Freedom of Speech and of the Press

Striking passages from distinguished champions of freedom of expression

Selected by

John Haynes Holmes

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(Revised)
In this pamphlet

will be found what certain men have said about the great ideals of free thought and free speech. Here is the testimony of John Milton, John Looke, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster, Wendell Phillips, Abraham Lincoln, William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Bernard Shaw, and many others, as to the sanctity of freedom as a social principle—the wisdom of letting all be heard, the folly and sin of silencing a single voice.

It seems impossible that a principle so carefully reasoned by the leaders of our race, established and vindicated by centuries of noble sacrifice, recognized in all constitutions, charters, and codes of law, should ever again be called in question. But the Great War has discovered tyrannies at home as well as abroad. The right and efficacy of free thought and speech is being challenged today as never before in American history. Hence the worth of this reminder of our ideals!

No attempt, of course, has been made to prepare anything even resembling a complete anthology. We have simply brought together a few of the more striking passages from a few of the more distinguished champions of free speech. If this compilation shall offer convenient material for use in addresses, sermons, editorials, etc., and tempt to fresh and more thorough investigation of the field, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

John Haynes Holmes.
NOTE—The material is classified in three groups: (1) American, (2) English, and (3) Miscellaneous. In each group the arrangement is chronological.

### 1. AMERICAN QUOTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams, J. Q.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beecher, Henry Ward</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channing, William Ellery</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Congress (1774)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of the United States</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby, Judge Ernest</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of Independence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson, Ralph Waldo</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiske, John</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freund, Prof. Ernst</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrison, William Lloyd</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giddings, Prof. Franklin H.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, Thos.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, Abraham</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowell, James Russell</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paine, Thomas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker, Theodore</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips, Wendell</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Court, United States</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoreau, Henry David</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twain, Mark</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Commission on Industrial Relations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia, Act of</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster, Daniel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitman, Walt</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Woodrow</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. ENGLISH QUOTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angell, Norman</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beutham, Jeremy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackstone, Sir William</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. MISCELLANEOUS QUOTATIONS

(Not American or English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helvetius</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machiavelli</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montesquieu</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socrates</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinoza, Benedict</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodosius, Emperor</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turgot</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltaire</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. AMERICAN QUOTATIONS

The Continental Congress (1774): The last right we shall mention regards the freedom of the press. The importance of this consists, besides the advancement of truth, science, morality and arts in general, in its diffusion of liberal sentiments on the administration of government, its ready communication of thoughts between subjects, and its consequential promotion of union among them, whereby oppressive officers are shamed or intimidated into more honourable and just modes of conducting affairs.

The Declaration of Independence (1776): We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. * * * All experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Act of Virginia establishing Religious Freedom (1786): To suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all liberty; because he being, of course, judge of that tendency, will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own. It is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order. (Approved by United States Supreme Court in Reynolds vs. U. S., 98 U. S. 163.)
Amendments to the Constitution: Article 1. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Article 4. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized.

Thos. Jefferson: (Inaugural address of 1801; Harpers Encyc. U. S. History, Vol. 5, p. 134.) If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

J. Q. Adams: The freedom of the press should be inviolate.

Thomas Paine: He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression, for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.

Daniel Webster: Important as I deem it, sir, to discuss the policy of the measures at present pursued, it is still more important to maintain the right of such discussion in its full and just extent. * * * It is the ancient and constitutional right of this people to canvass public measures, and the merits of public men. It is a home-bred right, a fireside privilege. * * * It is not to be drawn into controversy. It is as undoubted as the right of breathing the air and walking on the earth. Belonging to private life as a right, it belongs to public life as a duty. This high constitutional privilege I shall defend and exercise in all places in time of war, in time of peace and at all times. Living, I will assert it; dyeing, I will assert it; and should I leave no other inheritance to my children I will leave them the inheritance of free principles and the example of a manly, independent and constitutional defense of them.

William Ellery Channing:

The Present Age (1841): Human nature is not a tiger which needs a constant chain. In this case it is the chain which makes the tiger. * * * It is not denied that thought, in its freedom, questions and assails the holiest truth. But is truth so weak, so puny, as to need to be guarded by bayonets from assault? Has truth no beauty, no might? Has the human soul no power to weigh its evidence, to reverence its grandeur? Besides, does not freedom of thought, when most
unrestrained, carry a conservative power in itself? * * * Error soon passes away, unless upheld by restraint on thought.

* Duties of the Citizen in Times of Trial or Danger (Written during the War of 1812): A republican government secures to its subjects immense privilege, by conferring on them two most important rights—the right of suffrage, and the right of discussing with freedom the conduct of rulers. The value of these rights in affording a peaceful method of redressing public grievances cannot be expressed, and the duty of maintaining them, of never surrendering them, cannot be too strongly urged. Resign either of these, and no way of escape from oppression will be left you but civil commotion. From the important place which these rights hold in a republican government, you should consider yourselves bound to support every citizen in the lawful exercise of them, especially when an attempt is made to wrest them from any by violent means. At the present time, it is particularly your duty to guard with jealousy the right of expressing with freedom your honest convictions respecting the measures of your rulers.

Freedom of opinion, of speech, and of the press is our most valuable privilege, the very soul of republican institutions, the safeguard of all other rights. * * * Nothing awakens and improves men so much as free communications of thoughts and feelings.

If men abandon the right of free discussion; if, awed by threats, they suppress their convictions; if rulers succeed in silencing every voice but that which approves them; if nothing reaches the people but what would lend support to men in power,—farewell to liberty. The form of a free government may remain, but the life, the soul, the substance is fled.

