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?

Epist. 2, Thucydides, The Suppliant.

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 (1642), 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 advantage 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 "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

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OF
Mr. JOHN MILTON

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LONDON,
Printed in the Year, 1644.


They who to states 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 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; 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

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 "invisible States" of the devils' parliament in PL. II, 187; States General, the ancient parliament of France, consisting of clergy, nobility, and the third estate.

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, 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; whereas 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 free from such a steep disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a Roman recovery; it will be attributed first, as is most due, to the strong assistance of God our deliverer, next to your faithfulness 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 preface of your laudable deeds and such a long obbligation 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 wholly worth praise; next, when greatest likelihoods are brought

8 passion: enthusiasm (for writing on the subject of Areopagus).

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.

8 obbligation: obligation.


11 civil: civilized; polite. Cf. its use as synonymous with "gentleman," as in S 147.

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 (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 courier as, in the Danes Masacre had sure been slaine. Saire (IV, 23-24)

18 Sir: Isocrates. Cf. the Bibliographical Note to Areopagus.


20 Dion Chrysostomus (the "Golden-mouthed") a private orator, counsel the Rhodians against a former edict; and I abound with other like examples, which set to 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 the fifty degrees of northern latitude, 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 repeat 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 the love of truth which ye eminently profess, and that uprightness 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 shall be thereto appointed. For that part which preserves justly every man's copy to himself, or provides for the poor, I touch not, only wish they be not made pretenses to abuse and persecute honest and painful men, who offend not in either of those particulars. But that other clause of licensing books, which we thought had died with his

was born in Pruss but was famous as a spokesman of republican ideals in Rome in speeches against the Emperor Vespasian to restore the Republic and condemn the tyranny of Domitian. He was influential in placing the "worthy emperor" Titus (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 any measure of names standing on public monuments to make room for those of contemporary public men (Thirty-first Discurso, 8).

14 Cf. Memos, 38, PL IX, 45, and CG, n. 168.

15 copy: copyright.

16 pantiful: diligent, willing to take pains.
brother quadragesimal¹⁸ and matrimonial²⁰ when the prelates expires, I shall now at

tend with such a homily as shall lay be
tween ye, and to those whom ye shall be lost to own; nor, I think, is

to be thought in general of reading, what

ever sort the books be; and that this Order

avails nothing to the suppressing of scan-
dalous, seditious, and libellous books, which

were mainly intended to be suppressed.

Last, that it will be proper to the discour-
gagement of all learning and the stop of

truth, not only by discrediting and blunt-

ing our abilities in what we know already,

but by hindering and cropping the dis-

cover that might be yet further made both

in religious and civil wisdom.

21 quodagizal: pertaining to the forty days of

Lent. The Puritans had relaxed the tradi-
tional, Anglican restrictions on diet dur-

ing Lent.

2² In Hirelings (p. 868) Milton approved

Parliament’s act securing the “civil liberty of

marriage; transferring the riveting, and register-
ing of marriage to the civil magistrates.”

2³ Several parallels to Milton’s thought can be

found—one of them perhaps likely to have influ-

enced the present passage than Bacon’s saying in the

Advancement (W. A. Wright’s ed.,


wits and knowledge remains in books, exempted

from the wrong of time and capable of perpetu-

al renovation. Neither are they fadly to be called im-

ages, because they generate still, and cast their seeds

in the minds of others, provoking and causing in-

finite actions and opinions in succeeding ages.”

2⁴ 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, 92-

26) were not but its slayer, Cadmus, King of

Thebes in Boeotia.

⁵ 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

life beyond life.²² “Tis true, no age can

restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no

great loss; and revolutions of ages do not

often recover the loss of a rejected truth,

for the want of which worlds are not the worse.

We should be wary, therefore, what

persecution we raise against the living lab-

rors of public men, how we spill that

seasoned life of man preserved and stored

up in books; since we see a kind of homi-
cide 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,²³ the breath of reason it-

self, slays an immortality rather than a life.²⁴

But lest I should be condemned of intro-
ducing license, while I oppose licensing, I

refuse not the pains to be so much histori-
cal as will serve to show that what hath been

done by ancient and famous common-

wealths against this disorder, till the very

time that this project of licensing crept out

of fashion, 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 or heretical, or libel-

lous. Thus the books of Protagoras²⁵ were

28 Cf. Henry Vaughan, To his Books:

Bright books! the perspective to our weak sights:

The clear projections of discerning lights.

Burning and shining Thoughts; man’s postume

day:

The track of fled souls, and their Milkie-way.

The dead alive and buie, the still voice

Of living’s voice; I. 53, 172.²⁹

2⁹ Cf. PL III, 713–19, n.

²⁵ Milton referred not only to the Spanish In-

quisition, but he also said, in 1635 and 1660

took strong measures against heresy in Holland in

the sixteenth century, but also to the whole in-

quisitorial movement which was first instigated by

the Council of Trent in 1229.

²⁶ Protagoras (? 480–411 B.C.) of Abdera, in

Thrace, was the first of the great sophists or pro-

fessors of诡辩家, who was put to death by

the Council of the Lycurgus.

²⁷ The tradition recommended Aris-

tophanes’ comedies to Dionysus (the Elder?),

Tyrant of Syracuse from 372 to 365 B.C. and from

348 to 344 B.C. He was the first to mark the short, ancient life

of Aristophanes which is to be found in the Tench-

ned edition of his plays.

