

Free Speech
Upon the Rock Above the City:
A re-wording of John Milton's
Areopagitica

By William Altoft

*“Yet if all cannot be of one mind
– as who looks they should be? –
this doubtless is more wholesome,
more prudent, and more Christian,
that many be tolerated,
rather than all compelled.”*

*“Give me the liberty to know,
to utter, and to argue
freely according to conscience,
above all liberties.”*

– John Milton

Wherein I have attempted to take John Milton's brilliant and highly relevant essay, where he fights against an order by the British Parliament to make all printing require licensing before it may be published, and render it more accessible to the modern reader.

In our time of hate speech, blasphemy laws, trolls, and trigger warnings, the notion of censoring speech and expression for what appears to be good reason has taken root, and our online world is rife with censorship in the name of good and loving kindness. If you support that, then you must be surer about it than you have ever been about anything, you must have done everything that you are able to do to argue against your own position. If you are against it, then the same applies – yet more importantly for you, you must say so, out loud, while you still can.

The title of the original text – *Areopagitica* – comes from Areopagus, a large rock outcropping just outside of Athens, Greece. Milton used this because, in ancient times, the outcropping had been used as the seat for councils and tribunals; had been used for open and free debate.

When I read the *Areopagitica*, I was struck by two things. Firstly, the brilliance and relevance, paragraph after paragraph after paragraph, of the arguments he was making. This was an argument needed for now. Secondly, that I had to read the opening two paragraphs about three times before I fully understood the flow and what he meant. Recognising that most people are not exposed to this essay, and, if they did happen to be, there wasn't an awful lot of reason to hope that they would put up with the writing for long enough to get past the first page, I decided to do what I could to increase its exposure and appeal, and to re-word it, to translate it: English to English.

I have done my absolute best to not alter any of Milton's arguments or points, nor to use them as an opportunity to infuse my own under his name. I took great care when I was unsure of what modern word I could use to replace an archaic one that he had written, looking into many synonyms and definitions in order to be sure that my version of his sentence, phrase, or paragraph was saying the same thing that he had said in his original. I aimed to translate the piece in such a way that the resulting text would sound as if Milton himself had reluctantly agreed to simplify his original, refusing to give up his style, turns of phrase, and lengthy sentences entirely, but accepting the task of making it more accessible to more people.

There are rare but present elements where I would not fully endorse what he is saying – namely, some of the more religious and nationalist moments. Whether he meant some of these things truly, or he was merely aware of his intended audience and what analogies and metaphors could be used to make them engage with the arguments he was making, I don't know. However, the reason I have translated the entire piece is because, despite minor points, I completely agree with him. Whatever is explicitly related to England and to Christianity can be seen for its generalisable argument and principle and how it applies to all.

With Milton re-joining the discussion, this time with less obscure vocabulary, and no more paragraphs that turn out to be single sentences, I hope that many who currently feel that censorship is worth it for a good cause, that free speech and expression can be sacrificed in the fight for what is good and right, may be convinced to think again, and perhaps conclude that, even though it is the harder path, the greater challenge, and has often a high cost, keeping speech and expression – online, in print, and spoken out into the space between us – free and uncensored, even when you do not like what you are hearing, is vital for the long-term good of all, and is worth fighting for.

Think what you like, and say what you think, and ensure that everybody else is free to do the same.

William Altoft

A Speech
to the Parliament of England
for the Freedom of the Press

Consider, High Court of Parliament, those who take it upon themselves to speak to governors and to states, or those who wish for privacy and thus write, instead, whatever they can which they believe will advance the public good. I believe these people must be significantly altered and moved within their minds for them to begin such an extraordinary task. Some beset by fear of failure, and others by fear of what disapproval may come. Some moved with hope, and others with confidence in what they have to write or say. And as I approached this subject, perhaps I was beset and moved by each of these at various times, and I could begin, in these opening lines, by describing which of them influenced me the most. But simply the act of beginning my address, and the thought of whom it offers an alternative to, has driven the desire within me to a passion – a passion very welcome to this preface.

I do not speak simply to perform my passion, but I shall be blameless if this does nothing more than bring joy to and show solidarity with those who desire their country's freedom, and fight for it. This shall be a testimony to them and to that freedom, even if not ultimately a trophy of victory. The idea that no complaint or outrage should ever surface or be felt in the Commonwealth: this is not a liberty we can hope for, and let nobody expect it. A society where complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily addressed: now that is the highest reach of civil liberty that the wise of us look for. My very words at this very moment are the evidence of how close to this we have come. That progress began with the steepest disadvantage, our principles infused with tyranny and superstition, and it is thanks to God's assistance first of all, followed by your faithful guidance and unfailing wisdom, Lords and Commons of England, that we have come so far. God shall not consider his honour diminished when the good and worthy are so honourably and closely compared to him. And if I begin to speak of your honour only now, after all your praiseworthy deeds, and after so much benefit given us all, tirelessly, by you, then I might fairly be placed among the slowest and most unwilling of your champions.

Nevertheless, there are three crucial things that must be followed, to prevent one's praise from simply being courtship and flattery. Firstly, only the fully deserving should be praised – it must not be given easily to anyone and anything. Secondly, one must be convinced that the praise is accurate, and really, truly does apply. Finally, the praise-giver must prove it is not flattery by demonstrating that they know their subject well. I have tried before to achieve those first two, by denouncing any

who would insult you with empty and poisonous praise. The third – demonstrating that I do not seek to flatter you – is mine yet to prove, saved for this perfect opportunity.

For the one who gives the clearest promise of loyalty is the one who will stand and applaud, and then not be too afraid to stay standing and lay out all their criticisms – that is a sincere ally. With them, the highest praise is not just flattery, and the most blunt advice becomes a kind of praise. I am going to insist and argue that it would better for truth, for learning, and for the Commonwealth, if one of your published Orders were reversed. Yet in doing so, I will not be able to avoid reflecting the quality of your government, when you are seen to take more pleasure in hearing advice from your public than other courts have taken in absorbing pure public flattery. Then all will see the differences between a generous and patient parliament, and the kind of arrogant and insecure bishops and counsellors we have known. They, who produced nothing worth remembering besides shallow shows of wealth, and are the weakest in the face of criticism, can join all in observing you humble and tolerant in the face of criticism, even in the midst of your victories and successes.

Assuming that I will continue to be indulged, Lords and Commons, by your civility and gentleness, I shall contradict that which your published Order states. If any were to hear that and accuse me of being some insolent upstart, I might defend myself with ease by letting them know how much better I find you when you imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece, rather than the uncivil and insecure pride of a Hun-like or Norwegian stateliness. We owe the wisdom and the letters of that Ancient Greece, for giving us the chance to be more than Goths and Jutlanders. Out of those times, I could name he who wrote, from his private home, to the parliament of Athens, persuading them to change the form of their established democracy. This was a time when such honour was given to those who demonstrated wisdom and eloquence, at home and abroad – so much so that, if they had anything with which to publicly, and stridently, criticise the state, cities and their elites listened gladly, and with respect. That is how Dion Prusaeus, a stranger and a private speaker, counselled the Rhodians against one of their own Orders. The many other examples I might give here to show this would only be superfluous.

My life and work has been wholly dedicated to study, and my natural talents for it are, fortunately, not dampened by the cold of our climate. But if so much of that is to be belittled to the point where I am considered as less deserving of the freedom of expression held by those private speakers of Ancient Greece, then I would fight to be considered just as deserving as they are, just as you, yourselves, are rightly seen as superior to most of those whom they counselled. And by just how much you exceed them, Lords and Commons, there is no greater sign than when your far-sighted spirit hears and listens to the voice of reason, no matter who or where it comes from, and when you

are just as willing to act on that advice and go back on one of your own Acts or Orders, as you are to repeal any set by your predecessors.

Now, if my characterisation of you is correct, and it would be an insult to assume otherwise, then I cannot think of anything that ought stop me from giving you a perfect opportunity to show that love of truth which you sing so supremely of, and to show your based and unbiased judgement, that is not prone to side with yourselves. That opportunity is this: review the Order you have put out that demands the regulation of printing. The Order which states that, from here on, no book, pamphlet, or article may be printed without being first approved of and licensed by those appointed to do so. Some of the better elements of it, I do not touch –the part that protects each writer’s copyright, for example, or provides for the poor. I only wish that they are not used as a cover under which the persecution and abuse of the honest and the innocent can take place. But that other clause of licensing books, this thing which we thought had died along with its religious brothers and sisters, I will address with a sermon of my own. Firstly, I will lay out the inventors of this censorious behaviour, with whom you will be very reluctant to be grouped. Secondly, to discuss what can and should be thought about reading in general, beyond any specific content. Then, I will show that this Order is of no use in the fight to suppress offensive, inciting, and misrepresentative books – the very texts it is intended for. Finally, to argue that this Order will, more than anything else, discourage learning and stop truth – not only by making us intellectually lazy and less sure of what we know already, but by hindering and limiting any and all potential further discoveries we might make, both in religious and in civil wisdom.

I do not deny that there should be great concern in the Church and Commonwealth to keep a watchful eye on how books, as well as people, can bring shame upon themselves, and how they should face judge and jury, with sharp judgement brought on them for their responsibility. For books are not absolutely dead things. They contain a power of life within them that makes them as active as those whom they are the children of – no, they in fact preserve the purest extract of the capability of the living mind that made them, as if stored in a glass bottle. I know that they may act as lively and as productively as those fabled dragon’s teeth: teeth that, when scattered across the ground, may cause the sprouting up of armed men. And yet, despite the danger, unless caution is used the destruction of a good book is little different to killing a man. One who kills a person kills a creature with the capacity for reason – destroys a reflection of God’s image. But one who kills a book kills reason itself – destroys the very image of God that is held in the mind. A good book is the precious life-blood of a spirit that transcends the earth-bound human being, and must be secured and treasured for its immortal purpose. It is true that no amount of time can restore a life: perhaps this is not, ultimately, a great loss. It is also true that generations over the course of history rarely

manage to recover a lost and rejected truth: in the face of this kind of loss, whole nations are hurt and hindered.

And so, we should be wary of what we raise up and use against the living work of public people, of how we destroy the life of a person that had been protected and preserved within a book. This way a kind of murder may be done, sometimes a martyrdom, and, if our actions extend to the whole of a person's body of work, then a kind of massacre. The execution has gone beyond the ending of a physical life, and has struck at that spirit essence, at the breath of reason itself, and ended an immortality rather than merely a life. But, to make it clear I oppose licensing and avoid misunderstanding or misrepresentation, I will now put in the historical effort to show how ancient and famous commonwealths have dealt with this issue, right up until the time in history when this mission of licensing survived beyond the Inquisition, and was caught and taken up by our bishops and our ministers.