We have lived to hear the strange doctrine, that to expose the measures of rulers is treason; and we have lived to see this doctrine carried into practice. The cry has been that war is declared, and all opposition should therefore be hushed. A sentiment more unworthy of a free country could hardly be propagated. If the doctrine be admitted, rulers have only to declare war and they are screened at once from scrutiny. * * * Our peace and all our interests require that a different sentiment should prevail. We should teach our present and all our future rulers that there is no measure for which they must render so solemn an account to their constituents as for a declaration of war; that no measure will be so freely, so fully discussed; and that no administration can succeed in persuading this people to exhaust their treasure and their blood in supporting war, unless it be palpably necessary and just. In war, then, as in peace, assert the freedom of speech and of the press. Cling to this as the bulwark of all your rights and privileges.
The *Abolitionists* (1836): The defenders of freedom are not those who claim and exercise rights which no one assails, or who win shouts of applause by well turned compliments to liberty in the days of her triumph. They are those who stand up for rights which mobs, conspiracies, or single tyrants put in jeopardy; who contend for liberty in that particular form which is threatened at the moment by the many or the few.

The greatest truths are often the most unpopular and exasperating; and were they to be denied discussion till the many should be ready to accept them, they would never establish themselves in the general mind. The progress of society depends on nothing more than on the exposure of time-sanctioned abuses, which cannot be touched without offending multitudes, than on the promulgation of principles which are in advance of public sentiment and practice, and which are consequently at war with the habits, prejudices, and immediate interests of large classes of the community. The right of free discussion is therefore to be guarded by the friends of mankind with peculiar jealousy. It is at once the most sacred and most endangered of all our rights. He who would rob his neighbor of it should have a mark set on him as the worst enemy of freedom.

William Lloyd Garrison, *Free Speech and Free Inquiry*: He who is forcibly stopping the mouth of his opponent, or for burning any man at the stake, or thrusting him into prison, or exacting a pecuniary fine from him, or impairing his means of procuring an honest livelihood, or treating him scornfully, on account of his peculiar view on any subject * * * is under the dominion of a spirit of ruffianism or cowardice, or animated by that fierce intolerance which characterized Paul of Tarsus in his zeal to exterminate the heresy of Christianity. On the other hand, he who forms his opinions from the dictates of enlightened reason, and sincerely desires to be led into all truth, dreads nothing so much as the suppression of free enquiry—is at all times ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him—calmly listens to the objections of others—feels nothing of anger or alarm lest his foundation be swept away by the waves of opposition. It is impossible, therefore, for him to be a persecutor, or to call upon the strong arm of violence to put a gag into the mouth of any one, however heretical in his sentiments. In proportion as we perceive and embrace the truth, do we become meek, heroic, magnanimous, divine.

Theodore Parker *The Mexican War*: Your President tells us it is treason to talk so! Treason is it? Treason to discuss a war which the government made and which the people are made to pay for? Why, if the people cannot discuss the war they have got to fight and to pay for, who under heaven can? Whose business is it, if it is not yours and mine?
I think lightly of what is called treason against a government. That may be your duty today, or mine. But treason against the people, against mankind, against God, is a great sin, not lightly to be spoken of.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson:** But if there be a country where knowledge cannot be diffused without perils of mob law and statute law; where speech is not free; where the post-office is violated, mail bags opened and letters tampered with; * * * where liberty is attacked in the primary institution of social life; where the laborer is not secured in the earnings of his own hands; where suffrage is not free and equal—that country is, in all these respects, not civil, but barbarous, and no advantage of soil, coast or climate can resist these suicidal mischiefs.

**Wendell Phillips:** No matter whose the lips that would speak, they must be free and ungagged. Let us believe that the whole of truth can never do harm to the whole of virtue; and remember that in order to get the whole of truth you must allow every man, right or wrong, freely to utter his conscience, and protect him in so doing. Entire unshackled freedom for every man's life, no matter what his doctrine—the safety of free discussion no matter how wide its range. The community which dares not protect its humblest and most hated member in the free utterance of his opinions, no matter how false or hateful, is only a gang of slaves.

If there is anything in the universe that can't stand discussion, let it crack.

**Henry Ward Beecher:** There is tonic in the things that men do not love to hear; and there is damnation in the things that wicked men love to hear. Free speech is to a great people what winds are to oceans and malarial regions, which waft away the elements of disease, and bring new elements of health; and where free speech is stopped miasma is bred, and death comes fast.

**Henry David Thoreau:**

*Early Spring in Massachusetts* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1892, p. 41): Must the citizen even for a moment; or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.

*Same* (p. 284): There is no need of a law to check the license of the press. It is law enough and more than enough to itself. Virtually the community must have come together and agreed what things shall be uttered, have agreed on a platform and to excom-
municate him who departs from it, and no one in a thousand dares utter anything else.

_Yankee in Canada_ (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891, p. 125): A free spoken man, of sound lungs, cannot draw a long breath, without causing your rotten institutions to come toppling down, but the vacuum he makes. Freedom of speech! It hath not entered into your hearts to conceive what those words mean. * * * The church, the state, the school, the magazines, think they are liberal and free! It is the freedom of the prison yard.

**James Russell Lowell:** _Stanzas on Freedom_ (T. Y. Crowell & Co., 1898, p. 176):

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

**Walt Whitman:** I say discuss all and expose all—I am for every topic openly: I say there can be no safety for These States without innovators—without free tongues, and ears willing to hear the tongues.

And I announce as a glory of These States that they respectfully listen to propositions, reforms, fresh views and doctrines from successions of men and women.

Each age with its own growth!

**Abraham Lincoln:** The man who will not investigate both sides of a question is dishonest.

_(First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861):_ The country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it. * * * If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would if such a right were a vital one. * * * A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. * * * At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties in personal actions,
the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned the government into the hands of that eminent tribunal.