⁸⁸ monely known and may be excused, if holy

Chrysostom,²⁴ as is reported, nightly studied

so much the same author and had the art of mimicry in the

style of a rousing sermon.

That other leading city of Greece, Laced-

emnon, considering that Lycurgus²⁶ their

lawgiver was so addicted to elegant learn-

ing as to have been the first that brought out

of his scattered works of Homer, and

sent the poet’s Thesmophoria,²⁷ which was

to prepare and mollify the Spartan surliness

with his smooth songs and odes, the better

to plant among them law and civilty, it is

to be wondered how museless²⁸ and unbookish

they were, minding nought but the feats of

war. The writing of books among them, for

they disliked all that was written but their

own laconic apothegms and took a slight

occasion to chase Archilochus²⁸ 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

2⁴ An interest in Aristophanes on the part

of John Chrysostom (347–407 A.D.) would seem note-
worthy to usarians who hold that this bishop

(according to Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical

History VI, xvi) was banished from his see for

profane literary indulgences in the study of Hesiod’s

Eudoxia and the “common plays and shows” that

he approved. (Meredith Hanmer’s translation,

(1859) In the first printed edition of Aristophanes’ plays

(1498) “Alde Manuzio says that St. John

Chrysostom was so fond of them (that) he con-

stantly read 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.”

2⁵ Lord, E. "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 persuasions to obedi-

ence and unanimity, and . . . they softly in-

duced both the masses and the nobility; and

often from the animosities which then prevailed,

and united them in zeal for . . . virtue.”

2⁶ Archilochus (early seventh century B.C.) “took
delight in mimicking the manners and the

art of the satiric and comic drama.” (H. J. Rose,

A Handbook of Greek Literature (1922), p. 80) and may have ear-

ned his traditional banishment from Sparta for his supposedly licen-

tious verses or for his poem boasting of his
cowardice in throwing away his shield in a retreat.
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des affirms in *Andromache* that their women were all chaste. Thus much may give us light. It is true that books were prohibited among the Greeks.

The Romans also, for many ages trained up only to a military roughness, resembling most the Lacedaemonian guise, knew of learning little but what their twelve tabs taught them, with their augers and flamen taught them in religion and law, so unacquainted with other learning that when Carneades and Critolaus, coming ambassadors to Rome, took thereby occasion to give the city a taste of their philosophy, they were not treated with less respect by a man than Cato the Censor, who moved it in the senate to dismiss them speedily, and to banish all such Attic babblers out of Italy. Thus Cicero, the noblest senators withstood him and his old Sabine auctoritas; 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 the popularity of the first Latin comedians, had filled the city with all the borrowed scenes of Menander and Philemon.

Then began to be considered there also what was to be done to libellous books and authors; for Naxius was quickly cast into prison for writing his *Death of Menander* by the tribunes upon his recantation; we read also that libels were burnt, and the makers punished by Augustus. 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 Lucretius was well punished, . . . for when he was past three-score years old, he was taken with an extreme desire to go to school again, and to learn the Greek tongue, to the perturbation of books, which doth well demonstrate that his former career of the Grecian learning was rather an affected grace than a according to the inward sense of his own opinion.

Scipio the Younger (178—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.

Naxius produced the first of his satirical plays about 255 B.C. He was imprisoned for attacking Scipio the young, and the aristocratic party in his plays and obliged to recant. He died in exile in Utica (1703 A.D.).

Plautus (252—184 B.C.) was the most popular of Roman writers of comedy.

Menander (142—31 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 modeled.

Philemon (1361—263 B.C.) was a rival of Menander. Only a few short fragments of his plays survive, but of his 28 as sources which Plautus followed closely in his *MERCATO* and *TRINIMUM*.

Tacitus declared (Annals I, lxxxiii) 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.

So in the Epistle Dedicator to *The Liberty of Prophesying* Jeremy Taylor quoted Tacitus' *Agricola*.

The practice of the Romans was that of the 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 Sophists philosophical. In fact he was a young man of Rome. "For his blasphemy against learning," said Bacon in the *Advancement I*, ii, 91 p. 17, ... he without impugnment versifies his Epicureim to Memmus, 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 plausiness of Lucullus, or Catullus, or Flaccus, by any order passed upon.

And for matters of state, the story of Titus Livius, thought it extolled that part which Pompey held, was not therefore suppressed by Octavius Cæsar of the other faction. But that Naos was by him banished in 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 tyrannny in the Roman empire, that we may not marvel, if not so often as bad good books were silenced. I shall therefore dem to have been large enough in producing what among the ancients was punishable to write, save only which, all arguments were free to treat on.

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

Pratero in 58 B.C.). The belief that Cicero edited Lucullus, (139—58 B.C.), for St. Jerome in his additions to Eusebius' *Chronicon* and is hardly consistent with Cicero's attacks on Epicurus in the *tu sculeturn Disputationes II* and III, and in the *De fmmibus I* and II.

Lucullus (148—103 B.C.) is usually recognized as the founder of Roman satire.

Pliny the Elder and the *forma of Cato* (87—47 B.C.) were some lampoons of Caesar and his partisans.

Quintus Hortensius Flaccus (Horace, 65 B.C.) hardly challenged censorship of any kind by his Saturae.