In Athens, where books and minds were always busier than in any other part of Greece, I can see that only two sorts of writings ever took the attention of the judges: writings against religion, and slander and libel. That is how, up on Aeropagus, the books of Protagoras were sentenced to burning, and he himself was banished from the territory, all because he began a discourse with a confession: that he did not know whether or not there were gods. And with slander, it was declared that none should be defamed or mocked by name, which was the style of older parts of Greek comedy. We can guess how they went about censoring libel. As Cicero writes, it was clear that the methods used were quick and efficient both to silence the thinking of other atheists, and to stop the trend of open defamation. Yet other groups and their opinions were overlooked or ignored, despite being often just as offensive, and denying, also, the gods.

So we do not read that Epicurus, or the freethinkers of Cyrene, nor the scepticism they uttered, were ever questioned by the law. It is also not recorded that the writings of those old comedians were ever censored, only that performing them was forbidden. It is well known that Plato even recommended reading Aristophanes, the loosest of all of them, to Dionysius, his royal scholar. That can be forgiven if it is true that Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, read Aristophanes too, nightly, and managed to take the passionate and insulting humour and transform it into the style of a rousing sermon.

Then there is Lacedaemon, that other leading city of Greece. Their lawgiver, Lycurgus, was addicted to elegant learning: he was the first to have brought the scattered works of Homer out of Ionia, and he sent the poet Thales of Crete to pacify the hot-headed Spartans with his smooth songs and odes, the better to plant the seeds of law and civility among them. And so it is a wonder how uninspired

and unbookish they were, with their minds occupied only with the fear of war. There was no need for the licensing of books in Lacedaemon, for they disliked all except their own concise and simple proverbs, taking only one rare occasion to chase the poet Archilochus out of the city. Perhaps he composed something reaching too high for their soldierly ballads and poems to match. Or if he were chased out for his vulgar verses, the people of the city were not as careful or prudent in their actual sexuality: Euripides insists, in his tragic play *Andromache*, that their women were all far from pure. This all gives us an idea of what kind of books were and were not banned among the Greeks.

The Romans, too, were for a long time just as military and unbookish as the Lacedaemonians, knowing nearly nothing beyond their Twelve Tables of law, and the religious lecturing of the Catholic priests. They were so kept within their limited bubble of learning, that when three philosophers came to Rome as ambassadors from Greece – Carneades, Critolaus, and Diogenes – they were denounced as the seductive spreaders of dangerous ideas by Cato the Censor, who urged the Senate to kick them and any other babbling Greeks back out of Rome, and quickly. But Scipio and some of the more noble senators held Cato and his old-fashioned strictness off, and admired and honoured the ambassadors. And the censor himself, in his old age, even fell to studying that which he was so doubtful of. Yet at the same time as this victory for the freedom of expression, the first Latin comedians, Naevius and Plautus, had spread throughout the city their adaptations of works by the Greeks Menander and Philemon. So Rome began to consider what should be done about slanderous books and authors. We read that Naevius was quickly cast into prison for his free, unhampered pen, only released when he took back his words, and that any works of slander were burned, with punishment from Augustus awaiting their authors. No doubt this was also the reaction to anything disrespectful to their treasured gods. Again, beyond slander and blasphemy, the courts cared not how the world went in books.

And so Lucretius could freely share his Epicurean philosophy with a Roman audience through his poetry, which was recorded for us all by no less a man than Cicero – even though Cicero argues against that philosophy in his own writings. Lucilius, Catullus, Flaccus: three more writers and poets who wrote sharp satire and spoke unabashed and unafraid and yet were never stopped by any orders. And matters touching on state and politics? Work by Titus Livius, the Roman historian, was not suppressed by Octavius Caesar, despite it praising the role played by Caesar's enemy, Pompey the Great. It is true that the same Caesar banished the poet Naso in his old age for the outrageous poems of his youth, but this was only the official reason used to cover up some state secret that was the true cause. Besides, the books that contained the material were neither banished nor recalled. After this point in history, we will find little else but tyranny from the Roman Empire, and so we should not wonder if we find books good and bad silenced in equal measure. I shall therefore

consider myself to have been detailed enough on what writing the ancients deemed punishable, whilst they let all arguments else continue on freely.

And now the emperors were become Christians. But at this point in time, I do not find the practice of the Christians on this issue of censorship to be any more severe than what had gone before. They took the books of those whom they considered heretics and examined them, refuted them, and condemned them in their Councils – only after this were those books banned, or burnt, by authority of the emperor. The writings of non-Christian authors went by unprohibited, unless they were plain insults and challenges to Christianity, like the works of Porphyrius and Proclus. This changed in the year 400, at a Council of Carthage: but this change was to ban bishops themselves from reading these non-Christian works, though they still read works of heresy against their faith. Contrary to this, long before them, bishops had been more fearful of works of heresy against Christianity than of the works of other religions. We already know, from the work of Padre Paolo, who exposed the Council of Trent, that these earlier Councils and bishops only declared what was denounced by the Church and went no further, leaving up to the conscience of each the decision of whether to read a work or set it aside. At least, this was the way until after the year 800.

After that time, the Popes of Rome began lapping up freely more and more political power and extending their reach to cover now the eyes of their subjects, as an extension of church control over their minds and judgements. Now that which they did not like was banned and burnt. Yet even then, they did not deal with so many books, and kept some measure of limit to their censoring. Until Pope Martin V., that is, who issued commands that did more than merely ban certain books: he was the first to excommunicate the very reading of heretical books. It was the threat of the reformers Wickliffe and Huss that drove the Papal Court to a stricter policy of prohibiting. A course that Pope Leo X. and his successors followed, until the Council of Trent and the Spanish Inquisition came terribly together to create, or at least perfect, catalogues and indexes of prohibited books, that could ransack and pillage through the legacy left by many an author – a violation worse than any graverobber could offer to those author's tombs. And they did not limit themselves to heresy any longer. Any matter or subject they did not like, they either condemned by prohibition, or sent it straight into the new purgatory that was a spot in the index.

And to complete their intrusive expansion, their final move was to ordain that no book, pamphlet, or paper was to be printed unless it had first been given the seal of approval by two or three indulgent friars – as if St. Peter had entrusted them with the keys, not only to Paradise, but to the printing press too. Take this exchange, for example:

Let the Chancellor Cini be pleased to see if in this present work be contained aught that may withstand the printing.

VINCENT RABBATTA, Vicar of Florence.

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

NICOLO GINI, Chancellor of Florence.

Attending the precedent relation, it is allowed that this present work of Davanzati may be printed.

VINCENT RABBATTA, etc.

It may be printed, July 15.

FRIAR SIMON MOMPEI D'AMELIA, Chancellor of the Holy Office in Florence.

It is clear that they have this notion that Satan himself would be locked back up again by this little back and forth of theirs, if he of the bottomless pit had just broken free. I am afraid their next move will be to gather up all that which Claudius allowed and then to censor and license it, claiming that he had intended to do so all along. Let yourselves see here, on another form, the Roman stamp of *Imprimatur* – “Let it be printed”:

Imprimatur, If it seem good to the reverend Master of the Holy Palace.

BELCASTRO, Vicegerent.

Imprimatur, Friar Nicolo Rodolphi, Master of the Holy Palace.

Sometimes five of these *Imprimatur*s are found as if in dialogue in the piazza that is a title page, complimenting and bowing to each other with their holy shaven heads, discussing whether the authors – who stand in suspense at the end of their works – are destined for the press or for cleansing.

This is the wondrous call and response of Christian choir that has so bewitched our clergy lately, enchanted by the goodly echo they made, and had us captivated by the playful imitation by our bishops and archbishops of a lordly Roman stamp of permission, from Lambeth House to the west

end of St. Paul's. Such pathetic Romanising, that the commands were still set down in Latin, as if no serious and learned pen that dared write could cast ink in any other language. Or perhaps they recognised that no common tongue was good enough to fully express the smug self-satisfaction of an Imprimatur. Rather I hope the reason is that our English, the language of those famous and foremost in freedom, cannot easily be turned to spelling out such dictatorial and disrespectful language.

And there you have the original book-licensing and its inventors torn up and laid out as clear and linear as a family tree. As far as one can see, we do not get this licensing from any ancient state, or government, or church, nor from any law left us by our ancestors, distant or recent. Nor do we get it from the modern ways of reformed cities or from churches abroad. Instead, we get it from the most anti-Christian council and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired. Until then, books were as freely admitted into the world as any other birth, and the matter of the brain was nor more stifled than the matter of the womb. Unlike Juno interfering any way she might with the birth of Hercules, there was no jealous wife sitting cross-legged over the nativity of any person's intellectual offspring. Yet who could deny that when it proved a monster, it was still justly burnt or sunk into the sea? That a book, regarded worse than a sinful soul, could be stood before a jury prior to being born into the world, and then assessed, in darkness, by the judges of Hades before it might be granted ferry-passage into the light: this was unheard of. That is, until that mysterious evil, the Church of Rome, provoked and scared by the first signs of Reformation, decided to invent new hells and limbos into which they could throw our books and add them to the number of their damned. This rare morsel of opportunity they snatched up so completely, and were so hideously imitated by our inquisitor-aspiring bishops, and the Franciscan friars. All those that know the integrity of your actions and how you honour truth will clear your name readily, knowing that you are not like these particular authors of licensing orders, and that, unlike them, sinister intention was far from your thoughts when you passed yours.

But some will say: so the inventors were bad, what does that matter if the thing itself could be good for all? Well that may be a fair question. Yet if that thing is not a hidden invention but an obvious one, easy for anyone to discover, but all the best and wisest societies throughout the ages have avoided using it whilst the most deceitful seducers and oppressors were the first to take it up, and for no other purpose than to block and to hinder the beginnings of the Reformation... well, then I am one of those who believe that extracting any good out of this invention will be a magic much harder to perform than any the alchemist Lullius ever tried. All I seek from this argument is that this thing be considered a dangerous and suspicious fruit, as it certainly deserves given the tree that bore it, until I can take it apart and examine each of its properties. But I first have to finish, as I laid out

earlier, discussing what can and should be thought about reading in general, regardless of content, and to weigh up the benefits and the harm that may or may not result.

