her chastity was first aroused. The story of the nickname is told in Davanzati's *Schism*, p. 66 (see n. 69 above), as Harris Fletcher has noted in *JEGP*, XLVII (1948), 387-9.

¹¹⁹ *Cathay*: China. Cf. *PL X*, 291-3.

¹²⁰ Cf. the Apostle Philip's conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch by interpreting Isaiah to him (*Acts* viii, 28-35).

¹²¹ The school which Robert de Sorbon founded for poor students at the University of Paris in 1252 soon gave its name to the entire institution, which was the center of Scholastic teaching for four centuries.

¹²² The allusion to *Arminius* (1560-1609), the Dutch opponent of the extreme Calvinistic belief

merely by the perusing of a nameless discourse written at Delft, which at first he took in hand to confute.

Seeing, therefore, that those books, and those in great abundance which are likeliest to taint both life and doctrine, cannot be suppressed without the fall of learning, and of all ability in disputation; and that these books of either sort are most and soonest catching to the learned, from whom to the common people whatever is heretical or dissolute may quickly be conveyed; and that evil manners are as perfectly learned without books a thousand other ways which cannot be stopped; and evil doctrine not with books can propagate, except a teacher guide, which he might also do without writing, and so beyond prohibiting: I am not able to unfold how this cautious¹²³ enterprise of licensing can be exempted from the number of vain and impossible attempts. And he who were pleasantly disposed, could not well avoid to liken it to the exploit of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting his park gate.

Besides another inconvenience, if learned men be the first receivers out of books and disseminators both of vice and error, how shall the licensers themselves be confided in, unless we can confer upon them, or they assume to themselves above all others in the land, the grace of infallibility and uncorruptness? And again, if it be true that a wise man, like a good refiner, can gather gold out of the drossiest volume, and that a fool will be a fool with the best book, yea or without book, there is no reason that we should deprive a wise man of any advantage to his wisdom, while we seek to restrain from a fool that which being restrained will be no hindrance to his folly. For if there should be so much exactness always used to keep that from him which is unfit for his reading, we should, in the judgment of Aristotle¹²⁴ not only, but of

about Predestination, in *DDD* II, iii, shows that Milton was hardly in sympathy with him at this time. Arminius was Professor of Theology at Leyden, and was said to have been persuaded against Calvin's position by the writing of one or more obscure Dutch clergymen to whom he was asked, in his official capacity, to reply.

¹²³ *cautious*: uncertain, tricky.

¹²⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics* X, viii, 3, Aristotle acknowledges, in closing his great work, that discourses on ethics have no effect on ordinary man-

Solomon¹²⁵ and of our Savior,¹²⁶ not vouchsafe him good precepts, and by consequence not willingly admit him to good books; as being certain that a wise man will make better use of an idle pamphlet than a fool will do of sacred scripture.

'Tis next alleged we must not expose ourselves to temptations without necessity, and, next to that, not employ our time in vain things. To both these objections one answer will serve, out of the grounds already laid; that to all men such books are not temptations nor vanities, but useful drugs and materials wherewith to temper and compose effective and strong medicines which man's life cannot want.¹²⁷ The rest, as children and childish men, who have not the art to qualify¹²⁸ and prepare these working minerals, well may be exhorted to forbear, but hindered forcibly they cannot be by all the licensing that sainted Inquisition could ever yet contrive. Which is what I promised to deliver next: that this order of licensing conduces nothing to the end for which it was framed; and hath almost prevented¹²⁹ me by being clear already while thus much hath been explaining. See the ingenuity¹³⁰ of Truth, who, when she gets a free and willing hand, opens herself faster than the pace of method and discourse can overtake her.

It was the task which I began with, to show that no nation, or well instituted state, if they valued books at all, did ever use this way of licensing; and it might be answered that this is a piece of prudence lately discovered. To which I return that as it was a thing slight and obvious to think on, so if it had been difficult to find out, there wanted not among them long since who suggested such a course; which they not following, leave us a pattern of their judg-

kind and can inspire virtue only in men of generous temperament.

¹²⁵ "Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" (*Prov.* xvii, 24).

¹²⁶ "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (*Matt.* vii, 6).

¹²⁷ *want*: do without, lack.

¹²⁸ *qualify*: fix the quality or nature of a drug by proper compounding.

¹²⁹ *prevented*: anticipated or "got ahead of" another person in arriving somewhere, or—as here—in doing something.

¹³⁰ *ingenuity*: ingenuousness, liberality.

ment that it was not the not knowing, but the not approving, which was the cause of their not using it.

Plato,¹³¹ a man of high authority indeed, but least of all for his commonwealth, in the book of his *Laws*, which no city ever yet received, fed his fancy with making many edicts to his airy burgomasters, which they who otherwise admire him, wish had been rather buried and excused in the genial cups of an Academic night-sitting. By which laws he seems to tolerate no kind of learning, but by unalterable decree, consisting most of practical traditions, to the attainment whereof a library of smaller bulk than his own dialogues would be abundant. And there also enacts that no poet should so much as read to any private man what he had written, until the judges and law-keepers had seen it and allowed it;¹³² but that Plato meant this law peculiarly to that commonwealth which he had imagined, and to no other, is evident. Why was he not else a law-giver to himself, but a transgressor, and to be expelled by his own magistrates; both for the wanton epigrams and dialogues which he made, and his perpetual reading of Sophron¹³³ Mimus, and Aristophanes, books of grossest infamy; and also for commending the latter of them, though he were the malicious libeller of his chief friends, to be read by the tyrant Dionysius,¹³⁴ who had little need of such trash to spend his time on? But that he

¹³¹ Herbert Agar points out in *Milton and Plato*, p. 59, that, "except for the fact that Milton does not approve of censoring any reasonable form of art, his own attitude towards music was very similar to that of Plato." Cf. *Educ.*, n. 87.

¹³² Miss Lockwood quotes *Laws* VII, 801: "Shall we make a law that the poet shall compose nothing contrary to the ideas of the lawful, or just, or beautiful, or good, which are allowed in the state? nor shall he be permitted to show his compositions to any private individuals, until he shall have shown them to the appointed judges, . . . and they are satisfied with them."

¹³³ Milton thought of epigrams like Plato's to Agathon as it is found in the Third Book of *Diogenes Laertius*. Shelley paraphrased it:

Kissing Helena, together

With my kiss, my soul beside it

Came to my lips, and there I kept it, . . .

Sophon the Mimer left a number of mimes or dramatic sketches which, according to *Diogenes*, were sufficiently admired by Plato to justify Milton's statement in *Apology* (C.E. III, 293) that he took "them nighty to read on and after to make them his pillow."

¹³⁴ Cf. n. 33 above.

knew this licensing of poems had reference and dependence to many other provisos there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have no place; and so neither he himself, nor any magistrate, or city ever imitated that course, which, taken apart from those other collateral injunctions, must needs be vain and fruitless.

For if they fell upon one kind of strictness, unless their care were equal to regulate all other things of like aptness to corrupt the mind, that single endeavor they knew would be but a fond¹³⁵ labor; to shut and fortify one gate against corruption, and be necessitated to leave others round about wide open. If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric.¹³⁶ There must be licensing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth, but what by their allowance shall be thought honest;¹³⁷ for such Plato¹³⁸ was provided of. It will ask more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also, and the balconies must be thought on; there are shrewd¹³⁹ books, with dangerous frontispieces,¹⁴⁰ set to sale; who shall prohibit

¹³⁵ *fond*: ineffective, foolish.

¹³⁶ Cf. Roger Ascham's praise of that "kinde of Musicke inuented by the Dorians," because both Plato and Aristotle thought "it to be verie fyt for the studie of vertue & learning, because of a manlye, rough and stoute sounde in it, whyche shulde encourage yong stomakes, to attempte manlye matters." Ascham recalled also that "they both agre, that [that] Musike vsed amonges the Lydians is verie ill for yong men." (Ascham's *English Works*, edited by W. A. Wright, Cambridge, 1904, p. 12.) Cf. *PL I*, 550.

¹³⁷ *honest*: honorable, decent.

¹³⁸ The passage in the *Laws* (800-802) which Milton has in mind provides that a selection from the countless existing songs of the Greeks shall be made by mature judges—men not under fifty—to make sure that the ideal city for which he is legislating shall have no music or poetry which does not rightly praise the gods and the great dead.

¹³⁹ *shrewd*: mischievous, wicked.

¹⁴⁰ *frontispieces*: fronts or decorated pages at the

them? Shall twenty licensers? The villages also must have their visitors¹⁴¹ to inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebeck¹⁴² reads even to the balladry and the gamut of every municipal fiddler, for these are the countryman's Arcadias,¹⁴³ and his Monte Mayors.