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.

Naso: Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) was banished to Tomis 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 Torni in 15 B.C.

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It is not found to have been more severe than what was formerly publicly practiced. The books of those whom they sought to be book-obsess were examined, refuted, and condemned in the general councils, and not till then were prohibited, or burnt, by authority of the emperor. As for the writings of heathen authors, unless they were plain invasions against the Christian religion or a Porphyry (135—205 A.D.) and Proclus (412—485 A.D.) met with no interdict that can be cited till about the year 400 in a Carthaginian Council where bishops themselves were forbid to read the books of Gentiles, but heresies they might read: while others long before them, on the contrary, had been burned on the word 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 Paulo, the great unmasker of the Trentine Councils. After which time the Popes of Rome, engaging what they

In the following survey of the attempts of some of the general councils and popes to suppress books (214—1357 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 Cicero is one of the few destroyed by order of the emperor Theodosius.

Proclus (412—485 A.D.) was a lifelong enemy of Cicero.

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.

The Council of Trent (1545—1563) met frequently between December 1545 and December 1563, and ended its efforts to reconcile Protestant with Catholic Europe by reaffirming most of the great truths of the Catholic Church and by affirming that in matters of faith and morals the tradition of the Church ranked with the Bible as an authority. In demurring Sarpi's statement at 1563 as its "unmasker," Milton does not misrepresent the spirit of his History, which was first published in 1619.
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 sought in Martin V, they by his Bull, not only prohibited, but was the first that excommunicated the reading of heretical books; for about that time Wycliffe and Huss growing terrible, were they who first drove the papal court to a stricter policy of prohibiting. Which cause Leo Xth and his successors followed, until the Council of Trent and the Spanish Inquisition, en-gendering together, brought forth, or perfected those catalogues and expurgating indexes that rake through the entrails of many an old good author with a violation 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 in all their books, whether in print, tablet, 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 gluton friars. For example: Let the Chancellor Cini be pleased to see if in this present work be contained any that may withstand the printing. Vincent Rabbata, Vicar of Florence. I have seen this present work, and find nothing atwart the Catholic faith and good manners: in witness whereof I have put my hand. Nicolo Cini, Chancellor of Florence. Attending the precedent relation, it is allowed that this present work of

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

65 Cl. CG, n. 159.

66 Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) was Pope from 1513 to 1521.

67 Sireuck notes that the Inquisition was re-organized by a bull of Paul III on July 21, 1542.

68 The first index Excerptarius was issued by Paul IV in 1559.

Davanzati may be printed.

Vincent Rabbata, &c.

It may be printed, July 15.

Friar Simon Mompej d'Amedea, Chancellor of the holy office in Florence. Sure they have a conceit, if he of the bottomless pit had not long before brok'ed his very body, to the church would he bar him down. They fear their next design will be to get into their custody the licensing of that of which they say Claudius intended but went not through with. Vouch-safe 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 Nicola Rodolphi, Master of the holy Palace. Sometimes five Imprimaturs are seen together, dialoguewise, in the piazza of one titlepage, complimenting and ducsing each to another 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 paper. These are the pretty responsories, these are the dear antiphonies that so bewitch'd of late their prelates and their claries with the godly echo they made; and besotted us to the gay imitation of a lordly Imprimatur, one from Lambeth House, another from the

The little book On the English Schism (Lo Scisma d'Inghilterra) of Giovanni (1550-1606) was reissued in Florence in 1638 in 2h edition which may have been published while Milton was there, and which has been identified by A. Allodioli in Giovanni Milton e l'Italia, p. 82, as having been used by him in writing Areop. Cl. n. 11C above.

8 The Milton text the following was printed in the margin: Quo venire dare flautum crepitaque verbo in conne omnibus. Sustinet in Claudio,

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

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

11 Imprimatur: let it be printed," the order stamped on manuscripts which are permitted by ecclesiastical authority to be sent to the press. "To the spine of the book, or to Alcen's Zeal, as the Z in the script that wiped off—has been applied to manuscripts unworthy of publication since Sustenius helped to popularize the expression in the Latin Rheest, &c.

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

west end of Paul's, so aptly Romanizing that the word of command still was set down in Latin; as if the learned grammatici-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 that an author of so great an English, and the language of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements of liberty, will not easily find servile letters enough to spell such a dictatorial presumptuous English.

And thus ye have the inventors and the original of book-lenapping rapped up drawn as long as a pedagogue. 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 Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any great man's offspring, but if it proved a monster, who denies that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the sea? But that a book, in worse condition than a pecan soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be born to the world and undergo yet in darkness the judgment of Rhadamanth, and his colleagues, ere it can pass the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious inquietude, provoked and troubled at the first entrance of reformation, sought out new limbs and

13 St. Paul's is the cathedral church of the Bishop of London. Cl. The Bibliographical Note above.

14 In Metamorphoses IX, 285-295, Ovid tells the story of Juno (Juno) to Alcmena, deceiving the goddess of childbirth cross-legged beside her, muther-ering 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.