Take Moses, Daniel, and Paul, who were well-versed in the teaching of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Greeks: this could not very likely be so if they did not read books of all sorts and origins. Paul especially, who had no problem with inserting the words of three Greek poets – and one of them a tragedian – into the Holy Scripture. Despite these high examples, the question of whether this wide-reading and outside inspiration was good or bad was still debated among the early elders, though always with the majority regarding it not only allowable, but profitable – something clearly realised by the ex-Christian nephew of Constantine, Julian the Apostate, the most subtle enemy of our faith. He banned Christians from studying anything outside of Christian learning, saying that otherwise they would wound us with our own weapons, and with our own arts and sciences overcome us. Indeed, out of this crafty decree the Christians were put so well in their place, and found themselves at such danger of declining into ignorance, that Apollinaris of Alexandria and his son were compelled to coin the liberal arts out of the Bible, taking that little literature they were allowed and drawing out of it diverse forms of speech, of poetry, of dialogue – even a new Christian grammar. Yet, as Socrates says, the providence of God provided better than the industry of the two Apollinarii, by taking away that illiterate law along with the life of the one who devised it. It was considered a great injury to be deprived of Hellenic learning, and thought of as more profound a persecution, and causing more decaying and undermining of the Church, than even the cruelty of the severely and clearly anti-Christian emperors, Decius and Diocletian.

And perhaps it was the same political bent that drove the Devil, in a dream during Lent, to whip St. Jerome for reading Cicero. And if not the Devil, then a phantasm summoned by the fever possessing him. For if the discipliner truly had been an angel, as St. Jerome recalled, who punished the man for heretical reading, and not simply for too much vain dwelling on Ciceronianisms, then the judge had been quite plainly a little biased. Firstly, for chastising Jerome for serious Cicero and not for the comedies of Plautus, which he confesses to have been reading not long before. Secondly to chastise only him, and to let him so many other ancient fathers grow old in all kinds of pleasant and exciting studies without ever facing the lash of such a tutoring apparition. What of Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea, who encouraged the reading of Homer's lost mock-heroic poem, *Margites*, for the good that could be gleaned from it? Why not then read the Italian romance, *Morgante*, for the same purpose?

But if it is agreed we shall be tried by visions, then there is another, far more ancient, we may look at: a vision recorded by Eusebius. Besides, this one has no fever involved in it. About the year 240,

Dionysius of Alexandria was a great name of piety and learning within the Church, and was in the habit of taking on heretics by being familiar with their books. That is until a certain elder made doubtful his conscience, pointing to how he ventures among such corrupting volumes. Dionysius, a worthy man not wanting to give offence, then fell into a debate with himself over what was to be thought of reading the works of heretics, when suddenly, so his own letter declares, a vision sent from God confirmed for 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." He confesses that he accepted quick this revelation, as it matched Paul's message to the Thessalonians: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Dionysius might have also justified his choice by another remarkable saying of that same Apostle: "To the pure, all things are pure" – not only food and drink, but all kinds of knowledge, whether it be of good or evil. The knowledge cannot defile, and nor so can the books, if the will and the conscience remain undefiled.

For books are as meats and other food, with some of good and some of evil substance, and yet God said to Peter, in that authentic vision related in Acts, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Without exception, and leaving the choice to the discretion of each. Wholesome food to a spoiled stomach differs little or not at all from unwholesome; yet the best books to a wicked mind are not useless in occasions of evil. Even within the healthiest concoction, bad meat will scarce breed good nourishment – and here is the difference between bad food and bad books. Bad books, to a thoughtful and discerning reader, serve as opportunities of discovery and illustration, and provide forewarning and understanding. What better witness of this can you expect me to produce than one of your own, now sitting in Parliament, the most highly regarded of the knowledgeable in this land: Mr John Selden. His work of natural and national law lays out, not only by bringing together and referring to great authorities, but by carefully drawn out reasons and propositions almost mathematical in their clarity, how all opinions, and yes errors, that are known, read, and collected are crucial in the push toward the speedy attainment of that which is most true. I put forward, then, that when God enlarged the universal diet of our body, saving the rule of moderation, he then left, as before, the diet and feeding of our minds down to our personal choice and judgement. Thus, that everyone mature might have to exercise their ability to lead themselves.

How great a virtue is moderation, and how crucial throughout the whole of one's life! Yet God hands over the managing of so great a trust, without rule and regulation, wholly to the disposition of every adult. And so, when He himself fed the Jews from heaven, that portion given, which was each one's daily measure of manna, is calculated to have been more than might have satisfied the heartiest feeder for three times as many meals. As Christ said, those things that enter into a person, unlike those things that issue out, do not defile, corrupt, and disgrace. For those incoming things, God

entrusts each with the gift of reason to be therefore their own chooser, rather than trapping all within a perpetual childhood of bans and permissions. There would be little work left for preaching, if law and force grew fast over and upon those things that had previously been tackled only by warnings and advice. Solomon might tell us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh, but neither he nor any other divinely-inspired author tells us that this or that reading is unlawful. If God had thought it good to limit us in reading, it would have been a little more effective to have told us what was illegal rather than what was tiring. As for the burning of Ephesian books by converts of St. Paul: the books were thought to be magic, rendered so by their language. This book burning was a private act, a voluntary act, and leaves us to imitate or not voluntarily. The converts, in remorse, burnt books which were their own – yet the judge and the magistrate are not elected to book-banning and -burning by this example. The converts previously practised the magic found in those books; another might perhaps have read them and put the knowledge to some good use.

Good and evil, we know, in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably. We know that the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and so often so skilfully resemblant of one the other that they can hardly be told apart – the mix of many seeds given to Psyche by Venus as a punishing and endless task of sorting were not more mixed than the seeds of good and evil. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. Perhaps this is that doom into which Adam fell: that is, of knowing good through evil. That is the state humankind is in now, and what wisdom is there in choosing, what self-control would there be to uphold and endure, without knowledge of evil? The one that can face up to and consider vice with all its baits and apparent pleasures, and yet hold back, and yet recognise, and yet freely choose that which is truly better – that is the true battling Christian.

I cannot praise a virtue that hides and shields itself, staying unexercised and unspoken, that never rides out to meet an adversary but sneaks out of the race, the race where that immortal winning wreath is to be won, unwinnable without the dust and heat of effort. We do not bring innocence into the world, we bring impurity; that which makes us pure is trial, and trial is by facing that which is contrary. And so that virtue which is but a child and inexperienced when it comes to the contemplation of evil, and does not first know all the things that vice promises to its own followers and only then rejects those promises, is an empty virtue, not a pure one. Its whiteness is merely superficial. That is exactly why our own sage and serious poet Edmund Spenser (I dare say a better teacher, in my opinion, than either Scotus or Aquinas), when trying to show true moderation through the character of Guyon, takes his pilgrim through the tempting cave of Mammon, a bower of earthly bliss, so that he may be exposed to all, understand, and still hold back. The knowledge and

understanding of vice is in this world so necessary for the building and strengthening of human virtue, just as looking at error is vital for the confirmation of truth. Is there any safer way, with less risk, to explore the regions of evil and falsehood than by reading all manner of writings and hearing all manner of argument? This is the benefit gained from the promiscuous reading of books.

The harm that may come from that promiscuous reading is usually reckoned to be of three kinds. First, that the infection of bad ideas may spread. But then all human learning, including disputes on religious points, must be removed from the world. Even the Bible itself, for that often relates blasphemy in great detail, describes the lust of wicked men elaborately, shows the holiest men passionately murmuring atheistically against God, presents other disputes in a way that is unclear and misleading to the common reader. Ask those who read the Talmud and write euphemisms as substitutes in the margins of the Old Testament and say these aloud: what is the content that is so embarrassing that even Moses and all the prophets cannot persuade them to repeat the actual text? For all these reasons that we all know well the Bible would be placed by the Catholics into the first rank of prohibited books. Next for removal would be the most ancient fathers of the Church: Clement of Alexandria, and the book by Eusebius on Evangelic preparation, both transmit to our ears the message that we should receive the Gospel, but only through a hoard of heathenish obscenities, described in detail to make a person shun those pagan rituals. The likes of Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and Jerome discover and present more heresies than they are able to prove wrong, often refuting apparent heresy that is closer to the truth.

It is no use to say that these, and all the most infectious heathen writers (if it must be thought of as an infection), with whom is bound up the life of human learning, are writing in an unknown tongue, and so do not need prohibiting and licensing as English does. Not as long as we know that those unknown languages are actually known to the worst of us, those who are both most able and most eager to administer the poison they draw out from elsewhere. Those who would instil that poison into the courts of princes first, to acquaint the influential with temptations and criticisms of the idea of sin. As perhaps did the man Petronius, whom the emperor Nero called his chief judge of taste and etiquette, and that notorious and profane satirist of Arezzo, whose wit and writing terrified the Italian courtiers into keeping him close. Out of decency I do not name another: he whom Henry VIII joyfully declared as his Vicar of Hell. Via this quick and efficient way, all the contagion that foreign books have to spread will find a passage to the people far easier and more directly than any Indian voyage could, whether it sailed eastward by the north of China or westward toward Canada, all whilst our Spanish licensing gags the English press worse than ever.

Meanwhile, the infection that threatens from controversial books in religion brings more doubt and danger to the learned than to the ignorant – and yet those books must be allowed untouched by any licenser. It will be hard to show where any common person has been seduced by Papal writing in English, unless it were recommended and recounted to them by some of the clergy. And, indeed, all such religious writings, whether false or true, are as the prophecy of Isaiah was to the eunuch: not to be understood without a guide. But of our guides, our priests and doctors, see how many have been corrupted through studying the comments of the Catholic Jesuits and scholars of Sorbonne, in Paris, and how quickly they could transfuse that corruption into the people – we have such recent and sad experience with this. It is not forgot how that perceptive and clear-thinking theologian we call Arminius was turned simply through perusing a discourse written at Delft, which he had first picked up in order to prove it wrong.

Therefore, we can see that those books – which there are many of – that are the most likely to corrupt both their subject and their readers, cannot be covered up without preventing learning and weakening our ability to dispute and counter-argue to vanishing point. We can see that these, or any, books find their first and biggest audience in the educated, who may then quickly and easily spread whatever is corrupt and heretical to the common people. We can see that evil manners may be learned just as perfectly a thousand other ways that cannot be stopped, and that evil doctrine can only be spread through books with the help of a teacher and guide – and that this teacher and guide can do so without writing, and is thus beyond your censorship. I cannot see this cunning mission of licensing as anything other than merely one more inevitably fruitless attempt at the impossible. Even the gentlest critic would have a hard time avoiding making the comparison between this and the plucky man who hatches a plan to trap the crows by closing the park gate.

Yet here's another inconvenience, if the learned are the first to get something out of books and thus the ones to spread both evil and error: how can we confide in the licensers themselves, unless we place upon them, or they place it upon themselves and no others in all the land, the grace of infallibility and purity? And again, if it is true that someone wise, like any good refiner, can get gold out of the most impure volume, and that a fool will be a fool with both the best book and with no book at all, then there is no reason that we should deprive the wise of any advantage to their wisdom just because we seek to deprive a fool of something that the fool does not need for to be foolish. If we are to be so exact and strict when keeping from someone that which is supposedly unfit for their reading, then, in the judgement of Aristotle, and of Solomon and our Saviour too, we ought not give them good writings nor allow them access to good books. After all, the wise will make better use of a pointless pamphlet, than a fool will do with sacred Scripture.