United States Supreme Court: The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times and under all circumstances. No doctrine involving more pernicious consequences was ever invented by the wit of man than that any of its provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government. Such a doctrine leads directly to anarchy or despotism. (*Ex parte Milligan*, 4 Wall. 2, 1863.)

John Fiske: The persecuting spirit has its origin morally in the disposition of man to domineer over his fellow creatures; intellectually, in the assumption that one's own opinions are infallibly correct.

Prof. Ernst Freund (*Police Power*, p. 509): As the freedom of religion would have no meaning without the liberty of attacking all religion, so the freedom of political discussion is merely a phrase if it must stop short of questioning the fundamental ideas of politics, law, and government. Otherwise every government is justified in drawing the line of free discussion at those principles or institutions which it deems essential to its perpetuation—a view to which the Russian government would subscribe. It is of the essence of political liberty that it may create disaffection or other inconvenience to the existing government, otherwise there would be no merit in tolerating it. This toleration, however, like all toleration, is based not upon generosity but on sound policy; on the consideration, namely, that ideas are not suppressed by suppressing their free and public discussion, and that such discussion alone can render them harmless and remove the cause for illegality by giving hope of their realization by lawful means.

Judge Ernest Crosby, (*North American Review*, 1904, Vol. 176, p. 616): All liberty involves a risk, but then it is often a risk worth taking. And all repression involves risks too, and these risks are so much less noble and alluring! Freedom presupposes strength and courage, but we are becoming cowardly in our old age, and are afraid to allow men to land upon our shores who dare to “disbelieve” in our institutions or to criticise them. It is, perhaps, unlikely that we should soon return to our old-time devotion to freedom. So be it. But, in that case, let us stop talking about it. Let us clear ourselves of cant and cease to be hypocrites. Let us take down the beautiful statue of Liberty enlightening the world, that brazen lie, which now casts its beams on Ellis Island and its prison, and let us put up in its place an ogre of iron, grasping a gnarled and knotted club, and casting its baneful shadow upon the immigrant—an image no longer of Liberty Enlightening, but of Despotism Darkening, the World.
Prof. Franklin H. Giddings: Our government is based on the agreement both tacit and implied, that the minority shall always have the rights of free speech, of free press, and of free agitation, in order to convert itself if possible from a minority into a majority. As soon as these rights of the minority are denied, it will inevitably resort to secret meetings, conspiracies and finally force. In times of stress, it may be extremely embarassing for the majority to be hampered in quick, decisive action by an obstinate minority; but nevertheless the recognition of the right of the minority is our sole bond of unity. For this reason, I repeat that any attempt to interfere with the rights of free speech and free press is a blow at the very foundations of our government. (On the Espionage Bill, 1917.)

Mark Twain, (“Mysterious Stranger,” Harper and Bro., 1916, p. 128; “Satan” speaking of the effect of an aggressive war on liberty of opinion): The loud little handful, as usual, will shout for the war. The pulpit will—warily and cautiously—object at first; the great big, dull bulk of the Nation will rob its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war, and will say, earnestly and indignantly, “It is unjust and dishonorable, and there is no necessity for it.” Then the handful will shout louder. A few fair men on the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech and pen, and at first will have a hearing and be applauded; but it will not last long; those others will outshout them, and presently the anti-war audiences will thin out and lose popularity. Before long you will see this curious thing: the speakers stoned from the platforms, and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at once with those stoned speakers—as earlier—but do not dare to say so. And now the whole nation—pulpit and all—will take up the war-cry and shout itself hoarse, and mob any honest man who ventures to open his mouth; and presently such mouths will cease to open. Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of their conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutation of them; and thus he will bye and bye convince himself that the war is just, and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception.

United States Commission on Industrial Relations (1914): In some cases this suppression of free speech seems to have been the result of sheer brutality and wanton mischief, but in the majority of cases it undoubtedly is the result of a belief by the police, or their superiors, that they were “supporting and defending the Government” by such an invasion of personal rights. There could be no greater error. Such action strikes at the very foundations of Government. It is axiomatic that a Government which can be maintained
only by the suppression of criticism should not be maintained. Furthermore, it is the lesson of history that attempts to suppress ideas, result only in their more rapid propagation.

Not only should every barrier to the freedom of speech be removed, as long as it is kept within the bounds of decency and as long as the penalties for libel can be invoked, but every reasonable opportunity should be afforded for the expression of ideas and the public criticism of social institutions.

**Woodrow Wilson:** If there is one thing we love more than another in the United States it is that every man should have the privilege, unmolested and uncriticized, to utter the real convictions of his mind. * * *

I believe that the weakness of the American character is that there are so few growlers and kickers among us. * * *

Difference of opinion is a sort of mandate of conscience. * * *

We have forgotten the very principle of our origin, if we have forgotten how to object, how to resist, how to agitate, how to pull down and build up, even to the extent of revolutionary practices, if it be necessary to readjust matters. * * *

(*The New Freedom, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918*)

For a long time this country has lacked one of the institutions which freemen have always and everywhere held fundamental. For a long time there has been no sufficient opportunity of counsel among the people; no place and method of talk, of exchange of opinion, of parley. * * *

I conceive it to be one of the needs of the hour to restore the processes of common counsel. * * *

We must learn, wc freemen, to meet as our fathers did, somehow, somewhere, for consultation. * * *

At this opening of a new age, in this its day of unrest and discontent, it is our part to clear the air, to bring about common counsel, to set up the parliament of the people. * * *

What are the right methods of politics? Why, the right methods are those of public discussion. * * *

The only thing that can ever make a free country is to keep a free, hopeful heart under every jacket in it. * * *

We have been told that it is unpatriotic to criticize public action. Well, if it is, there is a deep disgrace resting upon the origins of this nation. This nation originated in the sharpest sort of criticism of public policy. We originated, to put it in the vernacular, in a kick, and if it be unpatriotic to kick, why then the grown man is unlike the child.