15 According to Plato in Gorgias, 524a, the Greek king Rhadamantus, together with Minos and Aegeus, went on a journey to the Underworld to see hell. The lock of hell, such as the limbus purgatorum or limbo of babies, and limbus purum or limbo of the patriarchs, who were delivered in Christ's harrowing of hell. In RES, XVIII (1942),

new hellst wherein they might include our books also within the number of their damned. And this was the rare morse so officiously struck up, and so ill-favorably imitated by our inquisitorious bishops and the attendant minoritas, chaplains. That ye like not now these most pure words, is the puritans no wonder, 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 Lullius ever knew to sublimate any good use or use of an alchemy. Let 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 propounded, 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. Harrell compares Pl. III, 440-7, and notes that "the sombre associations of the word might easily come from Virgil's "lenus" or "hideus," translated into English as "Hades, . . . where the souls of infants weep, and with them are the suicides." Milton refers to the charge which Jeremy Taylor repeated in his Dis-sentance from Popery, II, vii. "Of the Expository Indexes 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 Irish themselves, or threshold to Hades, . . . where the souls of infants weep, and with them are the suicides." Milton refers to the charge which Jeremy Taylor repeated in his Dis-sentance from Popery, II, vii. . .
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. 

So greatly did he wish that he be held to be drenched of Hellenic learning; and thought it a persecution more undermining, and secretly decaying the Church, than the open cruelty of Decius57 or Diocletian.58 And perhaps it was the same politic drift that the devil whipped St. Jerome59 in a Lenten dream, for reading Cicero; or which was intended by the 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 Ciceronianism, and had chastised the reading, not the vanity, it had been plainly partial; first to correct him for grave Cicero, and not for scurril Plautius, 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; insomuch that Basilius60 says that the very whole of the epistle to the Romans61 might be made of Margites; a sportful poet not now extant writ by Homer; and why not then of Morgante?62 An Italian romance much to the same purpose?

But if it be agreed we shall be tried by visions, there is a vision recorded by Eusebius, far ancienter than this tale of Jerome to the nun Eustochium, and, besides, has nothing of a fever in it. Dionysius Alexanderius 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 presbytery 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 it is) 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 assoiled 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.”

And he might have added another remarkable saying of the same author: “To the pure, all things are pure.”63 Not only meats and drinks, but all kind of knowledge, the knowledge of the things of God, commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the discretion of every grown man. And therefore, when he himself tabled the Jews from heaven, that omer which was every man’s daily portion of bread, and which he had 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 command should grow so fast upon those things which heretofore were governed only by exhortation.

57 Cf. Educ. n. 12. 
58 The Socrates of Moser’s chapter tells the story of Julia’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, Justin. 
59 Decius was emperor from 249 until 251. 
60 The persecutions under Decius and Diocletian, who reigned from 284 to 305, were particularly severe. 
61 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 to Virginia. 
62 Milton’s interpretation of it goes back as far as Gratian’s Decretum, Prima Pars, Distinctio XXXVII, vii, where it is joined to the story of Ciceron’s being summoned to his heavenly judge by asking whether clegyermen ought not to have skill in secular literature. 
63 The Bodleian manuscript of the Ecclesiastical History (IV, xxi) of Socrates Scholastici as preparing for a career as a Christian apologist by reading papyrus rolls containing pagan philosophy in Athens in his youth. Milton is quoting Basili’s The Right Use of Greek Literature (Palladino’s Ed. p. 102). 
64 The mock-heroic romance of Luigi Pulci (1343-1387), 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. 
65 Milton quoted loosely from the summary of Dionysius’ (Bishop of Alexandria, 245-65) letters to Philemon in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History VII, viii, where it is joined to the story of Ciceron’s being summoned to his heavenly judge by asking whether clegyermen ought not to have skill in secular literature. 
66 John Selden (1584-1654) published his De Jure Naturae et Gentium (with Discipulum) in 1646. His portrait, which is parrying Selden’s Preface. Cf. n. 59 above. 
67 The omer was the measure of manna which Moses commanded the Israelites, Exod. xvi, 16, to ration to the Israelites daily. The account lays stress on the abundance of the supply.
AРЕОРАГИТАСИЯ

Solomon²⁸ informs us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but neither he nor any 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,²⁹ '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 approved: 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 Psyche³⁰ 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 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.

As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continuance of life without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider wise 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 warfarer³¹ Christian.

²⁸ Eccles. xii, 12. Mark vii, 15: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering in can defile him: but the things which come out of him are those that defile the man."
²⁹ The story is found in Acts xix, 19.
³⁰ Milton would know the story of Psyche best in The Golden Ass of Apuleius [V-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.
³¹ Again in CD I, x, Milton reaffirms this interpretation of the meaning of the fall of man in Gen. iii. 18.
³² warfaring, the reading of the first edition, I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbred, that never saluted man, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland 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 which is extinguished in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spen-
³³ Seraphic Doctor, in his Summa contra Gentiles, the greatest medieval compendium of Christian doctrine.
³⁴ Solomon's recommendation of 'mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to abide under his labour in the days of his life.' (Ecc. viii, 15) was often compared with the supposedly similar advice of Epicurus. Cf. CG, n. 265.
³⁵ It is a tradition of Aristotle that when he wrote the poem, 'a philosophical, a religious, or a moral.' When the settled habits of character fail to do so. But in many passages Milton disapproves of virtue which is not a matter of human experience, and claimed his admiration for the kind that is constantly won "with dust and heat." Cf. n. 150 below.
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 con-
tagent members of the Christian faith 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 Ca-
thay119 eastward, or of Canada westward, while our Spanish licensing gags the Eng-
lish press never so severely.