Next, what more national corruption, for which England hears ill¹⁴⁴ abroad, than household gluttony? Who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? And what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunkenness is sold and harbored? Our garments also should be referred to the licensing of some more sober workmasters, to see them cut into a less wanton garb. Who shall regulate all the mixed conversation¹⁴⁵ of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this country? Who shall still appoint what shall be discoursed, what presumed, and no further? Lastly, who shall forbid and separate all idle resort, all evil company? These things will be and must be; but how they shall be least hurtful, how least enticing, herein consists the grave and governing wisdom of a state.

To sequester out of the world into Atlantic and Utopian¹⁴⁶ polities, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our

beginning.

¹⁴¹ Such *visitors* or censors were being urged by Puritans like George Wither, who in dedicating his *HALELUJAH, or Brians Second Remembrancer* (1641) to Parliament was "an humble petitioner" for them to supervise "Publike Feasts and civil meetings," where, he said, "Scurrilous and obscene Songs are impudently sung, without respecting the reverend Presences of *Matrons, Virgins, Magistrates* or *Divines*. Nay, sometime, in their despite, they are called for, sung, and Acted, with such abominable gesticulations as are very offensive to all modest hearers, and beholders; and fitting only to be exhibited at the Diabolical Solemnities of *Bacchus, Venus, or Priapus*."

¹⁴² *rebeck*: a simple fiddle, originally with only two strings. Cf. *L'All*, 94.

¹⁴³ Cf. the prominence of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* in *Eikon*, Chap. i, n. 38. Milton refers also to the Italian *Arcadia* of Jacopo Sannazaro and to the *Diana Enamorada* of the Portuguese, Jorge de Montemayor (1520-1561).

¹⁴⁴ *Hears ill* (said of itself). The idiom is Greek.

¹⁴⁵ *conversation*: social intercourse.

¹⁴⁶ As he has condemned the strict social regulation of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Milton now objects to the same aspect of the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More and of Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*. To "sequester" one's self in such speculative commonwealths is mere escapism.

condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evil, in the midst whereof God hath placed us unavoidably. Nor is it Plato's licensing of books will do this, which necessarily pulls along with it so many other kinds of licensing as will make us all both ridiculous and weary, and yet frustrate; but those unwritten, or at least unconstraining, laws of virtuous education, religious and civil nurture, which Plato there mentions as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth,¹⁴⁷ the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute; these they be which will bear chief sway in such matters as these, when all licensing will be easily eluded. Impunity and remissness, for certain, are the bane of a commonwealth; but here the great art lies, to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work. If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years, were to be under pittance¹⁴⁸ and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramericy¹⁴⁹ to be sober, just, or continent?

Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing;¹⁵⁰ he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions.¹⁵¹ We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force. God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? They are not skilful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin. For, besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act

¹⁴⁷ Milton is thinking of the passage in the *Republic* IV, 424-33, where Plato makes sound education the basis of social order.

¹⁴⁸ *pittance*: ration, allowance. Originally, the word was applied to a monk's portion of food.

¹⁴⁹ *gramericy*: thanks.

¹⁵⁰ Milton quotes from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* III, ii, 6. Cf. n. 106 above.

¹⁵¹ *Motions*: puppet shows.

of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all, in such a universal thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left—ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness. Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is required to the right managing of this point.

Suppose we could expel sin by this means; look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who, though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us, even to a profuseness, all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth?

It would be better done to learn that the law must needs be frivolous which goes to restrain things uncertainly and yet equally working to good and to evil. And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing. For God sure esteems the growth and completing of one virtuous person more than the restraint of ten vicious. And albeit whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing, may be fitly called our book, and is of the same effect that writings are; yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far insufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not see—not once or oftener, but weekly—that continued court-libel¹⁵² against the Parliament and City printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispersed among us, for all that licensing can do? Yet this is the prime service a

¹⁵² Milton refers to the *Mercurius Aulicus* or *Court Mercury*, which was published 1642-1645 and was written mainly by Sir John Birkenhead.

man would think, wherein this Order should give proof of itself. If it were executed, you'll say. But certain, if execution be remiss or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter and in other books?

If then the Order shall not be vain and frustrate, behold a new labor, Lords and Commons. Ye must repeal and proscribe all scandalous and unlicensed books already printed and divulged¹⁵⁸ (after ye have drawn them up into a list, that all may know which are condemned and which not) and ordain that no foreign books be delivered out of custody, till they have been read over. This office will require the whole time of not a few overseers, and those no vulgar men. There be also books which are partly useful and excellent, partly culpable and pernicious; this work will ask as many more officials, to make expurgations and expunctions,¹⁵⁴ that the commonwealth of learning be not damnified. In fine, when the multitude of books increase upon their hands, ye must be fain to catalog all those printers who are found frequently offending, and forbid the importation of their whole suspected typography. In a word, that this your Order may be exact and not deficient, ye must reform it perfectly according to the model of Trent and Seville,¹⁵⁵ which I know ye abhor to do.

Yet, though ye should condescend to this, which God forbid, the Order still would be but fruitless and defective to that end whereto ye meant it. If to prevent sects and schisms, who is so unread or so uncatechized in story that hath not heard of many sects refusing books as a hindrance, and preserving their doctrine unmixed for many ages, only by unwritten traditions? The Christian faith, for that was once a schism, is not unknown to have spread all over Asia, ere any Gospel or Epistle was seen in writing. If the amendment of manners be aimed at, look into Italy and Spain, whether those places be one scruple the better, the honester, the wiser, the chaster, since all the inquisitional rigor that hath been executed upon books.

¹⁵⁸ *divulged*: publicly distributed, made generally available.

¹⁵⁴ *expunctions*: expungings, excisions by the censor.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. notes 63 and 77 above.

Another reason whereby to make it plain that this Order will miss the end it seeks, consider by the quality which ought to be in every licenser. It cannot be denied but that he who is made judge to sit upon the birth or death of books, whether they may be wafted into this world or not,¹⁵⁸ had need to be a man above the common measure, both studious, learned, and judicious. There may be else no mean mistakes in the censure of what is passable or not, which is also no mean injury. If he be of such worth as behoves him, there cannot be a more tedious and displeasing journey-work,¹⁵⁷ a greater loss of time levied upon his head, than to be made the perpetual reader of unchosen books and pamphlets, oftentimes huge volumes. There is no book that is acceptable unless at certain seasons; but to be enjoined the reading of that at all times, and in a hand scarce legible, whereof three pages would not down at any time in the fairest print, is an imposition which I cannot believe how he that values time and his own studies, or is but of a sensible¹⁵⁸ nostril, should be able to endure.

In this one thing I crave leave of the present licensers to be pardoned for so thinking; who doubtless took this office up, looking on it through their obedience to the parliament, whose command perhaps made all things seem easy and unlaborious to them; but that this short trial hath wearied them out already, their own expressions and excuses to them who make so many journeys to solicit their license, are testimony enough. Seeing, therefore, those who now possess the employment, by all evident signs wish themselves well rid of it, and that no man of worth, none that is not a plain unthrift of his own hours, is ever likely to succeed them, except he mean to put himself to the salary of a press corrector, we may easily foresee what kind of licensers we are to expect hereafter, either ignorant, imperious, and remiss, or basely pecuniary. This is what I had to show, wherein this Order cannot conduce to that end whereof it bears the intention.

I lastly proceed from the no good it can

¹⁵⁸ A glancing reference, says Sirluck, to the river on whose banks the souls wait to be born into this world in Plato's *Phaedo*, 113.

¹⁵⁷ *journey-work*: work by the day or by a journeyman.

¹⁵⁸ *sensible*: sensitive.

do, to the manifest hurt it causes in being first the greatest discouragement and affront that can be offered to learning and to learned men.

It was the complaint and lamentation of prelates, upon every least breath of a motion to remove pluralities¹⁵⁹ and distribute more equally church revenues, that then all learning would be for ever dashed and discouraged. But as for that opinion, I never found cause to think that the tenth part of learning stood or fell with the clergy; nor could I ever but hold it for a sordid and unworthy speech of any churchman who had a competency left him. If, therefore, ye be loth to dishearten utterly and discontent, not the mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenuous sort of such as evidently were born to study and love learning for itself, not for lucre, or any other end but the service of God and of truth, and perhaps that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose published labors advance the good of mankind; then know, that so far to distrust the judgment and the honesty of one who hath but a common repute in learning, and never yet offended, as not to count him fit to print his mind without a tutor and examiner, lest he should drop a schism, or something of corruption, is the greatest displeasure and indignity to a free and knowing spirit that can be put upon him.