Keep the air clear with constant discussion. * * *

The whole purpose of democracy is that we may hold counsel with one another, so as not to depend on the understanding of one man, but to depend upon the common counsel of all.

13
2. ENGLISH QUOTATIONS

John Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644,—R. Hunter, London, 1819, pp. 17, 18): Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself; slays an immortality rather than a life.

Censorship (Licensing,—Same, pp. 99, 101, 105, 111). When a man writes to the world, he summons up all his reason and deliberation to assist him; he searches, mediates, is industrious, and likely consults and confers with his judicious friends; after which done he takes himself to be informed in what he writes, as well as any that writ before him; if in this, the most consumate act of his fidelity and ripeness, no years, no industry, no former proof of his abilities, can bring him to that state of maturity, as not to be still mistrusted and suspected, unless he carry all his considerate diligence, all his midnight watchings, and expense of Palladian oil, to the hasty view of an unleisured licenser, perhaps much his younger, perhaps far his inferior in judgment, perhaps one who never knew the labor of book-writing, and if he be not repulsed, or slighted, must appear in print like a puny with his guardian, and his censor’s hand on the back of his title to be his bail and surety that he is no idiot, or seducer, it cannot be but a dishonour and derogation to the author, to the book, to the privilege and dignity of learning.

The State shall be my governors, but not my critics; they may be mistaken in the choice of a licenser, as easily as this licenser may be mistaken in an author.

Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolized and traded in by tickets and statutes and standards.

Heresy (Same pp. 127, 139, 156). A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believes things only because his pastor says so, or
the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though
his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.

For if we be sure we are in the right, and do not hold the truth
guiltily, which becomes not, if we ourselves condemn not our own
weak and frivolous teaching, and the people for an untaught and
irreligious gadding rout, what can be more fair, that when a man
judicious, learned, and of a conscience, for aught we know, as good
as theirs that taught us what we know, shall not privily from house
to house, which is more dangerous, but openly by writing publish to
the world what his opinion is, what his reasons, and wherefore that
which is not thought cannot be sound?

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be
much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good
men is but knowledge in the making.

Liberty of Opinion (Same pp. 171, 174, 175, 176, 180). Give
me liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to con-
science, above all liberties.

And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon
the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and
prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple;
who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open
encounter?

What a collusion is this, when as we are exhorted by the wise man
to use diligence, to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures early
and late, that another order shall enjoin us to know nothing but by
statute? When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the
deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their
equippage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scat-
tered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary
into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please;
only that he may try the matter out by dint of argument, for his
opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge
of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour
enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars
of Truth.

For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty;
she needs no policies, nor strategems, nor licensings to make her
victorious; those are the shifts and the defenses that error uses against
her power: give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps,
for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus did, who spake oracles
only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself
into all shapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice accord-
ing to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahad, until she be adjured
in her own likeness. Yet it is not impossible that she may have more
shapes than one.
How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief stronghold of our hypocrisy to be ever judging one another. I fear yet this iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of a linen decency yet haunts us. We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another though it be not in fundamentals; and through our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the grip of custom, we care not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all. We do not see that while we still affect by all means a rigid external formality, we may as soon fall again into a gross conforming stupidity, a stark and dead congealment of wood, and hay, and stubble forced and frozen together, which is more to the sudden degenerating of a Church than many subdichotomies of petty schisms.

John Locke, *Four Letters on Toleration in Religion* (1689), p. 51: Some enter into company for trade and profit; others, for want of business, have their clubs for claret. Neighborhood joins some, and religion others. But there is one only thing which gathers people into seditious commotions, and that is oppression.

There is a remedy at hand, better than force, if you and your friends will use it, which cannot but prevail; and that is, let the ministers of truth be as diligent; and they bringing truth with them, truth obvious and easy to understand, as you say what is necessary to salvation is, cannot but prevail.

Rev. Jeremy Taylor, *Diegesis*: While there are bad-hearted men in the world, and those who wish to make falsehood pass for truth, they will ever discover themselves and their counsel, by their impatience of contradiction, their hatred of those who differ from them, their wish to suppress inquiry, and their bitter resentment, when what they call truth has not been handled with the delicacy and niceness which it was never anything but falsehood that required or needed.

*Discourse on the Liberty of Prophesying*, 2nd Ed., London, 1702, pp. 269-70: It is unnatural and unreasonable to persecute disagreeing opinions. Unnatural, for understanding being a thing wholly spiritual, cannot be restrained, and therefore neither punished by corporeal afflictions. * * * And since all punishments in a prudent government punish the offender to prevent a future crime, and so it proves more medicinal than vindictive, the punitive act being in order to the cure and prevention, and since no punishment of the body can cure a disease in the soul, it is disproportionate in nature, and in all civil government to punish where the punishment can do no good; it may be an act of tyranny, but never of justice. For is an opinion ever the more true or false for being persecuted? Force
in matters of opinion can do no good, but is very apt to do hurt, for no man can change his opinion when he will, or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false because discountenanced.

Sir William Blackstone: The liberty of the press is essential to a free government.

Lord Chief Justice Eyre, (1794): The power of communicating thoughts and opinions is the gift of God, and the freedom of it is the source of all science, the first fruits and the ultimate happiness of society; and therefore it seems to follow that human laws ought not to interpose, nay, cannot interpose, to prevent the communication of sentiments and opinions in voluntary assemblies of men.

Lord Lyttleton: To argue against any breach of liberty from the ill use that may be made of it, is to argue against liberty itself, since all is capable of being abused.