But, on the other side, that infection which is from books of controversy in re-
ligion, is more doubtful and dangerous to the learned than to the ignorant; and yet
those books must be permitted untouched by the licensor. It will be hard to instance
where any ignorant man hath been ever seduced by papistical book in English, un-
less 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

Best of all, few how many have been corrupted by studying the com-
ments 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 (1492–1556), by practising a kind of ostentatious luxury and blackmail and by ex-
ploring 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 Bacon, 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, 1903), Vol. I. The story of his account on his cynical
betrayal of his niece Anne Boleyn to Henry when the royal suspicion of her chastity was first aroused.
119 The story of the nickname is told in Davenant's Schism, p. 66 (see n. 69 above), as Harris Fitchett
has noted in JEGP, XLVII (1948), 387–9.

121 Cf. the Apostle Philip's conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch by interpreting Isaiah to him (Acts
8:26–40).
122 The school which Robert de Sorbon founded for poor students at the University of Paris in 1525
soon gave its name to the entire institution, which was the center of Scholastic teaching for four cen-
turies.

123 The allusion to Arminius (1560–1609), the Dutch opponent of the extreme Calvinistic belief
merely by the pursuing of a nameless dis-
course written at Delft, which at first he

2 Solomon128 and of our Savior,129 not vouch-
safe 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
workings, minerals, well may be exorted to for-
bear, 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
prevented it. But of all that, we shall
thus much hath been explaining. See the
ingenuity129 of Truth, who, when she gets a
free and willing hand, opens herself faster
than the pace of method and discourse
and 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 that it might be answered
that this is a piece of prudence lately dis-
covered. To which I return that as it was
a thing slight and obvious to think on, so
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-

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128 Solomon is the name given to a story
about Predestination, in DDD II, iii, that
Milton was hardly in sympathy with him at this
time. Arminius was Professor of Theology at Ley-
den, and was said to have said against Calvin's
position by the wording of one or more
obscure Dutch clergymen to whom he was asked,
in his official capacity, to reply

129 caution: uncertain, tricky.
130 In the Nicomachean Ethics X, viii, 3, Aristotle
acknowledges, in closing his great work, that

discourses on ethics have no effect on ordinary man-

129 The wisdom is before him that hath understanding
and the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

130 "Give not that which is holy unto dogs,
neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt.
7:6).

131 With my kiss, my soul beside it

132 The voice "do without, lack.
133 qualify: fix the quality or nature of a drug
by proper compounding.
134 Preceded by "got ahead of" other person
in arriving somewhere, or—as here—
in doing something.
135 ingenuity: ingenuousness, liberality.

126 "Wisdom is before him that hath understanding,
and the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the
case, and are not found" (Prov. 2:5).

137 Solomon thought of epigrams like Plato's to
Agathon as it is found in the Third Book of
The Symposium. Shelley paraphrased its

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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, nor any dominated 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 regulat all other things of like importance to cor rupt the mind, that single endeavor they knew would be but a fond 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. 188 There must be licensing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth, but what by their allowance shall be thought honest. 189 Thus was provided for. 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 in the silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also, and the balconies must be thought on; there are shrewd books, with dangerous frontispieces; 180 set to sale; who shall prohibit

185 fond: ineffectual, foolish.
186 Cf. Roger Ascham's expression of that "kinde of Musick intituled by the Doriens," because both Plato and Aristotle thought "it to be very fyt for the studie of vertue & learning, because in that lyke and much smoke, as they shoulde condigne yor stomakkes, to attempte manelye matters." Ascham recalled also that "they both agree, that [that] Musike vaoed amonges the Lydians is very ill for yong men." (Ascham's English Work), edited by W. A. Wright, Cambridge, 1904, p. 123.) 187 Cf. L. Ill, 94.
188 honest: honorable, decent.
189 The passage in the Latus (800-802) which Milton quotes is interesting. The English is that a selection from the countless existing songs of the Greeks shall be made by mature judges—men not under fifty—to make the selection, and for which he is legislating shall have no music or poetry which does not rightly praise the gods and the great dead.

190 frontispieces: fronts or decorated pages at the condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evil, it is 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 unconstrained, laws of justice, charity, religion and civil nurture, which Plato there mentions as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, 191 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 riper ages, were to be under pittance 194 and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gravenery 195 to be sober, just, or continent?

Methinks 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; 196 he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. 197 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 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 be reave 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 stead. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scaring 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 often, but weekly—that continued court-libels stir up the silly breed, and by the sporty printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispersed among us, for all that licensing can do? Yet this is the prime service a

188 Milton refers to the Mercurius Adulcis or Court Mercury, which was published 1643-1645 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 proscrible all scandalous and unlicensed books already printed and divulged (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 of 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, that the commonwealth of learning be not damned. 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, though this Order may be exact and not deficient, ye must reform it perfectly according to the model of Trent and Seville, which I know ye ahhor to do.

Yet, though ye should descend to this, which God forbid, the Order still would be but fruitless, unless that end whereunto ye meant it. If to prevent sects and schisms, who is so unread or so unchaste 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 homester, the wiser, the chastier, since all the inquisition rigor that hath been executed upon books.