What advantage is it to be a man over it is to be a boy at school, if we have only escaped the ferula¹⁶⁰ to come under the fescue of an Imprimatur; if serious and elaborate writings, as if they were no more than the theme of a grammar-lad under his pedagogue, must not be uttered without the cursory eyes of a temporizing and extemporizing licenser? He who is not trusted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evil, and standing to the hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument to think himself reputed, in the commonwealth wherein he was born, for other than a fool or a foreigner.

When a man writes to the world, he summons up all his reason and delibera-

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *CG*, n. 262.

¹⁶⁰ *ferula*: a schoolmaster's rod. *fescue*: a pointer.

tion to assist him; he searches, meditates, is industrious, and likely consults and confers with his judicious friends, after all which done he takes himself to be informed in what he writes, as well as any that writ before him. If in this the most consummate act of his fidelity and ripeness, no years, no industry, no former proof of his abilities can bring him to that state of maturity as not to be still mistrusted and suspected (unless he carry all his considerate diligence, all his midnight watchings, and expense of Palladian¹⁶¹ oil, to the hasty view of an unleisured licenser, perhaps much his younger, perhaps far his inferior in judgment, perhaps one who never knew the labor of book-writing), and if he be not repulsed, or slighted, must appear in print like a puny¹⁶² with his guardian, and his censor's hand on the back of his title to be his bail and surety that he is no idiot or seducer; it cannot be but a dishonor and derogation to the author, to the book, to the privilege and dignity of learning.

And what if the author shall be one so copious of fancy as to have many things well worth the adding, come into his mind after licensing, while the book is yet under the press, which not seldom happens to the best and diligentest writers; and that perhaps a dozen times in one book. The printer dares not go beyond his licensed copy. So often then must the author trudge to his leave-giver, that those his new insertions may be viewed, and many a jaunt will be made, ere that licenser, for it must be the same man, can either be found, or found at leisure. Meanwhile, either the press must stand still, which is no small damage, or the author lose his accuratist thoughts and send the book forth worse than he had made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest melancholy and vexation that can befall.

And how can a man teach with authority, which is the life of teaching, how can he be a doctor in his book as he ought to be, or else had better be silent, whenas all he teaches, all he delivers, is but under the

¹⁶¹ *Palladian*: pertaining to Pallas Athene. The oil of the olive tree, which was sacred to her, when burned by an author, might be regarded as no less her gift than the wisdom which she was supposed to give to her devotees.

¹⁶² *puny*: a child, a person under the legal age of majority.

tuition, under the correction of his patriarchal¹⁶³ licenser to blot or alter what precisely accords not with the hidebound humor which he calls his judgment? When every acute reader upon the first sight of a pedantic license, will be ready with these like words to ding the book a quoit's distance from him: "I hate a pupil teacher, I endure not an instructor that comes to me under the wardship of an overseeing fist. I know nothing of the licenser, but that I have his own hand here for his arrogance; who shall warrant me his judgment?"

"The state, sir," replies the stationer,¹⁶⁴ but has a quick return: "The state shall be my governors, but not my critics; they may be mistaken in the choice of a licenser as easily as this licenser may be mistaken in an author; this is some common stuff"; and he might add from Sir Francis Bacon,¹⁶⁵ "That such authorized books are but the language of the times." For though a licenser should happen to be judicious more than ordinary, which will be a great jeopardy of the next succession, yet his very office and his commission enjoins him to let pass nothing but what is vulgarly received already.

Nay, which is more lamentable, if the work of any deceased author, though never so famous in his lifetime and even to this day, come to their hands for license to be printed, or reprinted; if there be found in his book one sentence of a venturesome edge, uttered in the height of zeal, and who knows whether it might not be the dictate of a divine spirit, yet not suiting with every low, decrepit humor of their own, though it were Knox¹⁶⁶ himself, the re-

former of a kingdom, that spake it, they will not pardon him their dash; the sense of that great man shall to all posterity be lost, for the fearfulness, or the presumptuous rashness, of a perfunctory licenser. And to what an author this violence hath been lately done, and in what book of greatest consequence to be faithfully published, I could now instance, but shall forbear till a more convenient season.¹⁶⁷

Yet if these things be not resented seriously and timely by them who have the remedy in their power, but that such iron-molds¹⁶⁸ as these shall have authority to gnaw out the choicest periods of exquisite books, and to commit such a treacherous fraud against the orphan remainders of worthiest men after death, the more sorrow will belong to that hapless race of men whose misfortune it is to have understanding. Henceforth let no man care to learn, or care to be more than worldly wise; for certainly in higher matters to be ignorant and slothful, to be a common, steadfast dunce, will be the only pleasant life, and only in request.

And as it is a particular disesteem of every knowing person alive, and most injurious to the written labors and monuments of the dead, so to me it seems an undervaluing and vilifying of the whole nation. I cannot set so light by all the invention, the art, the wit, the grave and solid judgment which is in England, as that it can be comprehended in any twenty capacities how good soever; much less that it should not pass except their superintendence be over it, except it be sifted and strained with their strainers; that it should be uncurrent without their manual stamp. Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolized¹⁶⁹ and traded in by tickets and byterianism and an uncompromising opponent of Mary, Queen of Scots.

¹⁶⁷ Since Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* suffered some mutilation in its edition of 1644, Knox may be the author in question; but so may be the great jurist, Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634), whose *Institutes* were also mutilated when their publication was authorized by Parliament.

¹⁶⁸ *iron-molds*: stains "on cloth, caused by rusty iron or ink." (Webster)

¹⁶⁹ So in the Preface to *Eikon* Milton took advantage of Puritan resentment of the commercial monopolies which Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I had increasingly abused, and he made them the basis of his metaphor of "religion" brought almost to be "a kind of trading monopoly."

statutes and standards.¹⁷⁰ We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the land, to mark and license it like our broadcloth and our woolpacks. What is it but a servitude like that imposed by the Philistines,¹⁷¹ not to be allowed the sharpening of our own axes and coulter,¹⁷² but we must repair from all quarters to twenty lincensing forges.

Had anyone written and divulged erroneous things and scandalous to honest life, misusing and forfeiting the esteem had of his reason among men; if, after conviction, this only censure were adjudged him, that he should never henceforth write, but what were first examined by an appointed officer, whose hand should be annexed to pass his credit for him, that now he might be safely read; it could not be apprehended less than a disgraceful punishment.

Whence, to include the whole nation, and those that never yet thus offended, under such a diffident¹⁷³ and suspectful prohibition, may plainly be understood what a disparagement it is. So much the more, whenas debtors and delinquents may walk abroad without a keeper, but unoffensive books must not stir forth without a visible jailor in their title. Nor is it to the common people less than a reproach; for if we be so jealous¹⁷⁴ over them as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what do we but censure them for a giddy, vicious, and ungrounded people, in such a sick and weak estate of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe¹⁷⁵ of a licenser. That this is care or love of them, we cannot pretend, whenas in those popish places where the laity are most hated and despised, the same strictness is used over them. Wisdom we cannot call it, because it stops but one breach of license, nor that neither; whenas those corruptions which it seeks to prevent,

¹⁷⁰ *tickets*: "official warrants or permissions of any kind." (O.E.D.)

¹⁷¹ When the *Philistines* disarmed the Israelites and forbade them to have forges, "all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax" (I Sam. xiii, 20).

¹⁷² *coulter*: the iron "foot" or point of the plough.

¹⁷³ *diffident*: lacking in confidence, suspicious.

¹⁷⁴ *jealous*: suspiciously watchful.

¹⁷⁵ *pipe*: a tube for taking medicine.

break in faster at other doors which cannot be shut.

And in conclusion, it reflects to the disrepute of our ministers also, of whose labors we should hope better, and of the proficiency which their flock reaps by them, than that after all this light of the Gospel which is and is to be, and all this continual preaching, they should be still frequented with such an unprincipled, unedified, and laic¹⁷⁶ rabble, as that the whiff of every new pamphlet should stagger them out of their catechism and Christian walking. This may have much reason to discourage the ministers, when such a low conceit is had of all their exhortations and the benefiting of their hearers, as that they are not thought fit to be turned loose to three sheets of paper without a licenser; that all the sermons, all the lectures preached, printed, vended in such numbers and such volumes as have now well nigh made all other books unsaleable, should not be armor enough against one single enchiridion,¹⁷⁷ without the castle St. Angelo¹⁷⁸ of an Imprimatur.