After this it is argued that we must not needlessly expose ourselves to temptation; and after this, that we must not spend our time on worthless things. To both of these objections one answer will suffice, built from the grounds I have already laid, and that answer is this: such books are not temptations, or worthless, to everyone, but can be useful goods and materials to mix and create strong, effective medicines that one cannot do without in life. As for the rest, the children and the childish, who lack the skill to identify and prepare these raw minerals, they may well be advised to avoid, but to prevent them forcibly simply cannot be done, even through all the licensing that the Sainted Inquisition could ever dream up. Which is what I promised to deliver next: the argument that this order of licensing brings about nothing that it was intended for – an argument that has almost anticipated me and come out already in my explaining of everything else. See the ingenuity of Truth, which, when it gets a free and willing hand, opens itself faster than the speed of any speech or writing that hopes to overtake and introduce it.

T'was the task I began with, to show that no nation or well-run state, if they valued books at all, did ever use this way of licensing. One might answer that this licensing is a piece of prudence only recently discovered. To which I answer, that as it is an idea quite easy and obvious to think up, and so quite difficult to find absent in history, there was never any lack of those who suggested such a course to follow. That they did not follow it leaves us with a pattern of judgement which shows that it was not the lack of knowledge of the method, but the lack of approval, that was the reason that it was not used.

Plato is and was a man of high authority, but not because of his Republic and his Laws, which no city ever yet has taken up. In these he indulged himself by making edicts to his imaginary mayors – edicts which those who admire Plato wish had been buried and excused pleasantly in a single night of debate. The laws from both of these dialogues seem to indicate that he tolerates no kind of learning apart from when mandated by law, mostly made up of practical traditions, for which a library that in total was smaller than his own dialogues would be more than enough to achieve. And there he also plays out the idea that no poet should even read to any private citizen the poetry that they had written, until the judges and the law-keepers had seen it, and allowed it. But that Plato meant this law only for that republic which he imagined is clear. If not, then why, instead of being a lawgiver to himself, was he a transgressor, expelled by his own government for the explicit and homophilic poems and dialogues he produced, for his perpetual reading of Sophron Mimus and Aristophanes, the most infamous of books, and for recommending Aristophanes, even though he ridiculed Plato's friend Socrates, to the tyrant Dionysius, who had little need of such trash to spend his time on? He knew, even as he imagined his Republic, that this licensing of poems referred to and depended on the context he had laid out, a context that could not be replicated in this world: and so neither he

himself, nor any civil servant or city, ever kickstarted that course – a course that, if undertaken alone and without doing anything about other potential sources of corruption, must be futile and fruitless. For if one kind of strictness were passionately adopted, all knew that then, unless they put the same and equal care into regulating all else that could potentially pollute the mind, it would be a foolish endeavour: essentially, to close and fortify one gate against corruption, and be forced to leave the rest round about wide open.

If we decide to regulate printing, in order to correct manners, then we must regulate all recreation and pastimes, all that is delightful to us. No music may be heard, no song be set or sung, except that which is serious, martial, and manly. Dancers must be licensed, so that no gesture, motion, or posture can be taught our youth except those deemed, through the licensers allowance, honest – Plato has laid out how. It will be beyond the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house – yet they cannot be allowed to chatter on as they please, but must be licensed regarding what they may say. And who shall silence all the songs that whisper softness in private rooms? The windows too, and the balconies, must be considered: there wicked books, with dangerous imagery, are set to sale. Who shall prohibit all these? A mere twenty licensers? And the villages also will need their own visitors who can inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the three-stringed rebeck reads, even inspecting the whole catalogue of ballads and the entire range of notes of every town fiddler, for these are the countryperson's romances and epics, their Arcadias and Monte Mayors.

Next, there is no bigger national corruption, one which England is embarrassed by abroad, than household bingeing: who shall be the governors of our daily rioting? And what shall be done to hold back the multitudes that haunt those houses frequently where drunkenness is sold and safeguarded? Our clothing too should be passed through the licensing of some more sensible workmasters to see them cut into a less playful outfit. Who shall monitor all the mixed conversation of our youth, with male and female altogether, as is the way of this country? Who shall decide the limits of what shall be argued between them, of what liberties lie open and how far they may be taken? Lastly, who shall ban and break up all pointless pursuit, all evil company? These things will be, and must be – they are all inevitable. It is not in banning but in considering how might they be less harmful, less tempting, that is the place for the serious and governing wisdom of the state.

To escape from the real world into the political systems of imaginary societies, to Atlantis and Utopia, which can never be drawn on and used, will not mend our condition – what will is to put things in order wisely in this world of evil, in the midst of which God has inescapably placed us. Nor will Plato's licensing of books achieve that mending, as it pulls inevitably along with it so many other

kinds of licensing that will make us laughable, tired, and frustrated. But it is those unwritten, or at least not restricting, laws of education in virtue and in becoming virtuous, and in religious and civil nurture, which Plato describes in his Laws as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, the pillars and preservers of every written law. It is those that will make the difference in these matters, when all licensing will be easily outfoxed. Unpunished crime and neglectful law, for sure, are the ruin of a commonwealth, but here is where the great art lies: to tease out and to discover and to separate what can be restrained by the law and legally punished, and what can only be worked on by persuasion.

If every action, which may be considered good or evil in an adult, were performed under permission and instruction and force, then what would virtue be but a name, what praise could then be earned by doing good, what gratitude and surprise at someone being sober, honourable, or self-controlled? Many there are who complain how the divine allowed Adam the potential to disobey: foolish words! When God gave him reason he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is choosing – no more, no less. Otherwise he would have been a mere artificial Adam, as he would be in any puppet show. We ourselves do not respect obedience, or love, or giving, that is produced by force. And so God left Adam free, setting before him a provoking object of temptation, almost always in his sight, and it is here where his merit lies, here the justification for any reward, for the praise of his restraint. Why did he create passions within us and pleasures all around, if not because to have these passions tamed through self-control is to have the very ingredients of virtue?

They are not so skilled at studying human behaviour, those who think to remove sin by removing the cause of it. For – besides the fact that it is a huge heap that increases as you try to diminish it – while some part of it may be removed for some time from some people, it cannot be removed from all, as such a universal thing are books. Even when the removal of all is achieved, yet the sin remains in full. Though you take from the greedy all treasure they possess, yet they have one jewel left: you cannot bereave them of their greed. Banish all sexual temptations, shut up all youth into the most severe discipline of any monk or nun, and you will not make innocent those that did not come there so. Such great care and wisdom is required to manage this point well, and correctly. Suppose that we could drive out sin this way, then watch when, however much of sin we remove, we remove that much of virtue, for the cause of both is the same. Remove that, and you remove them both alike.

This justifies the high providence of God: that though he commands of us moderation and restraint, fairness, and self-control, he pours out before us, even to extravagance, all desirable things and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limits and satisfaction. Why should we then lay down a strictness that goes against the way of God and nature, by cutting down or cutting off those

necessary instruments for both the testing of virtue and the exercise of truth, which freely permitted books are? It would be far better for all to learn that licensing and censorship laws must inevitably be worthless, variably and yet equally working to good and to evil ends. And were I the chooser, then hoping for the doing of good should be many times more desirable than preventing, by force, the doing of evil. For God, for certain, respects the development and completion of one virtuous person more than the holding back of ten vicious.

Though anything that we might hear or see whilst sitting, walking, travelling, or talking, may be aptly considered our 'book' in that case, and works to the same end as writings do, let us assume the thing to be banned is only books: then it seems this Order thus far is quite incapable of reaching its intended goal. Do we not see, not only once, nor every and now then, but weekly, the printing of the Court Mercury, continued slander of Parliament and City that the wet sheets can witness, even in the face of licensing? Yet this newspaper is the perfect situation, one would think, in which this Order should prove itself. If it were actually put into practice, you will say. But surely, if the implementation is inattentive or blindfolded now, what is it likely to be in the future and with other books? If the Order is to be successful hereafter, no longer thwarted and in vain, behold a new task, Lords and Commons: you must recall and outlaw all scandalous and unlicensed books already printed and published, after compiling them all into a list, so that all may know which are condemned, and which permitted. And you must command all foreign books be kept in custody, unfreed until they have been read over. This task will require the full time and attention of not just a few overseers – and those overseers need be no ordinary people. There are also books that are partly useful and excellent, partly guilty and harmful – thus this work requires many more again to clean up and make deletions, ensuring that the common good of learning is not injured. And ultimately, when the multitude of books increase upon their hands, you must be ready to instead catalogue all printers who are found frequently offending, and simply ban their entire suspected collection. In short, if your Order is to be precise and not failing in any way, you must reform it to match perfectly the model of Trent, that Catholic council, and Seville, that hive of Inquisitors – a prospect which I know you recoil in disgust from.

But if you were to give way to this – God forbid – then the Order still would be only fruitless and inadequate to the goal you intended it to achieve. If the licensing is to prevent division and breakaway movements, who is so lacking oral or written tutoring in history that they have never heard of many groups refusing books and writing as a hindrance, and instead preserving their teaching intact for many ages only by unwritten traditions? The Christian faith, which once was a breakaway movement, is known to have spread all over Asia before any Gospel or Epistle was seen in written form. If it is the improvement and correction of manners that is to be aimed at, then look

to Italy and Spain, and judge whether those places be now even one ounce the better, the more honest, the wiser, or the more innocent, after all the inquisitional severity that has there been brought upon books.

For another reason with which to make it clear that this Order will miss the end it seeks, consider the quality which ought be found in every licenser. It cannot be denied that the one who is made judge to preside over the birth and death of books, on whether or not they may be escorted into this world, would need be of more than average quality, being studious, educated, and wise. There can be no small mistakes or minor consequences in the censoring of what is acceptable or not. If one is found of such worth as is necessary, there cannot be a more mind-numbing and unwelcome menial task, no more greater waste of time put upon them, than to be made the endless reader of books and pamphlets one never asked for – often huge volumes. There is no book that is desirable at any and every moment, so to be tasked with the reading of all at all times, and in a hardly readable hand, is an inflicted burden that I cannot imagine any who value their time and personal study, or who simply have good taste, will be able to endure. This next thing I hope I have the permission of the present licensers to be forgiven for thinking: that even though they undoubtedly took on this responsibility due to regarding it as part of their obedience to Parliament, whose commands perhaps make all things seem easy and effortless to them, this short trial-shift thus far has tired them out already. Their own expressions and excuses upon seeing those who make so many journeys to ask for their license are evidence enough of that. So, seeing that those who currently possess the employment wish themselves, by all evident signs, well rid of it, and given that no-one of worth, none who aren't just wasters of their own hours, is ever likely to take their place (unless they particularly desire the salary of a press corrector), we can easily predict what kind of licensers we should expect to end up with: ignorant, authoritarian, incompetent, or just plain greedy. This is all I had to say regarding how this Order cannot produce the results that it speaks of intending.