Another reason whereby to make it plain that this Order will miss the end it seeks, consider by the quality of men it is ought to be in every licensor. 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, 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 unpleasing journey-work, a greater loss of time levied upon his head, that the perpetual reader of unchosen books and pamphlets, ofttimes 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 he that values time and his own studies, or is but of a sensible nostril, should be able to endure.

In this one thing I crave leave of the present licensors to be pardoned for so thinking; I thinking it 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 censor, we may easily foresee what kind of licensor we are to expect hereafter, either ignorant, imperious, and remiss, or basely pecuniary. This is what I had to show, wherein this Order cannot conducel to that end whereof it bears the intention.

I lastly proceed from the good, it can...
tution, under the correction of his patriarchal licensor to blot or alter what precisely accords not with the hidebound humor which has been everywhere. 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 wardrobe of a man. I know nothing of the licensor, but that I have his own hand here for his arrogance; who shall warrant me his judgment?"

"The state, sir," replies the stationer, but has a quick return: "The state shall be my governors, but not my critics; they may be mistaken in the choice of a licensor as easily as this licensor may be mistaken in an author; this is some common stuff; and he might add from Sir Francis Bacon, "That such authorized books are but the language of the times." For though a licensor 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 noted 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 venturous edge, uttered in the height of zeal, and who knows whether it might not be the dictum of a divine spirit, yet not suitting with every low, deject humor of their own, though it were Knox himself, the reformer 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 licensor. 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.

Yet if these things be not resented seriously and timely by them who have the remedy in their power, but that such iron-mold as these shall have authority to gnaw out the choicest periods of exquistest books, and to commit such a treacherous fraud upon mankind as would be an instance of the remembrance of a most hapless race of 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, stealadundence, 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 underlying spirit of sedition. If I were not 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 unconcurrent without their manual stamp. Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolized and traded in by tickets and by rialtanum and an uncompromising opponent of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Since Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland suffered some mutilation in its edition of 1654, Knox may be against it, but also may be the great jurist, Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), whose Institutes were also mutilated when their publication was authorized by Parliament.

"Iron-mold: stains 'on doth, caused by rusty iron or ink." (Webster)

"So in the Preface to Elken Milton took advantage of the remittance of the commercial monopolies which Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I had increased, and he made them the basis of his metaphor of 'religion' brought almost to 'a kind of trading monopoly.'

"Stickes: 'official warrants or permissions of any kind.' (O.E.D.)

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

"Coulter: the iron 'foot' or point of the plough.

"Difident: lacking in confidence, suspicious.

"Pipe: a tube for taking medicine."
grew old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. He 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 in speaking 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 questioner had endeared to the Sicilians, was not more by them imputed to tune against Verres, than by 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 and confound them, and 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 passions, who were hardened by the nominal prisoner of the Inquisition from the publication of his evidence for the Copernican theory in 1631 until his death, he was not inaccessible to visitors. In *Studies in Milton* (Land, 1919), S. B. Lijgren grossly overstated the probability that Milton would not have had access to him. Li- ligren's effort to cast doubt upon this and other statements about the Italian journey which Milton makes elsewhere, especially in *Def. 2*, has been refuted by W. S. Land, *Studies in English Literature*, 2 (1922), 272-9; by Walther Fischer in *English Studies*, 52 (1918), 390-6, and by B. A. Wright in *MLR*, XXXVI (1933), 308-14. Cf. *Eikon*, Chap. xxvii, n. 2.

144 While serving as questor in Sicily in 75 B.C., Cicero won such confidence that the Sicilians asked him to preside over the Roman forces from that province as praetor in 73-71 B.C. 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.

at a mere unlicensed pamphlet will after a while be afraid of every conventicle, and a while after will make a conventicle of every 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 licensor, must needs give cause of doubt and discourage-ment to all learned and religious men. Who cannot but discern the fineness of this politic drift, and who are the contrivers: that while bishops were to be bailed down, 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 voided 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 crust of truth must run no more oil; liberty of printing must be enthralled again. In a prelatical commission twenty, the press of the people multiplied; and, which is worse, the freedom of learning must groan again, and to her old letters: all this the parliament yet sitting. Although their own late arguments and defenses against the prelates might represent these means which obstruct violence acts 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 witches enhances its authority, saith the Viscount St. Albans," that kind of true faith which they profess to make an absolute necessity for the peace of the world; the same kind of true faith which the inquisition will set up against all other sects."

157 It is echoing Psalm lxxx., 11, but he is probably also recalling that Bacon said that "the truth is, that time seemeth to be of the nature of a current, to wash down us, that which is light and blown up, and sinketh and drowneth that which is weighty and solid." (Ad- duction I, v, 2, p. 39.)

158 So in TR Milton defines heresy as "a religion taken up and believed from the traditions of men," and contrasts "imPLICIT faith" with "unimplicit" faith (Cf. W.).

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

160 presenators: persons dissenting religious (and presumably Protestant) faith.

161 *Loreto*: the shrine near Ancora in Italy where, since 1604, pilgrims have attested their faith in the miraculous translation there by angels of the Santa Casa or house of Christ's residence in Nazareth.

162 mysteries: trades, skills, in the sense in which the term was applied to the trades which won Linacre's guilds.