And lest some should persuade ye, Lords and Commons, that these arguments of learned men's discouragement at this your Order are mere flourishes, and not real, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other countries where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes; when I have sat among their learned men, for that honor I had, and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition into which learning amongst them was brought; that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits; that nothing had been there written now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo,¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ *laic*: belonging to the laity. A Puritan grievance against Laud was his depression of laymen's importance in favor of the clergy.

¹⁷⁷ *enchiridion*: a pun on the two meanings, handbook and handbook, of the Greek word.

¹⁷⁸ The *castle of St. Angelo*, on the left bank of the Tiber in Rome, was built in 136 A.D. by the emperor Hadrian and was used as an imperial mausoleum for nearly a century. In Milton's time it was the papal prison.

¹⁷⁹ *Galileo* (1564-1642) was under what amounted to house arrest near Florence when Milton was there in 1638-1639. Though he was a

¹⁶³ In the eastern churches the position of a patriarch is comparable with that of the Archbishop of Canterbury as Primate of England. Archbishop Laud had been suspected of aspiring to the title and of planning to be recognized as a successor of the Anglo-Saxon patriarchs for whose historical existence Edward Brerewood argued in *The Patriarchal Government of the Ancient Church*. Cf. CG, n. 7.

¹⁶⁴ *stationer*: printer. For the part played in book-licensing by the Stationers' Company see the Bibliographical Note above.

¹⁶⁵ Milton quotes Bacon's *An Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England* (*The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. by J. Spedding, Vol. I. London, 1862; p. 78), to which he returns later. Cf. n. 193.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *TKM* notes 122, 123, and 206. Milton thinks of Knox here as a founder of Scottish Pres-

grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudest under the prelatical yoke, nevertheless I took it as a pledge of future happiness that other nations were so persuaded of her liberty.

Yet was it beyond my hope that those worthies were then breathing in her air, who should be her leaders to such a deliverance as shall never be forgotten by any revolution of time that this world hath to finish. When that was once begun, it was as little in my fear, that what words of complaint I heard among learned men of other parts uttered against the Inquisition, the same I should hear by as learned men at home uttered in time of Parliament against an order of licensing; and that so generally, that when I had disclosed myself a companion of their discontent, I might say, if without envy, that he whom an honest quæstorship had endeared to the Sicilians, was not more by them importuned against Verres,¹⁸⁰ than the favorable opinion which I had among many who honor ye, and are known and respected by ye, loaded me with entreaties and persuasions that I would not despair to lay together that which just reason should bring into my mind toward the removal of an undeserved thraldom upon learning.

That this is not, therefore, the disburdening of a particular fancy, but the common grievance of all those who had prepared their minds and studies above the vulgar pitch to advance truth in others, and from nominal prisoner of the Inquisition from the publication of his evidence for the Copernican theory in 1632 until his death, he was not inaccessible to visitors. In *Studies in Milton* (Land, 1919), S. B. Liljegren grossly overstated the probability that Milton would not have had access to him. Liljegren's effort to cast doubt upon this and other statements about the Italian journey which Milton makes elsewhere, especially in *Def 2*, have been refuted by Fr. A. Pompen in *Neophilologus*, VI (1922), 272-9; by Walther Fischer in *Englische Studien*, B. 52 (1918), 390-6, and by B. A. Wright in *MLR*, XXVIII (1933), 308-14. Cf. *Eikon*, Chap. xxviii, n. 2.

¹⁸⁰ While serving as quæstor in Sicily in 75 B.C., Cicero won such confidence that the Sicilians asked him to prosecute Gaius Verres for his extortions there as praetor in B.C. 73-71. After taking less than two months to collect evidence, Cicero virtually won his case and drove Verres into exile by the first of his orations against him.

others to entertain it, thus much may satisfy. And in their name I shall for neither friend nor foe conceal what the general murmur is; that if it come to inquisitioning again and licensing, and that we are so timorous of ourselves and so suspicious of all men as to fear each book and the shaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are; if some who but of late were little better than silenced from preaching,¹⁸¹ shall come now to silence us from reading, except what they please, it cannot be guessed what is intended by some but a second tyranny over learning; and will soon put it out of controversy that bishops and presbyters are the same to us both name and thing.

That those evils of prelaty which before from five or six and twenty sees¹⁸² were distributively charged upon the whole people, will now light wholly upon learning, is not obscure to us; whenas now the pastor of a small unlearned parish on the sudden shall be exalted archbishop over a large diocese of books, and yet not remove, but keep his other cure too, a mystical pluralist.¹⁸³ He who but of late cried down the sole ordination of every novice bachelor of art, and denied sole jurisdiction over the simplest parishioner, shall now at home in his private chair assume both these over worthiest and excellentest books and ablest authors that write them. This is not, ye covenants¹⁸⁴ and protestations¹⁸⁵ that we have made, this is not to put down prelaty; this is but to chop an episcopacy; this is but to translate the palace metropolitan¹⁸⁶ from one kind of dominion into another; this is but an old canonical¹⁸⁷ sleight of commuting our penance. To startle thus betimes

¹⁸¹ Milton is thinking of the Presbyterian clergy in London, who until recently had been held in severe check by authorities. He anticipates the mood in which he was to write within about two years that

New Presbyter is but *Old Priest* writ Large.
(Sonnet *On the New Forcers of Conscience*, 20)

¹⁸² sees: seats or diocesan centers of bishops.

¹⁸³ Cf. *CG*, n. 262.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *Eikon*, Preface, n. 33, and *TKM*, n. 7.

¹⁸⁵ In May, 1641, when Charles planned to use the army to overawe Parliament, the members agreed on a *Protestation* asserting civil liberties, parliamentary freedom, etc.

¹⁸⁶ metropolitan: pertaining to an archbishop or to his power or property.

¹⁸⁷ canonical: pertaining to Canon Law or law-books.

at a mere unlicensed pamphlet will after a while be afraid of every conventicle,¹⁸⁸ and a while after will make a conventicle of every Christian meeting.

But I am certain that a state governed by the rules of justice and fortitude, or a church built and founded upon the rock of faith and true knowledge, cannot be so pusillanimous. While things are yet not constituted in religion, that freedom of writing should be restrained by a discipline imitated from the prelates, and learnt by them from the Inquisition, to shut us up all again into the breast of a licenser, must needs give cause of doubt and discouragement to all learned and religious men. Who cannot but discern the fineness¹⁸⁹ of this politic drift, and who are the contrivers: that while bishops were to be baited down,¹⁹⁰ then all presses might be open; it was the people's birthright and privilege in time of parliament, it was the breaking forth of light?

But now, the bishops abrogated and voided¹⁹¹ out of the church, as if our reformation sought no more but to make room for others into their seats under another name, the episcopal arts begin to bud again; the cruse¹⁹² of truth must run no more oil; liberty of printing must be enthralled again under a prelatical commission of twenty, the privilege of the people nullified; and, which is worse, the freedom of learning must groan again, and to her old fetters: all this the parliament yet sitting. Although their own late arguments and defenses against the prelates might remember them that this obstructing violence meets for the most part with an event utterly opposite to the end which it drives at; instead of suppressing sects and schisms, it raises them and invests them with a reputation: "The punishing of wits enhances their authority," saith the Viscount St. Albans,¹⁹³ "and a forbidden writing is thought to be a certain spark of truth that flies up in the

¹⁸⁸ conventicle: a religious meeting of any of the independent sects whose services were forbidden.

¹⁸⁹ fineness: subtlety, cleverness.

¹⁹⁰ baited down: as bears are in the sport of bear-baiting.

¹⁹¹ voided: emptied out, expelled. Cf. *CG*, n. 44.

¹⁹² The cruse of truth is like the widow's inexhaustible cruse of oil in I Kings xvii, 12.

¹⁹³ Viscount St. Albans: Bacon. See n. 165 above.

faces of them who seek to tread it out."

This Order, therefore, may prove a nursing mother¹⁹⁴ to sects, but I shall easily show how it will be a stepdame to Truth; and first by disabling us to the maintenance of what is known already.

Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion.¹⁹⁵ Truth is compared in scripture to a streaming fountain;¹⁹⁶ if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth;¹⁹⁷ and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly¹⁹⁸ so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be, who knows not that there be, of protestants and professors¹⁹⁹ who live and die in as arrant an implicit faith, as any lay papist of Loreto.²⁰⁰

A wealthy man addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries²⁰¹ he cannot skill²⁰² to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do? Fain he

¹⁹⁴ "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers" (Isa. xlix, 23).

¹⁹⁵ complexion: the balance of "humors" in the body on which temperament and character were thought to depend. Cf. *Educ*, n. 42.