Finally, I proceed from the lack of good it can do, to the actual harm it causes, by being, primarily, the greatest discouragement and insult that can be offered to learning, and to the learned.

It was the sobbing complaint of the bishops, released at every slight hint of a motion to remove their opportunity for multiple incomes and to distribute more equally Church revenue, that all learning would then be forever dashed and discouraged. As for that opinion, I never found reason to think that even the smallest part of learning stood or fell with the clergy – nor could I ever see it as anything but a sleazy and shameful utterance for any of the church to make while resting on their wealth. Are you against utterly disheartening and frustrating, not the mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, but the free and sincere sort who were evidently born to study and love

learning just for learning, not for money or any other reward beside the service of God and of truth, and perhaps maybe the lasting fame and continuing praise which God and good people have decided shall be the reward of those whose published work advance the good of humankind? Then know this: to distrust so fully the judgement and honesty of one who has but average standing in learning, and has not so far offended, so as to count them unfit to print their mind without tutor and examiner, just in case they drop something divisive or degenerate, is the greatest insult and indignity that can be put upon a free and knowing spirit.

What is gained by being a grown-up instead of still a child in school if we have simply escaped the teacher's rod for the whip of a licensers Latin permission? What is the difference, if serious and elaborate writings, as if they were nothing more than the homework of a schoolchild to be looked over by the teacher, must not be published without the glancing, uninterested eyes of a procrastinating, improvising licenser? When not trusted to act even without any reputation for evil, and when facing the arbitrary game of law and punishment, there is no reason to feel regarded, in the Commonwealth that is home, as anything other than a fool or a foreigner. When writing to the world, one summons up all one's reason and contemplation for assistance, searching, meditating, working hard and carefully, questioning and discussing with one's most thoughtful friends. After which, the writing can be done with confidence, and with the feeling of being informed, as informed as any who wrote before on that issue. That is the most total act and demonstration of commitment and readiness. It seems even then that no years, no amount of hard work, no former proof of ability can prove somebody as mature enough to not be mistrusted and suspected, being instead still required to carry their careful effort, all their midnight musings and burnt lamp-light oil, to the hot-headed gaze of a licenser with nothing better to do – perhaps much younger, perhaps inferior in judgement, perhaps having no knowledge of the art and work of book writing. And then, if not rejected or disrespected, able only to appear in print like a first-year student with their supervisor, the censor's hand behind their title to reassure the reader that the writer is no idiot or seducer. If all that is so, it cannot be anything but a dishonour to and belittling of the author, the book, and the privilege and dignity of learning.

And what if the author is one so abundant in imagination that they have many things well worth adding come into their mind after already being licensed, while the book is still under the press, something not rare in the experience of the best and most passionate writers? And what if that happens multiple times for one book? The printer dares not print anything other than the licensed copy. So then must the author often traipse to their approver so the new additions may be viewed, and it may be many a walk before that licenser – as it must be the same person – can either be found, or found with the free time to view them. In the meantime, either the press must stand still

and wait, something more than a little harmful, or the author must lose their most up-to-date thoughts, and send out the book worse than it had been made. And that, to a passionate writer, is the greatest sorrow and frustration that can occur.

And how can someone teach with authority, the very life of teaching, or be a doctor in their book as they ought to be – silence would be better otherwise – when all they teach and deliver is but under the tuition and correction of a patriarchal licenser, free to erase or alter that which fits not perfectly with the narrow-minded whims the licenser calls judgement? When every sharp, perceptive reader will, on first sight of any pompous permission, be ready with words like these to fling the book a javelin's distance from them: "I hate a pupil teacher, I cannot stand an instructor who comes to me under the watch of an overseeing fist. I know nothing of this licenser, besides their own hand as evidence of their arrogance: who will convince me of the licenser's own judgement?" Why, the State, answers the printer, but this has a quick reply: "The State shall be my governors, but not my critics. They may be mistaken in their choice of a licenser, just as easily as this licenser may be wrong about an author – these mistakes are common stuff." And the speaker might add, paraphrasing Sir Francis Bacon, that "such authorised books are but the language of the times." For, even if a licenser happens to be more wise and considerate than usual, which will be a threat posed by future licensers, still their office and their task commands them to let pass nothing, unless it is vulgarity and offence already subjectively accepted by the current status quo.

It is even more regrettable if the work of any dead author, never well known in their own lifetime or even to this day, arrives in their hands for licence to be printed or reprinted. If they find in the book even one sentence with a daring edge to it (and who knows if it is or is not the dictation of a divine spirit?) but which does not fit with their own sordid taste, they will not spare it crossing out, even if it were the Scotsman Knox himself, reformer of a kingdom, that spoke the words. And so, the sense and wisdom of a great thinker shall be lost to all future generations, all because of the fearfulness or the arrogant carelessness of an uninterested licenser. I could speak, now, as to what an author this violence has been lately done, and in what book where publication faithful to the original form is of the utmost importance, but I shall instead hold off until a more suitable time.

If all this is not resented seriously and soon by those who have the power to solve it, leaving authority instead to such censorship as this to spread like ink stains on paper, eating away the finest sentences of the most exquisite books and committing such betrayal and injury against the orphan works left behind by the most worthy, then yet more sorrow will belong to our hapless race, whose misfortune it is to have understanding. From here on out, let no-one care to learn or to be more

than street-smart. For surely in higher matters, to be ignorant and lazy, to be a common and committed simpleton, will not just be the only pleasant life, but also the only one in demand.

It shows a particularly low opinion of every knowing person alive, and is the greatest slight to the written works and monuments of the dead, so it seems to me to only undervalue and cheapen the whole nation. I cannot consider all the invention, the art, the wit, the serious and solid judgement that is in England as so undemanding that it can be even comprehended fully by any twenty minds, no matter how good, let alone that their supervision of it should be the only reason it is accepted, having been sifted and strained with their strainers, out of circulation without their manual stamp. Truth and understanding are not products to be monopolised and traded in with receipts, rules, and standards. We must not seek to turn all knowledge in the land into a regulated commodity, marking and licensing it like our cloth and woolpacks. Will we not be then as the Israelites under the Philistines, who were not allowed smiths of their own so as to prevent them from learning the skill of sharpening their axes and plough-blades? Must we, from all quarters, head for the same twenty licensing forges? Had anyone written and spread things untrue, incorrect, and scandalous to common decency, they might be convicted of misusing and forfeiting the reputation of their reason among others. If after conviction the only punishment issued was that the writer must, henceforth, never write anything that was not first examined by an appointed officer, whose signature should be added to reassure all that they may now be safely read, this could not be recognised as anything less than a disgraceful punishment. So then to include the whole nation, and those that have never yet offended, under such a distrusting and suspicious ban can be clearly understood for just how belittling and demeaning it is. Even more so, when considering that those in debt and those who fought for the crown and not for Parliament may walk freely without a warden, yet inoffensive books must not venture out without a visible jailor in their title.

Nor is it anything less than a scolding to the common people. For if we are to be so doubting and watchful over them, not daring to trust them with an English pamphlet, what do we do but condemn them as a senseless, vicious, and ungrounded people, in so sick and weak a state of faith and judgement that they cannot stomach anything unless from the feeding hand of a licenser? That this is either love or care of them we cannot pretend, not while in those Pope-led places, where the common folk are most hated and despised, they are treated with the same strictness. Wisdom we cannot call it, as it stops only one breach of licence, just as that is undone when the corruptions it seeks to prevent break in faster through other doors that cannot be shut.

Finally, it testifies also to the disgrace of our priests. We should hope better of their work, and of the competence and knowledge gained from it by their followers, than that they, after all this light of

the eternal Gospel and all this continual preaching, should still be regularly visited by an un-clerical rabble so unprincipled and unenlightened that the whiff of every new pamphlet staggers them out of their learnt doctrine and off the Christian path. It may be a great cause of discouragement to the ministers when such a low opinion is held of all their counselling and cautioning, and of the benefit of it to listeners, that they are not thought fit to be turned loose to even three sheets of paper without a licenser. When all the sermons, all the lectures preached, printed, and aired, in such numbers and such volumes to the point now of nearly making all other books unsaleable, are not considered armour enough against a single handbook if it is not held prisoner behind the bars of a licenser's stamp, as if in the Papal prison of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome.

And to avoid you being persuaded, Lords and Commons, that these arguments detailing the discouragement of the educated at this Order of yours are mere exaggerations for effect, and not the reality, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes. I could speak of when I have sat among their own learned people (for that is an honour I had) and been considered fortunate to be born in such a place of free thinking, as they believed England was, while they themselves only mourned the condition into which learning had been brought in their lives, complaining that this situation had dampened the glory of Italian wit and wisdom, and resulted in nothing being written all these years, besides pretentious words and flattery. T'was there that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking differently in astronomy to the way those Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. And though I knew that England was then suffering its greatest under the bishop's tyranny, that other nations were so convinced of its liberty is something I took as a promise of future happiness. Yet it was beyond my hopes that, already breathing in England's air, were those who would be leaders to that promised deliverance, never to be forgotten by any cycle of time that this world has to finish. Once that deliverance had begun, it was just as beyond my fears that the words of complaint against inquisition I heard among the learned of other places would be echoed by those just as learned at home, and uttered against an order of licensing in the time of Parliament. I never feared that those echoes and utterances would be so widespread that, when I admitted I was a companion of their discontent, I was loaded with pleas and requests for me to have the courage to pull and piece together all that sound reasoning could bring together in my mind to argue for the removal of an undeserved enslavement of learning. I might humbly say that even Cicero of Rome, having endeared himself as a public official to the Sicilians, did not have more support against the cruel and unjust Verres than the favourable opinion I had among many who honour you, and are known and respected by you, and were among the many offering those pleas and requests. There is much to show, therefore, that this speech is not the unloading of a particular and personal

grievance, but the shared grievance of all those who had prepared their minds and studies above the common level to advance truth in others, and to receive it from others.

And in their name I shall not conceal, neither from friend nor foe, what the general whisperings are: if it is to come again to licensing and inquisition, if we are to be so uncertain of ourselves and so suspicious of all others that we fear each book and the turning of every page before we even know the contents, if those who recently were essentially silenced from preaching their Christianity shall now begin to silence us from reading anything beyond what they please, then it can only be assumed that the intention of some is a second tyranny over learning, and it will soon settle the debate over the difference between the Catholic bishops and the reforming Presbyterians: they will be the same to us, in name and character. That those evil practices, previously heaped evenly upon the whole population from twenty-five or -six regions of church authority, will now fall fully upon learning is not hidden from us. Suddenly now the pastor of a small uneducated parish is to be exalted Archbishop over a vast congregation of books, yet keeping that first post alongside the new: a miracle of double-office. They who, in recent times, successfully protested the idea that only university graduates could be ordained, and denied that such singular power and sole authority could be held by the bishops over the simplest parishioner, shall now, at home in their private chairs, perform both of these things over the most worthy and excellent books, and over the most able authors who write them.