163 skill: contrivance.
would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbors in that. What does he, therefore, but resolves to turn himself out some factor200 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 ad-heres, 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 more within himself, but is become a di-

...
wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon, with his consort, and her name Osiris, took the virgin Truth, heaved 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 limbs by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, or ever shall do, till her Master's second coming. He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall unfold that immortal feature of loving and perfecting virtue. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity, forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred savior.

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, and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs runs into each other in a place wherein 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 unkocking of a priest, the unmasking of a bishop, and the removing him from off the Presbyterian shoulders that will make us a happy nation; no, other things as great in the church, and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zwingleus and Calvin hath beaconed us up to, that we are stark blind.

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissent from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance that causes the disturbing. The vacant, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those disscivered pieces which are not only the perfection of poetic perfection, but 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 wherever ye are, and wherever ye are the governors; a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and lively spirit, for want of a true, 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 Pythagoras and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old philosophy of this island. And that wise and civil Roman, Julius Agricola, who governed

economic: pertaining to household management.

181 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 Mission, "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 find and reunite as his was.

182 obsequies: services or acts of veneration.

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

185 Milton's interest in Pythagoras is best illustrated by his poem "Profection" and "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 find and reunite as his was.

186 obsequies: services or acts of veneration.

187 combust: burnt up. In astrology the term applied to any thing coming within eight and a half degrees of the sun.
knowledge and understanding which God hath stirred up in this city.

What some lament of, we rather should rejoice. To raise 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 diligence to join and unite into one general and brotherly search after truth; could we but forego this prelatical 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 know 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 Pyrrhus did, admiring the Roman docility and courage, "If such were my Epipsiors, 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 temple246 of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others that there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms247 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 continued church as 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 dissimilitudes 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 builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected. For now the time seems come, where there must be a losing, the building up of the church rejoice 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 Joshua,248 then was, envied 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 dissensions, parties and sects; it 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 maniples249 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 vex in this behalf, but shall laugh in the end at these malicious auditors of our differences, I have these reasons to persuade me.

First, when a city shall be as it were besieged and blockaded, her navigable river infested, inroads and incursions round, defiance250 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 discussed or written of, argues first a singular goodwill, contentedness and confidence in your prudent foresight and safe government, Lords and Commons; and from thence derives 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, while Rome was high 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 book the blood is fresh, and the spirits251 pure and vigorous not only to vital but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the perpest operations of wit and subtility, 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 when in reach to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the soldest 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 them, as the young are old 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 a long invincible sleep.

246 Pyrrhus (316-372 B.C.), King of Epirus, is said by Florus (Epitome de gestis Romanorum 1, 18) to have paid this tribute to Roman discipline after his victory over Valerius Laevinus at Heraclea in 280 B.C.

247 The stones for Solomon's temple were all shaped and sized at the quarry (1 Kings vi, 7; but cf. the longer account in II Chron. ii, 2-9).

248 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, 39).

249 Maniples were Roman soldiers.

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

251 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, 39).

252 Behind Miltion are many stories of eagles flying in their old age straight into the zenith to sing their wings and burn the mist from their eyes in the sun's rays before plummeting thence into a fountain where, as T. H. White's translation of a twelfth century Bestiary in his The Book of Beasts (1932), p. 450, says, "Rapt up, they are renewed with a great vigor of plumage and splendor of vision." Because the word "rewritten" is used in the line, it may also be read as in Cicero, loc. cit., 5, as well as on scribal grounds, G. U. Yale—her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscalcing her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also in flight, should 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 lights 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 supplanting do, as good as bad 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, the old kings 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; from this it is from which hath enfranchised, enlarged, and lifted us out of our apprehensions and doubts above ourselves. Ye cannot make us now less capable, knowing less, eagarly pursing 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 expression of greatest and exactest things, in RES, XIX (1947), 61-62—and R. S. Loomis in M.L.N., XXXII (1927), 437, have amended "muving" to "newing," but L. C. Martin justifies the reading of the text in RES, XXI (1949), 44, because "moving" (muving) implies renewal of youth to follow as a result.

250 Milton probably thought in astrological terms, as he did in describing the woman of Actum and Eve:...

And happy Constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influences.

(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 despach at will their own children, and shall then stick closest to ye, and excite others? not he who takes up arms for coat and conduct,289 and his four nobles290 of Danegeld.291 Although I disprove 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 unequal284 to suppress opinions for the newness, or the unsuitableness to a customary acceptance, will not be any task, as I shall only 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 for honor's sake, and may it be eternal to him, shall name him, the Lord Brook.294 He, writing of episcopacy, and by the way treating of sects and schisms, left ye his vote,295 or rather now the last words of his dying charge (which I know will yet ever be honored and regarded with ye) so full of meekness and breathing charity that next to his last testament who bequeathed love and peace to his disciples,296 I cannot call to mind where I have read or heard words more mild and peaceful. He there exhorts us to hear with pa
tience and humility those, however they be miscalled, that desire to live purely, in such a use of God's ordinances as the best guid
ance of their conscience gives them, and to tolerate those in some disconnecti
on 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 be left not laid by without perusal.