¹⁹⁶ Milton is echoing Psalm lxxxv, 11, but he is probably also recalling that Bacon had said that "the truth is, that time seemeth to be of the nature of a river or stream, which carrieth down to us that which is light and blown up, and sinketh and drowneth that which is weighty and solid" (*Advancement* I, v, 3; p. 39).

¹⁹⁷ So in *TR* Milton defines heresy as "a religion taken up and believed from the traditions of men," and contrasts "implicit faith" with "unimplicit truth" (C.E. VI, 178).

¹⁹⁸ Presbyterians prevailed in the *Assembly of Divines*, which was then sitting at Westminster.

¹⁹⁹ professors: persons professing religious (and presumably Protestant) faith.

²⁰⁰ Loreto: the shrine near Ancona in Italy where, since 1294, pilgrims have attested their faith in the miraculous translation there by angels of the *Santa Casa* or house of Christ's residence in Nazareth.

²⁰¹ mysteries: trades, skills—in the sense in which the term was applied to the trades which were organized into guilds.

²⁰² skill: contrive.

would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbors in that. What does he, therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor²⁰³ to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs; some Divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion with all the locks and keys into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual²⁰⁴ movable, and goes and comes near him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him. His religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep, rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey,²⁰⁵ or some well spiced brewage, and better breakfasted than he whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem,²⁰⁶ his religion walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion.

Another sort there be, who, when they hear that all things shall be ordered, all things regulated and settled, nothing written but what passes through the custom-house of certain publicans²⁰⁷ that have the tonnage and the poundage²⁰⁸ of all free-spoken truth, will straight give themselves up into your hands, make 'em and cut 'em out what religion ye please. There be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a

²⁰³ factor: agent.

²⁰⁴ dividual: separable.

²⁰⁵ malmsey: a strong, sweet wine.

²⁰⁶ Riding from Bethany on his way to Jerusalem, Christ "was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off, . . . he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and . . . found nothing but leaves" (Mark xi, 12-3).

²⁰⁷ publicans: tax-gatherers.

²⁰⁸ Tonnage and poundage were a form of excise taxes traditionally granted to the king by Parliament, but disputed in 1641, when "the tonnage and poundage act declared the taking of all such duties without the consent of Parliament illegal" (F. C. Montague, *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Restoration*, p. 242).

delightful dream. What need they torture their heads with that which others have taken so strictly and so unalterably into their own purveying? These are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people. How goodly, and how to be wished, were such an obedient unanimity as this, what a fine conformity would it starch us all into! Doubtless a staunch and solid piece of framework, as any January could freeze together.

Nor much better will be the consequence even among the clergy themselves. It is no new thing never heard of before, for a parochial minister, who has his reward, and is at his Hercules pillars²⁰⁹ in a warm benefice, to be easily inclinable, if he have nothing else that may rouse up his studies, to finish his circuit in an English concordance and a topic folio, the gatherings and savings of a sober graduateship, a harmony²¹⁰ and a catena,²¹¹ treading the constant round of certain common doctrinal heads, attended with their uses, motives, marks, and means; out of which, as out of an alphabet or sol-fa, by forming and transforming, joining and disjoining variously a little bookcraft, and two hours' meditation, might furnish him unspeakably to the performance of more than a weekly charge of sermoning; not to reckon up the infinite helps of interlinearies,²¹² breviaries, synopses, and other loitering gear.

But as for the multitude of sermons ready printed and piled up on every text that is not difficult, our London trading St. Thomas²¹³ in his vestry, and add to boot

²⁰⁹ Hercules pillars: Gibraltar and the promontory opposite to it, which in the ancient world represented the final limit of at least ordinary travel or ambition.

²¹⁰ harmony: a simple treatise bringing divergent scripture narratives, such as those in the four gospels, into harmony with one another.

²¹¹ catena: a chain. The term was applied to popular but systematic theological works as various as the *Catena Aurea* of St. Thomas Aquinas and the *Golden Chain*, or *The description of theologie, containing the order of the causes of Salvation and damnation according to Gods Word* (1621) of the Reverend William Perkins.

²¹² interlinearies: interlinear commentaries on scripture.

²¹³ St. Thomas, etc. The identifications of the London churches intended are not clear, but the three spots indicated evidently bounded the book-selling district in the city.

St. Martin and St. Hugh, have not within their hallowed limits more vendible ware of all sorts ready made; so that penury he never need fear of pulpit provision, having where so plenteously to refresh his magazine. But if his rear and flanks be not impaled,²¹⁴ if his back door be not secured by the rigid licenser, but that a bold book may now and then issue forth and give the assault to some of his old collections in their trenches; it will concern him then to keep waking, to stand in watch, to set good guards and sentinels about his received opinions, to walk the round and counter-round with his fellow inspectors, fearing lest any of his flock be seduced, who also then would be better instructed, better exercised and disciplined. And God send²¹⁵ that the fear of this diligence, which must then be used, do not make us affect the laziness of a licensing church.

For if we be sure we are in the right, and do not hold the truth guiltily, which becomes not, if we ourselves condemn not our own weak and frivolous teaching, and the people for an untaught and irreligious, gadding rout, what can be more fair than when a man judicious, learned, and of a conscience, for aught we know, as good as theirs that taught us what we know, shall not privily from house to house, which is more dangerous, but openly by writing, publish to the world what his opinion is, what his reasons, and wherefore that which is now thought cannot be sound? Christ urged²¹⁶ it as wherewith to justify himself that he preached in public; yet writing is more public than preaching; and more easy to refutation, if need be, there being so many whose business and profession merely it is, to be the champions of truth; which if they neglect, what can be imputed but their sloth or inability?

Thus much we are hindered and disinured²¹⁷ by this course of licensing toward the true knowledge of what we seem to

²¹⁴ impaled: protected. Cf. Satan's artillery in PL VI, 553-4.

"impal'c"

On every side with shadowing squadrons deep."

²¹⁵ send, the reading of the original, has been emended by some editors to fend: prevent, forfend.

²¹⁶ Questioned by the high priest, "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; . . . in secret have I said nothing" (John xviii, 20).

²¹⁷ disinured: diverted from a customary practice, or one to which habit has become inured.

know. For how much it hurts and hinders the licensers themselves in the calling of their ministry, more than any secular employment, if they will discharge that office as they ought, so that of necessity they must neglect either the one duty or the other, I insist not, because it is a particular, but leave it to their own conscience, how they will decide it there.

There is yet behind of what I purposed to lay open, the incredible loss and detriment that this plot of licensing puts us to. More than if some enemy at sea should stop up all our havens and ports and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest merchandise, truth.²¹⁸ Nay, it was first established and put in practice by Antichristian malice and mystery, on set purpose to extinguish, if it were possible, the light of reformation, and to settle falsehood; little differing from that policy wherewith the Turk upholds his Alcoran, by the prohibition of printing. 'Tis not denied, but gladly confessed, we are to send our thanks and vows to Heaven, louder than most of nations, for that great measure of truth which we enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the Pope, with his appurtenances the prelates; but he who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attained the utmost prospect of reformation that the mortal glass²¹⁹ wherein we contemplate can show us, till we come to beatific vision,²²⁰ that man by this very opinion declares that he is yet far short of truth.

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape²²¹ most glorious to look on. But when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a

²¹⁸ Perhaps an allusion to the pearl of great price in Christ's parable of the merchant who sold everything for that single purchase (Matt. xiii, 46) —or to the "trade, not for gold, silver, jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor for any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was *Light*," which Bacon describes his New Atlanteans as maintaining. (*Essays, Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis, and Other Pieces*, edited by R. F. Jones, p. 469.)

²¹⁹ glass: mirror. Cf. I Cor. xiii, 12: "For now we see through [or in] a glass, darkly; but then, face to face."

²²⁰ Cf. PL I, 684, n.

²²¹ Cf. Satan's recognition of Christ as "of good, wise, just, the perfect shape," in PR III, 11, and also CG, n. 14, and *Comus*, 216, n.

wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon²²² with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming. He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mold them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity, forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies²²³ to the torn body of our martyred saint.

We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust,²²⁴ and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them to such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning. The light which we have gained, was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitering of a bishop, and the removing him from off the Presbyterian shoulders that will make us a happy nation; no, if other things as great in the church, and in

²²² Milton's public was familiar with Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, where the myth is interpreted as a symbol of the ceaseless assembly by Isis of the divine truth which is continually mangled and scattered by Typhon. In *An Humble Motion to the Parliament of England Concerning the Advancement of Learning* (1649, pp. 5-6) John Hall transferred the symbolism to the myth of Medea and described "the body of learning" as lying "scattered in as many pieces as ever Medea cut her little brother into, that they are as hard to finde and reunite as his was."