Rt. Hon. C. J. Fox, (1795): I have never heard of any danger arising to a free state from the freedom of the press or freedom of speech; so far from it I am perfectly clear, that a free state cannot exist without both. It is not the law that is to be found in books that constitutes—that has constituted, the true principle of freedom in any country at any time. No, it is the energy, the boldness of a man's mind which prompts him to speak not in private, but in large and popular assemblies, that constitutes, that creates in a state the spirit of freedom. This is the principle that gives life to liberty; without it the human character is a stranger to freedom.

Jeremy Bentham, On Liberty of the Press and Public Discussion (1821): In all liberty there is more or less of danger; and so there is in all power. The question is—in which is there most danger—in power limited by this check, or in power without this check to limit it. In those political communities in which this check is in its greatest vigor, the conditions of the members, in all ranks and classes taken together is, by universal acknowledgment, the happiest.

Necessary to instruction—to excitation—in a word, to a state of preparation directed to this purpose [that of changing a government when necessary, and of preventing individual cases of abuse] is—(who does not see it?) the perfectly unrestrained communication of ideas on every subject within the field of government; the communication, by vehicles of all sorts—by signs of all sorts; signs to the ear—signs to the eye—by spoken language—by written, including printed, language—by the liberty of the tongue, by the liberty of the writing desk, by the liberty of the post office—by the liberty of the press. The characteristic then of an undespotic government—in a word, of
any government that has any tenable claim to the appellation of a
good government is, the allowing, and giving facility to, this com-
munication, and this, not only for instruction and excitation, but also
for correspondence; and this again for the purpose of affording and
keeping on foot every facility for eventual resistance—for resistance
to government, and thence, should necessity require, for a change in
government.

As to the evil which results from a censorship, it is impossible to
measure it, because it is impossible to tell where it ends.

Rev. Robert Hall: The law hath amply provided against overt
acts of sedition and disorder, and to suppress mere opinions by any
other method than reasoning and argument is the height of tyranny.
Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happiness
and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more
importance than the preservation of any Constitution, that to infringe
the former under pretense of supporting the latter, is to sacrifice the
means to the end.

James Mill, (On Liberty of the Press, 1821):
The application of physical force which is treated as an evil is
clearly distinguishable from the resistance of government which is
the last security of the many against misconduct of the few. * * * *
It is resistance to all the powers of government at once, either to
withdraw them from the hands in which they have hitherto been
deposited, or greatly to modify the terms upon which they are held.

We think it may be satisfactorily shown, that no operation of the
press, however directly exhorting to this species of resistance, ought
to be treated as an offense. * * * *

So true it is, however, that the discontent of the people is the only
means of removing the defects of vicious governments, that the free-
dom of the press, the main instrument of creating discontent, is, in all
civilized countries, among all but the advocates of misgovernment,
regarded as an indispensable security, and the greatest safeguard of
the interests of mankind. * * * *

Freedom of discussion means the power of presenting all opinions
equally, relative to the subject of discussion; and of recommending
them by any medium of persuasion which the author may think proper
to employ. If any obstruction is given to the delivering of one sort
of opinions, not given to the delivering of another; if any advantage
is attached to the delivering of one sort of opinions, not attached
to the delivery of another, so far equality of treatment is destroyed,
and so far the freedom of discussion is infringed; so far truth is not
left to the support of her own evidence; and so far, if the advantages
are attached to the side of error, truth is deprived of her chance of
prevailing.
Thomas Erskine, Speeches:

*Liberty of the Press*

If the nation is to be combined to suppress writings, without further describing what those writings are, than by the general denunciation—seditious; and if the exertions of these combinations are not even to be confined to suppress and punish the circulation of books already condemned by the judgment of Courts, but are to extend to whatever does not happen to fall in with their private judgments—if every writing is to be prosecuted which they may not have the sense to understand, or the virtue to practise—if no man is to write but upon their principles, nor can read with safety except what they have written, lest he should accidentally talk of what he has read—no man will venture either to write or to speak upon the topics of Government or its Administration—a freedom which has ever been acknowledged by our greatest statesmen and lawyers to be the principal safeguard of that Constitution which liberty of thought originally created, and which a Free Press for its circulation gradually brought to maturity.

While we render obedience to Government and to Law, we will remember at the same time, that as they exist by the People's consent and for the People's benefit, they have a right to examine their principles, to watch over their due execution, and to preserve the beautiful structure of their Constitution, by pointing out as they arise those defects and corruptions which the hand of Times never fails to spread over the wisest of human institutions. If in the legal and peaceable assertion of this Freedom we shall be calumniated and persecuted, we must be contented to suffer in the cause of Freedom, as our fathers before us have suffered; but we will, like our fathers, also persevere until we prevail.

The press must be free; it has always been so and much evil has been corrected by it. If Government finds itself annoyed by it, let it examine its own conduct and it will find the cause—let it amend it and it will find the remedy. * * * A free and unlicensed press, in the just and legal sense of the expression, has led to all the blessings, both of religion and government, which Great Britain, or any part of the world, at this moment enjoys, and is calculated still further to advance mankind to higher degrees of civilization and happiness. * * * Government in its own estimation has been at all times a system of protection; but a free press has examined and detected its errors and the people have from time to time reformed them.

*Liberty of Opinion*

These associators to prosecute, who keep watch of late upon our words and upon our looks, are associated, it seems, to preserve our
excellent constitution from the contagion of France, where an arbitrary and tyrannous democracy, under the colour of popular freedom, destroys all the securities and blessings of life—but how does it destroy them? How, but by the very means that these new partners of executing power would themselves employ, if we would let them—by inflicting, from a mistaken barbarous state necessity, the severest punishments for offenses never defined by the law—by inflicting them upon suspicion instead of evidence, and in the blind, furious, and indiscriminate zeal of persecution, instead of by the administration of a sober and impartial jurisprudence.