We have made covenants and protestations against the rule of bishops, yet this Order is not to stamp out theocracy, it is to exchange one for another kind! It is to merely move the palace of the Archbishop from one type of dominion to another, an illusion and an old canonical trick to simply swap the sin we're guilty of. To be so shocked so quickly at a mere unlicensed pamphlet will lead, after a while, to the fear of every unconventional assembly – and it will not be long until that fear has made an unconventional assembly out of every Christian meeting. But I am certain that a State governed by the rules of justice and persevering patience, or a Church built and founded upon the rock of faith and true knowledge, cannot be so anxious and afraid. While such power is being stripped from religion, that freedom of writing should be restrained by practices imitated from the bishops who learnt them from the Inquisition, to shut us all up once more into the licenser's hands, must give cause for doubt and discouragement to all the learned and religious.

Who would fail to recognise the excellence of this turn of politics, and of the ones responsible, that with the bishops being chased to submission, all the presses might now be opened: it was the people's birth right and privilege under Parliament, it was the breaking forth of light. But now, even with the bishops overruled and driven out of the Church, it is as if our Reformation sought nothing

more than to make room for others to take their seats under another name. The Catholic arts begin to bud again, the pot of truth must be allowed to turn cold, the freedom of the press must be enslaved again under a commission of twenty quasi-bishops, the privilege of the people cancelled-out, and, worst of all, the freedom of learning must groan again in its old chains: all this with Parliament still sitting. Their very own recent arguments and defences against the clergy might remind them that this violent obstruction meets for the most part with an outcome utterly opposite to the one it strives for: instead of suppressing sects and movements, it raises them up and clothes them with a reputation. To paraphrase, once more, Sir Francis Bacon: the punishing of minds enhances their authority, and once a writing's forbidden, it is considered to contain some spark of truth that must be flying up into the face of those who seek to stamp it out. This Order may therefore prove a nursing-mother to sects. But I shall show with ease how it will be a stepmother to Truth. Firstly, by preventing and freeing us from the support and upkeep of what is known already.

As one who exercises them well knows, our faith and knowledge thrive by being exercised, just as with our physical health. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain: if its waters do not flow continuously onward, they sicken instead into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A person may be a heretic even when on the side of truth. If they believe things only because the shepherd says so, or because the Assembly of Divines in Westminster – a whole council of shepherds – decides and declares it, and knows no other reason for their belief or opinion, then even when that belief or opinion is true, the very truth they hold becomes their heresy.

There is no burden that some would be happier to hand off to another than the responsibility and care of their religion. There are – and who does not know this? – Protestants and Puritans who live and die in a faith as thoroughly based in blind trust as any Catholic pilgrim to Loretto, seeking the house where Mary was born and Christ conceived, apparently transported there from Nazareth by angels. A wealthy person, addicted to pleasure and profit, finds religion to be an affair so messy that, of all trades, it is this one that cannot be managed and kept stocked up and running. What should be done? They are eager to be labelled religious, and compelled to persist in that with their neighbours. So what is done? They decide to quit struggling and find some agent, to whose care and credibility the whole managing of religious affairs can be committed. That must be some divine person of quality and good judgement. This agent is obeyed, the whole warehouse of religion resigned, with all the locks and keys, into their custody, turning the very person of that agent into the religion, and this association with a holy person is considered to be sufficient evidence and approval of personal devotion to the faith. So that one may say their religion is no longer within them, but has become a transferable commodity, coming near and going, depending on when that holy person frequents the house. There the religion is entertained, given gifts and feasts, and is lodged; it comes home at night,

prays, is well fed and lavishly put to sleep. It rises, is saluted. And, after the morning wine or some well-spiced brew, and after being better breakfasted than Christ himself, that holy person, one's whole religion, walks out of doors at eight, leaving the kind host to work and trade all day without it.

There is another sort who, when they hear that all things shall be ordered, regulated, and settled, with nothing written that has not passed through the customs-station of certain officials who collect their tax on all free-spoken truth, will give themselves up, at once, into your hands, mould 'em and cut 'em out as whatever religion you please. There are delights and distractions, pleasures and pleasant pastimes that will seize and occupy the day from sun to sun, and sway the long and tiresome year in a delightful dream. Why should they torture their heads with things that others have taken, strictly and unalterably, for themselves to attend to and to supply? These are the fruits that a numbing ease and an end to the growth of our knowledge will produce among the people. How wonderful and desirable would be such an obedient unity as this, what a fine conformity it would stiffen us all into! Undoubtedly a steadfast and solid piece of framework, as fixed as anything any cold winter's January could freeze together.

Nor will the consequences be any better among the clergy themselves. It is not some new, unheard of thing for a local minister, having gotten their reward and tenure, and planted their pillars to mark the limits of their ambition, to be easily tempted to end their education, if they have nothing else that might reawaken the curiosity for study, with an English index and a notebook full of quotes – the gatherings and savings of a sensible, conventional career as student. With these and a synthesis of the Gospels, and a list of authorities to refer to, they can wander the endless round of the usual voices in doctrine, being served with their practices, motives, notes, and resources. Out of which, just as out of an alphabet or a musical scale, by forming and transforming, by variously putting together and taking apart, with a little book-craft and two hours of meditation, the performing of more than a week's worth of sermons could be indescribably well provided for. This is not even taking into account the infinite help of a slew of other texts with summaries, side-by-side translations, outlines and guides, and other time-saving tricks of the lazy student. And as for the multitude of sermons, on every text that is not difficult, ready printed and piled up, our London markets that are so close and attached to St. Thomas, St. Martin, and St. Hugh do not have anything else fit for sale within their hallowed limits that is more available and ready-made. So the minister never need fear scarcity of pulpit provision, having such plenty so close by with which to refill on ammunition. But if the rear and sides are not barricaded, if the back door is not secured by the rigid licenser, and a bold book may approach, every now and then, to launch an assault on some of the old collections in their trenches, this will concern the shepherd enough to stay awake and vigilant, to stand in watch and set good guards and sentinels around the already received opinions, to patrol

back and forth with fellow inspectors, fearful that any of the flock may be seduced – a flock who would also then be better instructed, exercised, and disciplined. May God ensure that the fear that drives this careful attention, which must then be used, prevents us from adopting the laziness of a licensing and censorious Church.

For if we do not hold the truth with a guilty conscience, which is unbecoming, and are sure we are in the right, and if we do not condemn our own teaching as weak and worthless, nor regard the public as a wandering, disorderly crowd of the immoral and the ignorant, then what could be more fair than allowing someone wise, thoughtful, educated, and, for all we know, in possession of a conscience just as good as any of those who taught us what we know, to publish openly to the world in writing what their opinion is, why they think it, and why current thinking is not well founded? It would be far more dangerous were they to have to do this privately, from house to house. Christ, in justifying himself, brought attention to the fact that he preached in public, speaking openly to the world. Yet writing is more public than preaching, and easier to challenge and refute, if need be, as there are so many around whose sole business and profession it is to be champions of truth: if they fail to do this, what else can be blamed besides their laziness or inability?

Thus, by this course of licensing, we are held back and put out of practice, cut off from and unaccustomed to true knowledge of the things we seem to know. Given how much it hurts and hinders the licensers themselves in their religious calling as ministers, more than any secular employment could, they should abandon one position or the other, otherwise they will, out of necessity, neglect their duties as either licenser or minister. I do not insist on which position they let go of: how that will be decided is something particular to each and their own conscience.

And behind all this that I aimed to lay out and open is the unbelievable loss and sustained harm that this plan to license brings us toward. More than if some seafaring foe were to block all our ports and bays and harbours, it delays and frustrates the importing of our most valuable merchandise: truth. No, it was first established and put into practice by Catholic anti-Christian hateful resentment and trickery, set on extinguishing, if possible, the light of Reformation and to silence falsehood, hardly differing from the policy of prohibiting printing through which Muslim authorities preserve and protect the Qur'an. Rather than denying, it is to be gladly confessed that we owe thanks and promises to Heaven louder than most nations for the great amount of truth that we enjoy, especially in those crucial quarrels between us and the Pope, with those accessories of his, the bishops. But anyone who thinks we are to pitch our tent here at this summit, and that we have before us the fullest view of progress that the mortal lens we use can show us, until we pass on to more blessed vision, by that very opinion do they declare that they are still far short of truth.

Truth did, indeed, come into the world with its divine Master, Christ, and held a perfect shape most glorious to look upon. But when he ascended, and once his followers, after him, were laid to rest, there immediately arose a wicked dynasty of deceivers, who dealt with the virgin Truth just as the Egyptian Typhon and his collaborators dealt with their god in the story of Osiris: they cut its lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time and ever since, the saddened friends of Truth, at least the ones who dared appear, set about imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, by gathering up, piece by piece and limb by limb, anything of Truth that they could find. We still have not found it all, Lords and Commons, nor will we ever, until its Master's second coming: he shall bring together every joint and limb, and mould them into an immortal form of beauty and perfection. Do not allow these licensing prohibitions, this censorship, to stand at every place of opportunity and forbid and disturb any who continue searching, those that continue to conduct our rites and ceremony to the torn body of our martyred saint.

We boast of our light, but if we look unwisely at the sun itself, it strikes us into darkness. No one can make out those planets closest to the sun, nor those other brightest shining stars that rise and set with it, until the differing motion of their orbits brings them to such a place in the sky that they may be seen evening or morning. The light that we have gained was given to us, not so we would be forever staring at it, but so that by that light we could discover yet more things even further from our current knowledge. To de-frock the priest, to strip the bishop of their rank and headdress, and remove them from where they stamp down upon reform, is not enough to make us a happy nation. No, if other equally problematic things, both within the Church and in the economic and political governing of life, are not looked into and reformed, then we have gazed into the light that reformers like Zwingli and Calvin have shone toward us for so long that we are now severely blind. There are those who never stop complaining about sects and division, and make it such a tragedy and disaster if anyone differs with and diverges from their beliefs and sayings. It is their own pride and ignorance that causes the resulting disturbance, when they will neither listen with patience, nor be open to changing their minds. Instead, everything that is not found within their collected dogma must be suppressed. They are the problem, they are the dividers of unity, those who search not, and do not allow others to unite those still severed pieces, missing from the body of Truth. To still be searching for what we do not know by using what we do, still piecing together truth with truth as we find it (for all its body is made up, in equal parts, of truth), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic. And it is this that creates the best harmony in a church or nation, not the forced and public unity of inactive, indifferent, and inwardly divided minds.