²²³ *obsequies*: services or acts of veneration.

²²⁴ *combust*: burnt up. In astrology the term applied to any planet coming within eight and a half degrees of the sun.

the rule of life both economical²²⁵ and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zwinglius²²⁶ and Calvin hath beaoned up to us, that we are stark blind.

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma.²²⁷ They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dis severed pieces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral and inwardly divided minds.

Lords and Commons of England, consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors; a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. Therefore the studies of learning in her deepest sciences have been so ancient and so eminent among us that writers of good antiquity and ablest judgment have been persuaded that even the school of Pythagoras²²⁸ and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old philosophy of this island. And that wise and civil Roman, Julius Agricola,²²⁹ who gov-

²²⁵ *economical*: pertaining to household management. Cf. *CG*, n. 243.

²²⁶ Cf. Milton's quotation of Zwingli and Calvin in *TKM*, notes 201-202.

²²⁷ *syntagma*: systematic treatise or body of doctrine.

²²⁸ Milton's interest in Pythagoras is best illustrated by *Prol II*.

²²⁹ Julius Agricola (37-93 A.D.) was proconsul in Britain from 78 to 85, and under him the Roman conquest was consolidated. In the *Life of Agricola* his son-in-law, Tacitus, says that he educated the sons of the chiefs in the liberal arts so successfully that those who had recently despised the language of the Romans were soon anxious to become eloquent in it.

erned once here for Cæsar, preferred the natural wits of Britain before the labored studies of the French. Nor is it for nothing that the grave and frugal Transylvanian²³⁰ sends out yearly from as far as the mountainous borders of Russia and beyond the Hercynian wilderness,²³¹ not their youth, but their staid men to learn our language and our theologic arts.

Yet that which is above all this, the favor and the love of Heaven, we have great argument to think in a peculiar manner propitious and propending²³² towards us. Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her as out of Sion²³³ should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of reformation to all Europe? And had it not been the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wycliffe²³⁴ to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Huss and Jerome,²³⁵ no, nor the name of Luther, or of Calvin, had been ever known; the glory of reforming all our neighbors had been completely ours. But now, as our obdurate clergy have with violence demeaned the matter, we are become hitherto the latest and the backwardest scholars of whom God offered to have made us the teachers.

Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, even to the reforming of reformation itself. What does he then but reveal himself to his servants, and, as his manner is, first to his Englishmen?²³⁶ I say as

²³⁰ From 1535 until 1689 *Transylvania* was independent, and in the seventeenth century it was aggressively Protestant.

²³¹ Hales points out that the name *Hercynian* survives in that of the Harz (mountains), but that ancient writers applied it vaguely to most of the mountains in the south and center of Germany.

²³² *propending*: inclining.

²³³ *Sion*: Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, standing for the city itself as the center of ancient Hebrew worship.

²³⁴ For Wycliffe and Huss see *CG*, n. 119.

²³⁵ Jerome of Prague (d. 1416), a strong supporter of Huss, studied and read Wycliffe's work at Oxford in 1398, and later became a devoted, though not perfectly loyal, supporter of Huss in Bohemia. He was burned at the stake.

²³⁶ As early as 1595 Milton's piously patriotic

his manner is, first to us, though we mark not the method of his counsels and are unworthy. Behold now this vast city, a city of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with his protection. The shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates²³⁷ and instruments of armed justice in defense of beleaguered Truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps,²³⁸ musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convictionment.

What could a man require more from a nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge? What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soul but wise and faithful laborers to make a knowing people, a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies? We reckon more than five months yet to harvest; there need not be five weeks, had we but eyes to lift up; the fields are white already.²³⁹ Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after

confidence in England's destiny was anticipated by the practical navigator, John Davis, in *The Worldes Hydrographical description*, "There is no doubt but that we of England are . . . by the eternal and infallible presence of the Lord predestined to be sent unto all these Gentiles in the sea of the Isles and famous kingdoms, there to preach the peace of the Lord: for are not we only set upon Mount Zion to give light to all the rest of the world." In *Miltons Anschauung im Staat, Kirche, und Toleranz* (Halle, Saale, 1934) Gertrude Hardeleand collects a number of interesting, later parallels to Milton's thought.

²³⁷ *plates*: armor of plate mail.

²³⁸ "Christ Jesus the Son of Glory and Righteousness hath lighted up such a candle in the midst of this Nation, and from hence in the midst of Europe, and the world, (as to Soul-freedom) that all the Devils of Hell shall never be able to extinguish," says *An Outrageous Outcry for Tithes . . . Answered* (1652), p. 28. This tract is anonymous.

²³⁹ Milton paraphrases Christ's words to the disciples whom he sent to preach to the Jews (John iv, 35).

knowledge and understanding which God hath stirred up in this city.

What some lament of, we rather should rejoice at, should rather praise this pious forwardness among men, to reassume the ill-deputed care of their religion into their own hands again. A little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and some grain of charity might win all these diligences to join and unite into one general and brotherly search after truth; could we but forego this prelatial tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men. I doubt not, if some great and worthy stranger should come among us, wise to discern the mold and temper of a people, and how to govern it, observing the high hopes and aims, the diligent alacrity of our extended thoughts and reasonings in the pursuance of truth and freedom, but that he would cry out as Pyrrhus²⁴⁰ did, admiring the Roman docility and courage, "If such were my Epirots, I would not despair the greatest design that could be attempted to make a church or kingdom happy."

Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries; as if, while the temple²⁴¹ of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms²⁴² and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilarities that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.

Let us, therefore, be more considerate

²⁴⁰ Pyrrhus (318-272 B.C.), King of Epirus, is said by Florus (*Epitome de gestis Romanorum* I, 18) to have paid this tribute to Roman discipline after his victory over Valerius Laevinus at Heraclea in 280 B.C.

²⁴¹ The stones for Solomon's temple were all shaped exactly for their positions at the quarry (I Kings vi, 7; but cf. the longer account in II Chron. ii, 5-9).

²⁴² Milton puns on the literal meaning of *schism*, cutting or division.

builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected. For now the time seems come, wherein Moses, the great prophet, may sit in heaven rejoicing to see that memorable and glorious wish of his fulfilled, when not only our seventy elders, but all the Lord's people, are become prophets. No marvel then though some men, and some good men too perhaps, but young in goodness, as Joshua²⁴³ then was, envy them. They fret and out of their own weakness are in agony, lest these divisions and subdivisions will undo us. The adversary again applauds and waits the hour. When they have branched themselves out, saith he, small enough into parties and partitions, then will be our time. Fool! he sees not the firm root, out of which we all grow, though into branches; nor will beware until he see our small divided maniples²⁴⁴ cutting through at every angle of his ill-united and unwieldy brigade. And that we are to hope better of all these supposed sects and schisms, and that we shall not need that solicitude, honest perhaps, though over-timorous, of them that vex in this behalf, but shall laugh in the end at those malicious applauders of our differences, I have these reasons to persuade me.

First, when a city shall be as it were besieged and blocked about, her navigable river infested, inroads and incursions round, defiance²⁴⁵ and battle oft rumored to be marching up even to her walls and suburb trenches; that then the people, or the greater part, more than at other times, wholly taken up with the study of highest and most important matters to be reformed, should be disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, even to a rarity and admiration, things not before discoursed or written of, argues first a singular goodwill, contentedness and confidence in your prudent foresight and safe government, Lords and Commons; and from thence de-

²⁴³ When Joshua was still one of Moses' "young men," he protested against certain prophets in the camp. "And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Num. xi, 29).

²⁴⁴ *maniple*: a platoon of Roman soldiers.

²⁴⁵ Milton remembered the situation in which he wrote *Sonn VIII*, when, after the battle of Edgehill in October, 1643, the Royalists advanced to the newly fortified suburbs of London.

rives itself to a gallant bravery and well grounded contempt of their enemies, as if there were no small number of as great spirits among us, as his was, who, when Rome was nigh besieged by Hannibal,²⁴⁶ being in the city, bought that piece of ground at no cheap rate whereon Hannibal himself encamped his own regiment.

Next, it is a lively and cheerful presage of our happy success and victory. For as in a body, when the blood is fresh, the spirits²⁴⁷ pure and vigorous not only to vital but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the pertest operations of wit and subtlety, it argues in what good plight and constitution the body is; so when the cheerfulness of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversy and new invention, it betokens us not degenerated nor drooping to a fatal decay, but casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pangs and wax young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue, destined to become great and honorable in these latter ages.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle muing²⁴⁸ her mighty youth, and kindling

²⁴⁶ Livy's *History* (XXVI, xi) tells the story of the damaging effect on the morale of Hannibal's Carthaginians who were besieging Rome when it was reported that the field where he had his headquarters had just been sold at "an unreduced price" inside Rome.