Every man not intending to mislead, but seeking to enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience, however erroneously, have dictated to him as truth, may address himself to the universal intelligence of a whole nation, either upon the subject of government in general, or upon that of his own individual country. He may analyze the principles of its constitutions—point out its errors and defects—examine and publish its corruptions—warn his fellow citizens against their ruinous consequences, and exert his whole faculties in pointing out the most advantageous change in establishments which he considers to be radically defective or sliding from their object by abuse. All this, every subject of this country has a right to do, if he contemplates only what he thinks would be for its advantage, and but seeks to change the public mind by the conviction which flows from reasonings dictated by conscience.

John B. Curran: What then remains? The liberty of the press only—that sacred palladium, which no influence, no power, no minister, no government, which nothing but the depravity, or folly, or corruption of a jury, can ever destroy. But the facts are too recent in your mind not to show you that the liberty of the press and the liberty of the people sink and rise together; that the liberty of speaking and the liberty of acting have shared exactly the same fate.

William Godwin, Political Justice: Governments, no more than individual men, are infallible. The cabinets of princes and the parliaments of kingdoms are often less likely to be right in their conclusions than the theorist in his closet.

Reason and good sense will not fail to augur ill of that system of things which is too sacred to be looked into; and to suspect that there must be something essentially weak that thus shrinks from the eye of inquiry.

Nothing can be more unreasonable than an attempt to retain men in one common opinion by the dictate of authority. The opinion thus obtruded upon the minds of the public is not their real opinion; it is only a project by which they are rendered incapable of forming
an opinion. Whenever government assumes to deliver us from the trouble of thinking for ourselves, the only consequences it produces or those of torpor, imbecility.

Either mankind will resist the assumptions of authority undertaking to superintend their opinions, and then these assumptions will produce no more than an ineffectual struggle; or they will submit, and then the effect will be injurious. He that in any degree consigns to another the task of dictating his opinions and his conduct, will cease to inquire for himself, or his inquiries will be languid and inanimate.

The first duty of man is, to take none of the principles of conduct on trust; to do nothing without a clear and individual conviction that it is right to be done. He that resigns his understanding upon one particular topic, will not exercise it vigorously upon others. If he be bright in any instance, it will be inadvertently and by chance. A consciousness of the degradation to which he is subjected will perpetually haunt him; or at least he will want the consciousness that accrued from independent consideration, and will therefore equally want that intrepid perseverance, that calm self approbation that grows out of independence. Such beings are the mere dwarfs and mockery of men, their efforts comparatively pusillanimous, and the vigor with which they should execute their purposes, superficial and hollow.

**Sir William Drummond:** He that will not reason is a bigot; he that cannot reason is a fool; he that dares not reason is a slave.

**Lord Brougham:** The great truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth that man shall no more render account to man for his belief, over which he has himself no control. Henceforward nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or to blame any one for that which he can no more change than he can the hue of his skin or the height of his stature.

**Percy Bysshe Shelley:** But I will demand if that man is not rather entitled to respect than the discountenance of society, who, by disputing a received doctrine, either proves its falsehood and inutility (thereby aiming at the abolition of what is false and useless) or gives to its adherents an opportunity to establish its excellence and truth. Surely this can be no crime.

**John Stuart Mill, An Essay on Liberty (1859):** Speaking generally, it is not, in constitutional countries, to be apprehended that the government, whether completely responsible to the people or not, will often attempt to control the expression of opinion, except when in doing so it makes itself the organ of the general intolerance of the
public. Let us suppose, therefore, that the government is entirely at one with the people, and never thinks of exerting any power of coercion, unless in agreement with what is conceives to be their voice. But I deny the right of the people to exercise such coercion, either by themselves or by their government. The power itself is illegitimate. The best government has no more title to it than the worst. It is as noxious, or more noxious, when exerted in accordance with public opinion, than when in opposition to it. If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

The opinion which it is attempted to suppress by authority may possibly be true. Those who desire to suppress it, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is false, is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility. Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument, not the worse for being common.

Yet it is as evident in itself, as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals; every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it is as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many, once general, are rejected by the present.

There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human facilities have any rational assurance of being right.

Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument; but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it. Very few facts are able to tell their own story, without comments to bring out their meaning. The whole strength and value, then, of human judgment, depending on the one property, that it can be set right when it is wrong, reliance can be placed on it only when the means of setting it right are kept constantly at hand.

The stead habit of correcting and completing his own opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation
for a just reliance on it; for, being cognizant of all that can, at least obviously, be said against him, and having taken up his position against all gainsayers—knowing that he has sought for objections and difficulties, instead of avoiding them, and has shut out no light which can be thrown upon the subject from any quarter—he has a right to think his judgment better than that of any person, and any multitude, who have not gone through a similar process.

The beliefs which we have most warrant for have no safeguard to rest on but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded.

Strange it is, that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion, but object to their being "pushed to an extreme"; not seeing that unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case. Strange that they should imagine that they are not assuming infallibility, when they acknowledge that there should be free discussion on all subjects which can possibly be doubtful, but think that some particular principle or doctrine should be forbidden to be questioned because it is so certain; that is because they are certain that it is certain. To call any proposition certain, while there is any one who would deny its certainty if permitted, but who is not permitted, is to assume that we ourselves, and those who agree with us, are the judges of certainty, and judges without hearing the other side.

There are, it is alleged, certain beliefs, so useful, not to say indispensable to well-being, that is as much the duty of governments to uphold those beliefs as to protect any other of the interests of society. In a case of such necessity, and so directly in the line of their duty, something less than infallibility may, it is maintained, warrant, and even bind, governments to act on their own opinion, confirmed by the general opinion of mankind. It is also often argued, and still oftener thought, that none but bad men would desire to weaken these salutary beliefs; and there can be nothing wrong, it is thought, in restraining bad men, and prohibiting what only such men would wish to practise.