Lords and Commons of England, consider the nation you are from, and of which you are the governors! A nation not slow and stupid, but possessed by a spirit intelligent and quick, innovative and perceptive, sharp in invention, bringing skill, toughness, and subtlety to debate, and not beneath the reach of any of the highest points that human capacity can soar to. It is because the most foundational sciences and philosophies within the study of learning have been among us for so long and so outstandingly that writers of best judgement from the greatest periods before ours have been convinced that even the school of Pythagoras and the wisdom of the Persians learnt, early on, from the old thinking of this island. The wise and civil Roman, Julius Agricola, who once governed Britain for several Caesars, preferred our natural wits to the laborious studies of the French. And it is not for nothing that the careful and cautious Transylvanians take not their youth, but their serious adults, and sends them out yearly, from as far as the mountainous borders of Russia and beyond the wilderness of the German forests, to learn our language and our studies of theology.

Yet above all of this, we have good reason to think that the favour and the love of Heaven inclines toward us in a unique and favourable manner. Why else was this nation chosen before any other to be the one that the first tidings and trumpets of the Reformation, as if out of Jerusalem, should be proclaimed and sounded out of to all of Europe? And if it had not been for the stubborn obstructive behaviour of our bishops against the divine and admirable spirit of John Wycliffe, supressing him as a divider and innovator, perhaps neither Jerome of Prague nor Jan Hus, the Bohemian Reformers, no nor the names of Luther or Calvin, would have ever been known or needed. The glory of reforming all our neighbours would have been completely ours. But, as our unbending clergy have led the way in the matter with violence, we have become now the slowest students falling furthest behind, when God had offered to make us the teachers. Now once again, by all signs coinciding, and by the general instinct of the holy and the devout, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is deciding to begin some new and great period in his Church, to even reform Reformation itself: how else does he do this but through revealing himself to his servants, and first, as is his way, to the English? I say that his way is to reveal it first to us, even though we do not acknowledge the methods he uses to do it with, and are unworthy of it.

Behold now this vast city: a city of refuge and shelter for those persecuted in their own countries, a mansion house of freedom, embraced and surrounded by his protection. There are more pens and minds, sat by their committed lamps, thinking, searching, throwing around new notions and ideas to present to the approaching Reformation with their honour and allegiance, and others studiously reading, trying all things, endorsing the force of reason and convincing argument, than there are anvils and hammers working within the shop of war to fashion out the armour and the instruments of justice in defence of truth under siege. What more could one require from a nation so willing and

inclined to seek after knowledge? What else is needed by such a promising and pregnant soil, besides wise and committed workers to produce an educated and worthy people, a nation of prophets, of teachers? We calculate more than five months yet to harvest, when there need not be five weeks: if we only had eyes to lift and see, the fields are white already.

Where there is much desire to learn, there will be, as there needs to be, much arguing, much writing, many opinions – for opinion in good people is but knowledge in the making. Acting under these imagined terrors of division and divisiveness, we wrong the sincere and passionate thirst after knowledge and understanding which God has stirred up in this city. What some complain of, we should instead rejoice at. We should praise this faithful courage among people that leads them to take back the poorly managed care of their religion into their own hands again. A little common sense, a little tolerance of one another, and some grains of goodwill, might succeed in joining all these committed movements together into one common and amicable search for truth, if only we could drop this bishop's tradition of cramming free minds and Christian liberties into rules, doctrines, and dogmas. When Pyrrhus saw and admired the courage and the willingness to learn of the Romans he had conquered, he cried out. If some great and worthy stranger were to come among us, with the wisdom to detect the character and qualities of a people and how best they should be governed, when observing the high hopes and aims, and the determined eagerness, of our advanced thoughts and reasoning in the pursuit of truth and freedom, I do not doubt that they would cry out as Pyrrhus did. If these lands were mine, I would not hope for less than the greatest design that could be attempted to make a church or kingdom happy.

Yet these, those who are keen for learning and truth, are the people being cried out against as the members and promoters of sects. It is as if there were some sort of irrational person while the temple of the Lord was being built, with some doing the cutting, some squaring the marble, others felling the trees for wood, who could not comprehend or accept that there must be these different groups and separations made in the construction site before the house of God can be finished. And when every stone is laid artfully together, they cannot be united into one continuous thing, but can only be adjacent to one another in this world, just as all the pieces of the building together cannot become one form. No, instead the perfection consists in this: that, out of many moderated varieties and respectful differences that are not wildly out of proportion with one another, arises the good and graceful symmetry that makes the whole pile and structure admirable.

So let us be more thoughtful builders, wiser in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected. For now the time seems to have come when the great prophet Moses may sit in heaven rejoicing, seeing that his memorable and glorious wish, for a time when all the Lord's people, not

only our elders, are become prophets, is being fulfilled. No wonder then that these people are envied by some, even envied, perhaps, by good people, only immature in their goodness, just as Joshua was. They worry and, due to their own weakness, are in agony, thinking that these divisions will undo us. The adversary again applauds, and the fallen angel awaits the hour, saying: "When they have branched themselves out enough, into small and divided parties, then will be our time." Fool! He does not see the firm root out of which we all grow, even if we grow into branches. Nor will he be aware of this until he sees our small, divided groups cutting at every angle through his single, poorly united, and unmanageable brigade. Why am I persuaded that we should be more hopeful with all these supposed divisions and sects? And that we shall not need this perhaps honest, but overly fearful worrying, but will laugh in the end at those who see our differences and applaud with malice? I have these reasons.

First, because of the example Londoners set when the Royalist army threatened our city, with the city besieged and surrounded as it was, clear and open river infested, attacks and raids all around, opposition and battle rumoured often to be marching up even to the walls and trenches of the suburbs. That during this the people (or most, at least) were absorbed even more than usual in the study of highest and most important matters needing reformation, that they were disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discussing, even, rarely and admirably, things not discussed or written about before, is a demonstration of remarkable goodwill, and of satisfaction and confidence in your wise foresight and safe government, Lords and Commons. And from this flows a remarkable bravery and quite justified disrespect toward their enemies, as if among us there were no shortage of great spirits – as great as the spirit of that citizen who was present when Rome was near surrounded by Hannibal, and demonstrated Roman confidence by buying, for the normal price, the piece of ground that Hannibal himself had camped his own troops upon.

Next, it is a lively and pleasant sign of our happy success and victory. In a body, when the blood is fresh, the spirits pure and healthy, it demonstrates what good condition and health the body is in, not only to the organs but to the mind, and those parts of the mind taken up by the sharpest and liveliest processes of wit and ingenuity. Just in this way, it indicates we are not degenerated, nor slipping into a deadly decay, when the cheerfulness of the people is so animated, to the point where we have not only the ability to guard well our own freedom and safety, but enough to spare so to devote it to the strongest and most dignified points of discussion, disagreement, and new thought and invention. Instead of degeneration and decay, it is the casting off of the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pains and grow young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and fruitful virtue, destined to become great and honourable in these later years. I think I see in my mind a noble and capable nation lifting itself like somebody strong after sleep, and shaking its invincible

head. I think I see the nation as an eagle grooming its mighty youth, and lighting its eyes, unfazed, at the full midday sun, cleansing its long-abused sight, freeing it of scales, at the fountain of heavenly radiance itself. All while the noisy band of fearful and flocking birds, including those who love the twilight of sunset, flutter about, shocked at this eagle and what it signifies, and in their jealous babbling they would predict a year of division and disruption.

What would you do then? Should you suppress all this abundant flowering of knowledge and new light that has sprung up and is still springing up daily in this city? Should you set an elite few of twenty over it to monopolise, to bring a famine upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing except that which is measured out in rations to be handed to us? Believe this, Lords and Commons: those who advise you to this kind of suppressing may just as well be inviting you to suppress yourselves – and I will soon show how. If you want to know the immediate cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there is not a truer cause that can be pointed to than your own gracious, free, and humane government. It is the freedom, Lords and Commons, that your own courageous and helpful guidance has bought us, freedom which nourishes all great minds. It is this that has elevated and enlightened our spirits like the influence of heaven; it is this that has liberated, enlarged, and lifted up our knowledge and understanding, to levels far above what it once was.

You cannot make us now less capable, less knowledgeable, less eager to look for the truth, unless you first make yourselves – the very ones who made us this way – less the lovers and founders of our true freedom. We can grow ignorant again, uncivilised, ordinary, and submissive, as you found us. But then you must first become something that you cannot be: oppressive, illiberal, unrestrained, and tyrannous, just like those from whom you have freed us. Our hearts are now more changeable, our thoughts more built and organised to searching for and expecting the greatest and best developed things. And that is the offspring of your own virtue, carried on in us. You cannot suppress that, unless you re-establish and re-enforce an abolished and merciless Roman law, that allowed fathers to kill their own children at will. And who will then stick closest by you, and inspire others to your support? Not those who previously took up arms with you against the illegal taxes forced on us by the king. I do not condemn fighting for rights and deserved freedoms, but I love peace better, personally, if that could be the way. Above all other liberties, give me the freedom to know, to speak, and to argue openly and honestly according to my conscience.

It will not be my task here to say what would be the best advice going forward, if it is agreed that it is so harmful and unfair to suppress opinions for being new, or unsuitable and unacceptable to custom and tradition. I shall only repeat what I have learned from a member of your own honourable ranks, an utterly noble and religious Lord. Had he not sacrificed his life and fortunes fighting for the

Parliamentary cause against the king, we would not now be missing and mourning a worthy and guaranteed supporter of this argument. You know him, I am sure, but for honour's sake (and may honour be eternally his) I shall name him: Robert Greville, the Lord Brook. He left you his vote on this issue by writing about the rule of bishops, and how to deal with division and sects. Or rather now it is his dying appeal, which I know will always be regarded dearly and with honour by yourselves, as it is so full of patience and gentleness, and breathing compassion. Other than the final words and wishes of the one who left behind love and peace to his disciples, I cannot call to mind where I have read or heard words more mild and peaceful. There he urges us to listen with patience and humility to those, no matter how they are labelled, who wish to live purely by following God's commands using the best guidance that their conscience gives them, and to tolerate them, even though they do not match with ourselves. The book itself will tell us more in greater detail, as it is a work published to the world, and dedicated to the Parliament by its author, who, both for his life and for his death, deserves that what advice he left should not be put aside without being read.