And now the time in special is, by privi
lege, to write and speak what may help to the further discussing of matters in agita
tion. The temple of Janus297 with his two controversial faces might now not unsignif
icantly be set open. And though all the world construes there, let us loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdirect her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open en
counter. Her confuting is the best and surest support of us. To pray there is for light and clearer knowl
dge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted be
yond the discipline of Geneva.298 framed and fabricated299 already to our hands. Yet when the new light which we beg for shines not there, be we not and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whens we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence, to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures300 early and late, that an
other order shall enter to know nothing but by bite. When a man hath been laboring the hardest labor in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his find
ings in all their equipment, 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,300 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 fortune. In peace it was kept closed.

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

301 Bk. f. CG. n. 10. 302 fabricate: fabricated.

303 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 ambiguities, to keep a narrow breach behind him, and a challenge should pass, though it be valor enough in soldiery, 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 pol
icves, nor stratagems, nor licencings 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 Proteus302 did, who spoke oracles only when he was caught and bounded, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes except her own,303 and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micah304 did before Ahab, until she be ad
jured into her own likeness.

Yet is it not impossible that she may have more shapes than one. What else is all that rack 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;305 what great purchase is this Chris
tian liberty which Paul so often boasts of?306 Has he for all a new garment, or eats not, regards a day, or regards it not, may do either to the Lord.307 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 decency308 yet haunts us.309

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

303 Cf. Owen Feltham: “Truth, in logical argu
mens, is like a Prince in a Maecus; where are so many other presented in the same attire, that we know not which is he." (Resolves I, iv.)

304 For a time Messiah, the prophet of God, agreed it was a Prince in a Maecus who gave Ahab the advice which led him into an attack on Ramoth-Gilead in which he lost his life. When he was adjudged to speak the truth, he warned Ahab that the other prophets were inspired by a "lying spirit" (1 Kings xxii, 23).

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

306 Col. vi, 1.

307 A paraphrase of Rom. xiv, 6.

308 Cf. Milton in Of Reformation grieving at the We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentals; though our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any en
thralled piece of truth out of the gripes of custom,309 we care not to keep truth separa
ted from truth, which is the richest 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 congelament of "wood, and hay, and stubble."310 forced and frozen together, which is more to the sudden de
generating of a church than many sub
divisions of petty schism.

Note 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,311 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 Chris

tian, that many be tolerated, rather than all compelled. I mean not tolerated popyry and open superstition, which, as it extinguishes all the heat and civil spirit, so it 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,312 no law can possibly permit, that intends not to un
law 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, the bishop's "pure linen, . . . palls and mitres, gold and gawgs fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the flannel's vestry" (C.E. III, 2).

309 Cf. Areopagitica in CG I, v, and in the preface to DDD.

310 "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." (1 Cor. iii, 12.)

311 This is the lesson of the parable of the tares and the wheat in Matt. 13:24-30.

312 Milton's position is parallel with that of Jeremy Taylor in Liberty of Prophesying. Sec

section xiv. They may be no toleration of doctrine inconsistent with piety or the public good."
if we could but find among us the “bond of peace.”

In the meanwhile, if any one would write and bring his helpful hand to the slow-moving reformation which we labor under, if truth has spoken to him before others, or but seemed at least to speak, who hath so besieged 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. And what is it then to 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; but a greater danger than which is in it.

For when God shales a kingdom with strong and healthful commotions to a general reformation, 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 abilites and more the 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 grace, as our earthly eyes may best sustain it. Neither is God appointed 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, less we should devote ourselves again to set places and assemblied and outward callings of men; planting our faith one while in the old Convocation house, and another while in the Chapel at Westminster; when all the faith and religion that shall be there canonized, is not sufficient without plain conviction and the charity of patient instruction, to supple the least brushe 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 the leading schismatics, what withholds us but our cloth, our self-will, and distrust in the right cause, that we do not give them gentle meetings and gentle dismissons, that they may consider 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 state receipts, are able to manage and set forth new prophets 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 yet if they be of no use to them whom God has given a special use of these times with eminent and ample gifts—and those perhaps neither among the priests, nor among the pharisees—and we in the haste of a precipitate 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, both of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster was meeting in Henry VII’s chapel.

278 An echo of Ephes. iv. 3.
279 So to see: to look at.
280 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and he shall reign over them, from one end of the earth even to the other: and his name shall be great. (Isa. 2:3-4.)
281 appointed: bound by prescription. Cf. 282 Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father. (Heb. 3:7.)
283 Chapter-house at Westminster was the meeting-place of Laud’s Convocation, while the most unlicensed book itself within a short while; and was the immediate image of a Star Chamber. See St. John 3:9-11, and 13. What was made in those very times when that Court did the rest of those her pius works, for which she is now fallen from the stars with Lucifer. Wherely 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 patenites and monopolizers in the trade of bookselling; who under pretense of the poor in the Company not to be defrauded, and the just retaining of each man his several copy (which God forbid should be gainsaid) brought divers gloating colors 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 should be made men of all sorts. 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 elenchus of merchandise I skill not. This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident; for what magistrat may not be misinformed and much sooner, if liberty of printing be reduced into the power of a few; but to redress willingly and speedily what hath been ered and in highest authority to esteem a plain advertisement more than others have done a sumptuous brieve, 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 Bibilographicall Cl. PL VII, 131. 286 Cf. CG. n. 295. 287 elench: "a fallacious answer to a sophistical question" (Whitehead). 288 what hath been ered: what mistakes have been made. Milton’s construction is a Latinism. 289 advertisement: intimation, notification.