This mode of thinking makes the justification of restraints on discussion not a question of the truth of doctrines, but of their usefulness; and flatters itself by that means to escape the responsibility of claiming to be an infallible judge of opinions. But those who thus satisfy themselves do not perceive that the assumption of infallibility is merely shifted from one point to another. The usefulness of an opinion is itself matter of opinion; as disputable, as open to discussion, and requiring discussion as much, as the opinion itself. There is the same need of an infallible judge of opinions to decide an opinion to be obnoxious, as to decide it to be false, unless the opinion condemned has full opportunity of defending itself.
The truth of an opinion is part of its utility. If we would know whether or not it is desirable that a proposition should be believed, is it possible to exclude the consideration of whether or not it is true?

A state of things in which a large portion of the most active and inquiring intellects find it advisable to keep the general principles and ground of their convictions within their own breasts, and attempt, in what they address to the public, to fit as much as they can of their own conclusions to premises which they have internally renounced, cannot send forth the open, fearless characters, and logical, consistent intellects who once adorned the thinking world.

But it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm is done to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped, and their reason cowed, by the fear of heresy.

No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who hold them only because they do not suffer themselves to think.

Where there is a tacit convention that principles are not to be disputed; where the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed, we cannot hope to find periods of history so remarkable. Never when controversy avoided the subjects which are large and important enough to kindle enthusiasm, was the mind of a people stirred up from its foundations, and the impulse given which raised even persons of the most ordinary intellect to something of the dignity of thinking beings.

However unwillingly a person who has a strong opinion may admit the possibility that his opinion may be false, he ought to be moved by the consideration that however true it may be, if it is not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth.

Assuming that the true opinion abides in the mind, but abides as a prejudice, a belief independent of, and proof against, argument—this is not the way in which truth ought to be held by a rational being. This is not knowing the truth. Truth, thus held, is but one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to the words which enunciate a truth.

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know that they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.
Such being the partial character of prevailing opinions, even when resting on a true foundation, every opinion which embodies some-
what of the portion of truth which the common opinion omits, ought
to be considered precious, with whatever amount of error and confu-
sion that truth may be blended. No sober judge of human affairs
will feel bound to be indignant because those who force on our
notice truth which we should otherwise have overlooked, overlook
some of those which we see. Rather, he will think that so long as
popular truth is one-sided, it is more desirable than otherwise that
unpopular truth should have one-sided assertors too; such being
usually the most energetic, and the most likely to compel reluctant
attention to the fragment of wisdom which they proclaim as if it
were the whole.

If either of two opinions has a better claim than the other, not
merely to be tolerated, but to be encouraged and countenanced, it is
the one which happens at the particular time and place to be in a
minority. That is the opinion which, for the time being, represents
the neglected interests.

Not the violent conflict between parts of the truth, but the quiet
suppression of half of it, is the formidable evil; there is always hope
when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend
only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases
to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood.

Lord Macaulay: The true distinction [between persecution and
punishment] is perfectly obvious. To punish a man because he has
committed a crime, or is believed, though unjustly, to have committed
a crime, is not persecution. To punish a man because we infer from
the nature of some doctrine which he hold, or from the conduct of
other persons who hold the same doctrines with him, that he will
commit a crime, is persecution; and is, in ever case, foolish and
wicked.

Herbert Spencer, Principles of Ethics (1879): It is said that a
government ought to guarantee its subjects “security and a sence of
security”; whence it is inferred that magistrates ought to keep ears
open to the declamations of popular orators, and stop such as are
calculated to create alarm. This inference, however, is met by the
dificulty that since every considerable change, political or religious,
is, when first urged, dreaded by the majority, and thus diminishes
their sense of security, the advocacy of it should be prevented.

Evidently such proposals to limit the right of free speech, political
or religious, can be defended only by making the tacit assumption
that whatever political or religious beliefs are at the time established,
are wholly true; and since this tacit assumption has throughout the
past proved to be habitually erroneous, regard for experience may reasonably prevent us from assuming that the current beliefs are wholly true. We must recognize free speech as still being the agency by which error is to be dissipated, and cannot without papal assumption interdict it.

It is to be the abnormal condition of the body politic that all evils arising from an unrestrained expression of opinion must be attributed, and not to the unrestrained expression itself.

Sir Leslie Stephen, (1883): I, for one, am fully prepared to listen to any arguments for the propriety of theft or murder, or if it be possible, of immorality in the abstract. No doctrine, however well established, should be protected from discussion. The reasons have been already assigned. If, as a matter of fact, any appreciable number of persons are so inclined to advocate murder on principle, I should wish them to state their opinions openly and fearlessly, because I should think that the shortest way of exploding the principle and of ascertaining the true causes of such a perversion of moral sentiment. Such a state of things implies the existence of evils which cannot be really cured till their cause is known, and the shortest way to discover the cause is to give a hearing to the alleged reasons.

Charles Bradlaugh: Without free speech no search for truth is possible; without free speech no discovery of truth is useful; without free speech progress is checked and the nations no longer march forward toward the nobler life which the future holds for man. Better a thousand fold abuse of free speech than denial of free speech. The abuse dies in a day, but the denial slays the life of the people and entombs the hope of the race.

James Bryce, (The American Commonwealth): One danger—the smaller one—yet sometimes troublesome, is the difficulty of ascertaining the will of the majority. The other danger is that minorities may not sufficiently assert themselves. Where a majority has erred, the only remedy against the prolongation or repetition of its error is in the continued protests and agitation of the minority, an agitation which ought to be peaceably conducted, carried on by voice and open, but which must be vehement enough to rouse the people and deliver them from the consequences of their blunders.