Now is the time, especially so, for using our right and privilege to speak and write anything that may help discuss any issues that are debated. The temple of Janus, with his two faces set in opposite directions, might now, significantly, be kept open, as the Romans did during times of war. And even if all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, Truth is in the field, and we do wrong to doubt its strength by licensing, censoring, and banning. Let Truth and Falsehood grapple – who ever knew Truth to come off worse in a free and open encounter? Being proven wrong by Truth is the best and most reliable suppression. No-one who hears the praying that there is for light and clearer knowledge to be sent down to us would be satisfied with dwelling only on the discipline of Presbyterianism, finished and framed already for us, but would think of other matters to be settled. But when the new light that we beg for shines down upon us, there are those who are jealous and oppose it if it does not shine first through their windows. What kind of conspiracy is this, when we are implored by the wise man, Solomon, to search night and day for knowledge and wisdom as if searching for hidden treasure, while another order will instruct us to know nothing except things that are first approved by the law? Imagine someone has been performing the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, has fully equipped all the findings, has set out their reasoning as if an army arranged for battle, has scattered and defeated all objections in the way thus far, and calls out their opponents into the field, giving them the advantage of wind and sun, if desired, all so that their conclusions may be tested through argument. If the opponents then sneak around to lay traps for ambush, and keep a narrow bridge of censorship where the challenger wishes to pass, while that is all courageous enough in real battle, it is only weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth.

For who does not know that Truth is stronger than all, except the Almighty? It needs no policies, strategies, or licensing to be victorious – those things are the evasions and defences that error uses against Truth's power. Just give it room, and do not bind it when it sleeps, for that it is when it does not speak honestly and accurately. While old Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, would only speak truthfully about the future when he was caught and bound, changing his shape to avoid it, Truth changes its shape when caught and bound, taking all forms but its own, perhaps tuning its voice to match the time (like Micaiah when in front of Ahab) until it can be commanded under oath back into its true form. Yet it is not impossible that Truth may have more than one shape. How else would one explain all those subjective things, neither good nor bad, in which Truth can be on this side or that, without contradicting itself? We were saved as the handwriting of laws against us was erased, taken with our Saviour to his cross. Yet if Truth is not free and unbound, what could this act be but an empty shadow? What kind of great purchase is this Christian freedom that Paul so often boasts of? Paul's doctrine is that whether one eats or fasts, whether one puts importance on certain days or sees them all equally, it does not matter to the Lord. How many other things might be tolerated in peace and left to conscience, if only we were more compassionate and patient, and if it was not our central, best defended hypocrisy to be forever judging one another?

I still fear this iron collar of outward agreement has left a print of slavery upon our necks; the ghost of priestly robes and proper decency still haunts us. At the smallest dividing of one visible group from another we stumble and become impatient, when it is not even a disagreement in anything fundamental. And because of our willingness to suppress, and our unwillingness to recover any enslaved piece of truth out of the clutches of tradition, we do not care if we keep truth separated from truth, which is the most dangerous split and separation of all. We do not see that, while we still give, by all means, an outward and uniform appearance that is strong and rigid, we may quickly fall again into a great multitude conforming in stupidity, a rigid and dead congealed mass of wood and hay and straw, forced and frozen together: something more likely to cause the sudden degeneration of a Church than many subdivisions of small and trivial disagreements.

Not that I can approve of every little separation, nor should anyone expect everything in a Church to be gold and silver and precious stones. It is not possible for us to pull the wheat apart from the wheat-like weeds, the good fish from the rest of the catch – that must be the good work of the angels at the end of mortal things. But if all minds cannot be the same (and who thinks that they should be?), it is undoubtedly healthier, more far-sighted, and more Christian, if many are tolerated, rather than all compelled. I do not mean that theocracy and open hostility to science and reason should be tolerated. It destroys all religious and civil rights and independence, and so should be destroyed itself, as long as all compassionate and understanding methods have first been used to

win back the weak and the misguided. Also, no law can possibly allow that which is immoral or evil, absolutely against social conduct or morality, unless that law intends to make itself unacceptable. It is those neighbourly differences (or indifferences), that clash but do not prevent and forbid each other, that I speak of, whether they are about some point of teaching and belief or of practice and action. And, though there may be many of them, they do not need to interrupt the unity of spirit, if we could just find the bond of peace among us.

Meanwhile, if anyone who has had Truth speak to them first – or, at least, believes that they have – seeks to write and bring their helpful hand to the slow-moving Reformation that we work for, who has made us into such priestly opposers of progress that we would demand that this person request permission to do such a worthy deed? Will we not consider that there is nothing more likely to be censored and prohibited than truth itself? When we first lay eyes on truth, our eyes are bleary and dimmed with prejudice and custom, making truth appear uglier and less plausible than many actual errors, just as many a great thinker can be seen as unimportant, disrespectful, and despicable. We are warned of new opinions, to no avail, when it is this opinion of theirs that is the newest and the worst of all: the opinion that only that which they like may be heard. It is this attitude that is the chief cause of thriving division and conflict, and keeps true knowledge distant from us. And, besides this, there is yet a greater danger within it.

For when God shakes a kingdom to reform things generally, with strong turbulence good for its health, it is true that many false teachers and their followers are busiest in seducing at that exact time. But it is still more true that God raises people of rare abilities and extraordinary dedication to do his work at that moment, not only to look back on and revise what has been taught so far, but to gain further knowledge, and go on some new enlightened steps in the discovery of truth. For this is how God enlightens his Church, by dispensing and dealing out his light bit by bit, so that it is possible for our earthly eyes to tolerate it.

Neither is God assigned to certain times and places, limited in when and where his chosen ones will first be heard to speak, for he does not see as we see, he does not choose as we choose. If we forget this, we would devote ourselves again to fixed places, gatherings, and public meetings, planting our faith where the clergy meet to decide on doctrine and where we worship in the Chapel at Westminster, when all the faith and religion that these places hold and give authority to is not enough without simply convincing others. It is insufficient without the offer of patient guidance to listen to and ease every problem raised by another's conscience, and to educate even the most lowly and ordinary Christian who wishes to walk in the Spirit, and not in blind trust of human instruction, despite all the many voices that can be heard for that. No, not even if Henry the 7th,

laying at rest beneath Westminster Chapel with his allies buried all around him, were to speak up and lend the voices of the dead to increase their number.

And if the ones who appear to be leading the dissent are wrong, just what, besides our laziness, our lack of self-discipline, and our lack of trust in what is right, is stopping us from giving them thoughtful attention and good-natured dismissal? Why would we not debate and examine the issue thoroughly, frequently, and in open-minded discussion – if not for their sake, but for our own? We see that all who have tasted learning admit that there are many ways to benefit by listening to those who have discovered and figured out new positions and laid them out for the world, having been unsatisfied with the old and unexciting thinking handed to them. And if they were nothing but dust and ash beneath our feet, as long as in being so they serve to polish and brighten the armour of Truth, just for that they ought to not be completely thrown away. But they may be those who have been equipped by God for special use in these times, given plenty of great gifts but are perhaps not part of the clergy or the established authorities for thought, and in our urgency from our passion that drives us we do not make any distinctions, but decide to shut them up, because we fear that they come with new and dangerous opinions, as we so often prejudge them before we understand them. Nothing less than great sorrow will be ours, when while we think we are defending the truth, we turn out to be the oppressors.

Since the beginning of this Parliament, there have been more than a few, both within the Church and without, who first broke the ice layered about our hearts with their own unlicensed books, defying any stamp of approval, and taught people to see daylight. I hope that none of those were the ones to argue that these shackles should be renewed upon us, when they themselves gained so much by throwing them off. The fact that Moses refused to prevent prophesy from being preached when Joshua asked him to forbid it, nor the fact that Christ overruled and admonished young John when he told our Saviour how he had suppressed the speech of one who was casting out devils because they were not a disciple, may not be enough to warn our elders how unacceptable to God their impatient mood of banning things is. Their own memory of the evil that has thrived in the Church due to this barrier of censorship, and the good that they themselves have kickstarted by breaching it, may not be enough to stop them from putting into law and into practice the very heart of the Spanish Inquisition over us, being already so active in suppressing with only one foot in the stirrups. If so, then it would not be unfair action to first suppress the suppressors themselves, who have become puffed up with pride by their change in position and condition, rather than being made wiser by their recent experience of harder times.

And as for regulation of the press, let no-one think they have the honour of advising you better than you have advised yourselves in the Order published prior to this one, in which you say that no book should be printed unless it states the names of the author and the printer – or at least the printer's. For works that appear without this and are found to be slander made for defaming others, destruction after publication will be the most appropriate and most effective solution that can be used as prevention. Because this authentically Spanish policy of licensing books, if I have shown anything at all, will prove to be the most unlicensed book itself within a short while, and it appears identical to a decree by the Star Chamber calling for the suppression of undesired publications, which was made when that royal court performed the rest of its holy deeds – for which it has now fallen from the stars with Lucifer. You may guess from that what kind of state judgement, what love of the people, from what care for religion and good manners it was created, while it pretended, with exceptional hypocrisy, to force books to behave. How has this now managed to get the upper hand against your previous Order, which I have already praised for being better formulated? If we may believe those who, given their profession, have looked into it most, we can suspect that it involved the lies of some old traders in books, who had patents and monopolies to protect. People who pretended to be concerned about the poor in their company being exposed to fraud, and who hid behind the rights of everyone to maintain copyright on their work – and God forbid that should ever be rejected – and through this presented diverse and colourful arguments to you. And colourful they were – only, merely there to colour the truth and to gain superiority for some over their neighbours. These are people, therefore, who do not work at anything honest, or anything that learning could be grateful for, and so they should be regarded as beneath others. It is thought there was another goal in mind for some when petitioning Parliament to take the kind of control over the press that the Star Chamber had, and that was so that, having that power in their hands, Royalist books against Parliament could escape abroad more easily to seek support – which we saw happen.

But I am not skilled in arguments and debunking that are clever but false, these tricks of the trade. This I do know: that mistakes are almost equally likely to happen in a good government and in a bad one. For what member of government is not at risk of being misinformed, and even more so if the freedom of the press is to be reduced into the power of a few? But to set right, quickly and willingly, what has been done wrong, and to then announce that correction, with highest authority, more clearly and publicly than some have announced their engagement, is a virtue, honoured Lords and Commons, possessed by you in your finest moments, and something in which only the greatest and the wisest can participate.

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There are two online resources I am indebted to, for making Milton make sense so that I could try to make Milton make more immediate sense, and these are:

- The John Milton Reading Room, by Dartmouth College (found at: https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/areopagitica/text.html)
- Bartleby.com – Great Books Online (found at: <http://www.bartleby.com/3/3/2.html>)

Both of these sites present the original text replete with annotations and footnotes, hyperlinks and explanations. Without them, my task would have been so much greater a challenge, and my own research into metaphors and allusions made by Milton would never have amounted to what they have managed. I would have been able to present his general points, but never the information that, without these sites, would have been lost in translation. If my piece manages to make Milton make sense and yet still sound like Milton, still say what he said, it is in no small part down to the work that went into these two annotated versions of his original text.

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