²⁴⁷ For the general conception see PL V, 484, n. In his Vanderbilt thesis W. B. Hunter quotes Thomas Walkington's *Optick Glasse of Humours* (1607), p. 49r & v, appositely to the effect that the demonic enemies of man's reason "do never take up their lodgings in a body happily attempted; there the spirits are subtle and of a pure constitution. . . . These spirits the more attenuated and purified they bee, the more that coelestiall particle of heavens flame, our reason."

²⁴⁸ Behind Milton's eagle are many stories of eagles flying in their old age straight into the zenith to singe their wings and burn the mist from their eyes in the sun's rays before plunging thrice into a fountain where, as T. H. White's translation of a twelfth century Bestiary in his *The Book of Beasts* (London, 1954), p. 105, has it, they are "renewed with a great vigor of plumage and splendor of vision." Because the word "renewed" is used in some similar passages and also in Psalm ciii, 5, as well as on scribal grounds, G. U. Yule

her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscales her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.

What should ye do then, should ye suppress all this flowery crop of knowledge and new light sprung up and yet springing daily in this city? Should ye set an oligarchy of twenty engrossers over it, to bring a famine upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing but what is measured to us by their bushel? Believe it, Lords and Commons, they who counsel ye to such a suppressing, do as good as bid ye suppress yourselves; and I will soon show how.

If it be desired to know the immediate cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a truer than your own mild and free and humane government. It is the liberty, Lords and Commons, which your own valorous and happy counsels have purchased us, liberty which is the nurse of all great wits. This is that which hath rarefied and enlightened our spirits like the influence of heaven;²⁴⁹ this is that which hath enfranchised, enlarged, and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves. Ye cannot make us now less capable, less knowing, less eagerly pursuing of the truth, unless ye first make yourselves, that made us so, less the lovers, less the founders of our true liberty. We can grow ignorant again, brutish, formal, and slavish, as ye found us; but you then must first become that which ye cannot be, oppressive, arbitrary, and tyrannous, as they were from whom ye have freed us. That our hearts are now more capacious, our thoughts more erected to the search and expectation of greatest and exactest things,

in *RES*, XIX (1943), 61-67—and R. S. Loomis in *MLN*, XXXII (1917), 437, have amended "muing" to "newing," but L. C. Martin justifies the reading of the text in *RES*, XXI (1945), 44, because "muing" (moult) implies renewal of youth to follow as a result.

²⁴⁹ Milton probably thought in astrological terms, as he did in describing the union of Adam and Eve: . . . all Heav'n

And happy Constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence.

(PL VIII, 511-3.)

is the issue of your own virtue propagated in us. Ye cannot suppress that unless ye reinforce an abrogated and merciless law, that fathers may despatch at will their own children. And who shall then stick closest to ye, and excite others? not he who takes up arms for coat and conduct,²⁵⁰ and his four nobles²⁵¹ of Danegelt.²⁵² Although I dispraise not the defense of just immunities, yet love my peace better, if that were all. Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

What would be best advised then, if it be found so hurtful and so unequal²⁵³ to suppress opinions for the newness, or the unsuitableness to a customary acceptance, will not be my task to say. I only shall repeat what I have learned from one of your own honorable number, a right noble and pious lord, who, had he not sacrificed his life and fortunes to the church and commonwealth, we had not now missed and bewailed a worthy and undoubted patron of this argument. Ye know him I am sure; yet I for honor's sake, and may it be eternal to him, shall name him, the Lord Brook.²⁵⁴ He, writing of episcopacy, and by the way treating of sects and schisms, left ye his vote,²⁵⁵ or rather now the last words of his dying charge (which I know will ever be of dear and honored regard with ye) so full of meekness and breathing charity that next to his last testament who bequeathed love and peace to his disciples,²⁵⁶ I cannot call to mind where I have read or heard words more mild and peaceful. He there exhorts us to hear with pa-

²⁵⁰ *coat and conduct*: an obsolete tax, originally levied to pay for clothing and transporting feudal troops in the king's service, and revived by Charles I in his effort to obtain funds without a parliamentary grant. cf. *Eikon*, Chap. i, n. 10.

²⁵¹ *noble*: a coin worth about six shillings and eight pence.

²⁵² *Danegelt*: originally, the money secured by taxation in England to buy off the Danish invaders of the Saxon kingdoms. Under the Norman kings it was established as a tax on land. King Charles's lawyers appealed to it in Hampden's case.

²⁵³ *unequal*: unjust, inequitable.

²⁵⁴ Lord Brooke's *A discourse of the nature of that episcopacie, which is exercised in England* (1641) is the work here mentioned. Milton was also influenced in his thought in *Areop* by Lord Brooke's *On the Nature of Truth* (1640).

²⁵⁵ *vote*: wish, expressed intention.

²⁵⁶ "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John xiv, 27).

tience and humility those, however they be miscalled, that desire to live purely, in such a use of God's ordinances as the best guidance of their conscience gives them, and to tolerate them, though in some disconformity to ourselves. The book itself will tell us more at large, being published to the world and dedicated to the parliament by him who, both for his life and for his death, deserves that what advice he left be not laid by without perusal.

And now the time in special is, by privilege, to write and speak what may help to the further discussing of matters in agitation. The temple of Janus²⁵⁷ with his two controversial faces might now not insignificantly be set open. And though all the winds of doctrine²⁵⁸ were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clearer knowledge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva,²⁵⁹ framed and fabricated²⁶⁰ already to our hands.

Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whenas we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence, to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures²⁶¹ early and late, that another order shall enjoin us to know nothing but by statute. When a man hath been laboring the hardest labor in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please,

²⁵⁷ *Janus*, the ancient Italian deity of gates and doors, had a sacred gateway in the Roman Forum which was always open in time of war—probably because it was supposed to make the armies that departed through it fortunate. In peace it was kept closed.

²⁵⁸ "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv, 14).

²⁵⁹ Cf. *CG*, n. 10.

²⁶⁰ *fabriced*: fabricated.

²⁶¹ An echo of Prov. viii, 11.

only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valor enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth.

For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty. She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious—those are the shifts and the defenses that error uses against her power. Give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus²⁶² did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes except her own,²⁶³ and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah²⁶⁴ did before Ahab, until she be adjured into her own likeness.

Yet is it not impossible that she may have more shapes than one. What else is all that rank of things indifferent, wherein Truth may be on this side, or on the other, without being unlike herself? What but a vain shadow else is the abolition of those ordinances, that handwriting nailed to the cross,²⁶⁵ what great purchase is this Christian liberty which Paul so often boasts of?²⁶⁶ His doctrine is, that he who eats, or eats not, regards a day, or regards it not, may do either to the Lord.²⁶⁷ How many other things might be tolerated in peace and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief stronghold of our hypocrisy to be ever judging one another. I fear yet this iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of a linen decency²⁶⁸ yet haunts us.

²⁶² The myth of *Proteus* as a prophet goes back to the *Odyssey* IV, 384-93.

²⁶³ Cf. Owen Feltham: "*Truth, in logical arguments, is like a Prince in a Masque; where are so many other presented in the same attire, that we know not which is he!*" (*Resolves* I, iv.)

²⁶⁴ For a time *Micaiah*, the prophet of God, agreed with the four hundred pagan prophets who gave Ahab the advice which led him into an attack on Ramoth-Gilead in which he lost his life. When he was adjured to speak the truth, he warned Ahab that the other prophets were inspired by "a lying spirit" (I Kings xxii, 23).

²⁶⁵ "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, . . . and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. ii, 14).

²⁶⁶ Gal. v, 1.

²⁶⁷ A paraphrase of Rom. xiv, 6.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Milton in *Of Reformation* girding at the

We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentals; and through our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the gripe of custom,²⁶⁹ we care not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all. We do not see that while we still affect by all means a rigid external formality, we may as soon fall again into a gross conforming stupidity, a stark and dead congealment of "wood, and hay, and stubble"²⁷⁰ forced and frozen together, which is more to the sudden degenerating of a church than many sub-dichotomies of petty schisms.

Not that I can think well of every light separation, or that all in a church is to be expected "gold and silver and precious stones." It is not possible for man to sever the wheat from the tares,²⁷¹ the good fish from the other fry; that must be the angels' ministry at the end of mortal things. Yet if all cannot be of one mind,—as who looks they should be?—this doubtless is more wholesome, more prudent, and more Christian, that many be tolerated, rather than all compelled. I mean not tolerated popery and open superstition, which, as it extirpates all religions and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate, provided first that all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and regain the weak and the misled; that also which is impious or evil absolutely, either against faith or manners,²⁷² no law can possibly permit, that intends not to unlaw itself; but those neighboring differences, or rather indifferences, are what I speak of, whether in some point of doctrine or of discipline, which though they may be many, yet need not interrupt "the unity of spirit,"

bishops' "pure linen, . . . palls and mitres, gold and gewgaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the flamen's vestry" (*C.E.* III, 2).

²⁶⁹ Cf. the attack on custom in *CG* I, v, and in the preface to *DDD*.

²⁷⁰ "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble" (I Cor. iii, 12).

²⁷¹ This is the lesson of the parable of the tares and the wheat in Matt. xiii, 24-30.

²⁷² Milton's position is parallel with that of Jeremy Taylor in *Liberty of Prophecy*. Section xix provides "that there may be no toleration of doctrine inconsistent with piety or the public good."

if we could but find among us the "bond of peace."²⁷³

In the meanwhile, if any one would write and bring his helpful hand to the slow-moving reformation which we labor under, if truth have spoken to him before others, or but seemed at least to speak, who hath so bejesuited us that we should trouble that man with asking license to do so worthy a deed? And not consider this, that if it come to prohibiting, there is not aught more likely to be prohibited than truth itself; whose first appearance to our eyes bleared and dimmed with prejudice and custom, is more unsightly and unplausible than many errors, even as the person is of many a great man slight and contemptible to see to.²⁷⁴ And what do they tell us vainly of new opinions, when this very opinion of theirs, that none must be heard but whom they like, is the worst and newest opinion of all others; and is the chief cause why sects and schisms do so much abound, and true knowledge is kept at distance from us; besides yet a greater danger which is in it. For when God shakes a kingdom²⁷⁵ with strong and healthful commotions to a general reforming, it is not untrue that many sectaries and false teachers are then busiest in seducing; but yet more true it is that God then raises to his own work men of rare abilities and more than common industry, not only to look back and revise what hath been taught heretofore, but to gain further and go on some new enlightened steps in the discovery of truth.

For such is the order of God's enlightening his church, to dispense and deal out by degrees his beam, so as our earthly eyes may best sustain it. Neither is God appointed²⁷⁶ and confined, where and out of what place these his chosen shall be first heard to speak: for he sees not as man sees, chooses not as man chooses, lest we should devote ourselves again to set places and assemblies and outward callings of men; planting our faith one while in the old Convocation²⁷⁷ house, and another while in

²⁷³ An echo of Ephes. iv, 3.

²⁷⁴ *to see to*: to look at.

²⁷⁵ "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come" (Hag. ii, 7).

²⁷⁶ *appointed*: bound by prescription. Cf.

Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father. (SA, 373.)

²⁷⁷ The Chapter-house at Westminster was the meeting-place of Laud's *Convocations*, while the

the Chapel at Westminster; when all the faith and religion that shall be there canonized,²⁷⁸ is not sufficient without plain conviction and the charity of patient instruction, to supple the least bruise of conscience, to edify the meanest Christian who desires to walk in the Spirit and not in the letter of human trust, for all the number of voices that can be there made; no, though Harry VII himself there, with all his liege tombs about him, should lend them voices from the dead to swell their number.

And if the men be erroneous who appear to be the leading schismatics, what withholds us but our sloth, our self-will, and distrust in the right cause, that we do not give them gentle meetings and gentle dismissions, that we debate not and examine the matter thoroughly with liberal and frequent audience; if not for their sakes, yet for our own? Seeing no man who hath tasted learning but will confess the many ways of profiting by those who, not contented with stale receipts, are able to manage and set forth new positions to the world. And were they but as the dust and cinders of our feet, so long as in that notion they may yet serve to polish and brighten the armory of Truth, even for that respect they were not utterly to be cast away. But if they be of those whom God hath fitted for the special use of these times with eminent and ample gifts—and those perhaps neither among the priests, nor among the pharisees²⁷⁹—and we in the haste of a precipitant zeal shall make no distinction, but resolve to stop their mouths because we fear they come with new and dangerous opinions (as we commonly forejudge them ere we understand them); no less than woe to us while, thinking thus to defend the Gospel, we are found the persecutors.

There have been not a few since the beginning of this Parliament,²⁸⁰ both of the

Assembly of Divines at Westminster was meeting in Henry VII's chapel.

²⁷⁸ *canonized*: formulated in canons, given the force of ecclesiastical law. *The Longer and Shorter Catechisms* are the best known of the results of the long sittings of the Westminster Assembly.

²⁷⁹ Milton thought of the traditional skill of the Hebrew *Pharisees* in law and of their unwillingness to meet Christ as an equal in their many encounters with him.

²⁸⁰ *this Parliament*: the Long Parliament, which first assembled on 3 November, 1640. Milton thought of England as embarking under its guidance upon an enterprise more heroic than the first ven-

presbytery and others, who by their unlicensed books, to the contempt of an Imprimatur, first broke that triple ice clung about our hearts, and taught the people to see day. I hope that none of those were the persuaders to renew upon us this bondage which they themselves have wrought so much good by contemning. But if neither the check that Moses gave to young Joshua,²⁸¹ nor the countermand which our Savior gave to young John,²⁸² who was so ready to prohibit those whom he thought unlicensed, be not enough to admonish our elders how unacceptable to God their testy mood of prohibiting is; if neither their own remembrance what evil hath abounded in the church by this let of licensing, and what good they themselves have begun by transgressing it, be not enough, but that they will persuade and execute the most Dominican²⁸³ part of the Inquisition over us, and are already with one foot in the stirrup so active at suppressing, it would be no unequal distribution, in the first place, to suppress the suppressors themselves; whom the change of their condition hath puffed up more than their late experience of harder times hath made wise.

And as for regulating the press, let no man think to have the honor of advising ye better than yourselves have done in that order²⁸⁴ published next before this, that no book be printed, unless the printer's and the author's name, or at least the printer's, be registered. Those which otherwise come forth, if they be found mischievous and libellous, the fire and the executioner will be the timeliest and the most effectual remedy that man's prevention can use. For this authentic Spanish policy of licensing books, if I have said aught, will prove the

tures of men on the sea, for which Horace said that hearts strengthened by *aes triplex* (triple brass) were needed.

²⁸¹ Cf. n. 243 above.

²⁸² When John reported having seen a man casting out devils in Jesus' name, "Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke ix, 50).

²⁸³ "The first that preached that doctrine was Dominic," says Taylor in the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Liberty of Prophecy*, "the founder of the begging order of friars, the friars-preachers; in memory of which the inquisition is intrusted only to the friars of his order" (Works, 1828, VII, cccxvi).

²⁸⁴ For the order of Parliament see the Bibliographical Note.

most unlicensed book itself within a short while; and was the immediate image of a Star Chamber²⁸⁵ decree to that purpose made in those very times when that Court did the rest of those her pious works, for which she is now fallen from the stars with Lucifer. Whereby ye may guess what kind of state prudence, what love of the people, what care of religion or good manners there was at the contriving, although with singular hypocrisy it pretended to bind books to their good behavior. And how it got the upper hand of your precedent order so well constituted before, if we may believe those men whose profession gives them cause to inquire most, it may be doubted there was in it the fraud of some old patentees and monopolizers in the trade of bookselling; who under pretense of the poor in their Company not to be defrauded, and the just retaining of each man his several copy (which God forbid should be gainsaid) brought divers glosing colors²⁸⁶ to the House, which were indeed but colors, and serving to no end except it be to exercise a superiority over their neighbors; men who do not, therefore, labor in an honest profession to which learning is indebted, that they should be made other men's vassals. Another end is thought was aimed at by some of them in procuring by petition this Order, that having power in their hands, malignant books might the easier scape abroad, as the event shows.

But of these sophisms and elench²⁸⁷ of merchandise I skill not. This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident; for what magistrate may not be misinformed and much the sooner, if liberty of printing be reduced into the power of a few; but to redress willingly and speedily what hath been erred,²⁸⁸ and in highest authority to esteem a plain advertisement²⁸⁹ more than others have done a sumptuous bribe, is a virtue, honored Lord and Commons, answerable to your highest actions, and whereof none can participate but greatest and wisest men.

²⁸⁵ For the Court of *Star Chamber* see the Bibliographical Note. Cf. PL VII, 131.

²⁸⁶ Cf. CG, n. 203.

²⁸⁷ *elench*: "a fallacious answer to a sophistical question" (White).

²⁸⁸ *what hath been erred*: what mistakes have been made. Milton's construction is a Latinism.

²⁸⁹ *advertisement*: intimation, notification.