Thomas Gordon, “Cato’s Letters”: Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom, and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech—which is the right of every man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the right of another; and this is the only check which it ought to suffer, and the only bounds which it ought to know.
Whoever would overthrow the liberty of the nation must begin by subduing freedom of speech.

You may write nonsense and folly as long as you see fit, and no one complains of it but the bookseller. But if a bold, honest, and wise book sallies forth, and attacks those who think themselves secure in their trenches, then their camp is in danger, and they call out all hands to arms, and their enemy is to be destroyed by fire, sword, or fraud. But 'tis senseless to think that any truth can suffer by being thoroughly searched, or examined into; or that the discovery of it can prejudice right religion, equal government, or the happiness of society in any respect.

Hon. Auberon Herbert, Westminster Gazette, Nov. 22, 1893: Of all the miserable, unprofitable, inglorious wars in the world is the war against words. Let men say just what they like. Let them propose to cut every throat and burn every house—if so they like it. We have nothing to do with a man's words or a man's thoughts, except to put against them better words or better thoughts, and so to win in the great moral and intellectual duel that is always going on, and on which all progress depends.

Robert Louis Stevenson: A human truth, which is always very much a lie, hides as much of life as it displays. It is men who hold another truth, or, as it seems to us, perhaps, a dangerous lie, who can extend our restricted field of knowledge, and rouse our drowsy consciences. Something that seems quite new, or that seems insolently false or very dangerous, is the test of a reader. If he tries to see what it means, what truth excuses it, he has the gift, and let him read. If he is merely hurt or offended, or exclaims upon his author's folly, he had better take to the daily papers; he will never be a reader.

W. H. H. Lecky, A History of Rationalism (1900): If persecution is unnecessary in the defense of truth, it has a fearful efficacy in preventing men from discovering it; and when it is so employed, as infallibility does not exist among mankind, no man can assuredly decide. For truth is scattered far and wide in small portions among mankind, mingled in every system with the dross error, grasped perfectly by no one, and only in some degree discovered by the careful comparison and collation of opposing systems. To crush some of these systems, to stifle the voice of argument, to ban and proscribe the press, or to compel it to utter only the sentiments of a single sect, is to destroy the only means we possess of arriving at truth.

The object of the persecutor is to suppress one portion of the element of discussion; it is to determine the judgment by an influence other than reason; it is to prevent that freedom of enquiry which is the sole method we possess of arriving at truth. The persecutor never
can be certain that he is not persecuting truth rather than error, but he may be quite certain that he is suppressing the spirit of truth.

**George Bernard Shaw** (*Preface to “The Showing up of Blanco Posnet”*): It is not possible to make the ordinary moral man understand what toleration and liberty really mean. He will accept them verbally with alacrity, even with enthusiasm, because the word toleration has been moralized by eminent Whigs; but what he means by toleration is toleration of doctrines that he considers enlightened, and, by liberty, liberty to do what he considers right: that is, he does not mean toleration or liberty at all; for there is no need to tolerate what appears enlightened or to claim liberty to do what most people consider right. Tolerance and liberty have no sense or use except as toleration of opinions that are considered damnable, and liberty to do what seems wrong.

**Bertrand Russell, “Why Men Fight”:** A free community requires not only legal freedom, but a tolerant public opinion, an absence of that instinctive inquisition into our neighbors’ affairs which, under the guise of upholding a high moral standard, enables good people to indulge unconsciously a disposition to cruelty and persecution.

The success in fighting which is achieved by suppressing freedom of thought is brief and very worthless.

Instead of obedience and discipline, we ought to aim at preserving independence and impulse. Instead of ruthlessness, education should try to develop justice in thought.

**John Galsworthy, “About Censorship”:** Pundits who, to the discomfort of the populace, foster this exemption of literature from discipline, cling to the old-fashioned notion that ulcers should be encouraged to discharge themselves upon the surface, instead of being quietly and decently driven into the system and allowed to fester there.

**Norman Angell, “Why Freedom Matters”:** Authority always tries to prevent the questioning of its premises by the unlearned. To the bishop it seems preposterous and an obvious menace to society and good morality that his conclusions in theology should be questioned by any bootblack. But experience has shown over and over again that the Bishop is sure to go wrong unless his conclusions are questioned and checked by the bootblack; and that unless the bootblack has the liberty of so doing, both will fall into the ditch.

Now I am suggesting here that we are drifting to a condition of institutions calculated to suppress these heresies, to prevent such questions as these being asked. We believe that it is pernicious that they should be asked at all, and the power of the State is being used for
the purpose of preventing it. What I have been concerned to show is that our welfare and freedom really do depend upon our preserving this right of the individual conscience to the expression of its convictions; this *right of the heretic to his heresy*.

And I base the claim here, not upon any conception of abstract "right"—but upon utility, our need of heresy, upon the fact that if we do not preserve it, it is not alone the individual heretic who will suffer, but all of us, society. By suppressing the free dissemination of unpopular ideas we render ourselves incapable of governing ourselves to our own advantage and we shall perpetuate that condition of helplessness and slavery for the mass which all our history so far has shown.
3. MISCELLANEOUS QUOTATIONS

(Not American or English)

Socrates: The sun might as easily be spared from the universe as free speech from the liberal institutions of society.

Decree of Emperor Theodosius: If any person, void of modesty and shame, shall think our name is to be abused by insolent reproach, and be want only a turbulent disparager of the times, we will not have him subjected to punishment, nor sustain any hardship or severity, because if it hath proceeded from levity it is to be condemned; if from insanity, most worthy of compassion; if from injury, it is to be pardoned.

Machiavelli: Man has a right to think all things, speak all things, write all things, but not to impose his opinions.

Voltaire, A Treatise on Religious Toleration (c. 1750): In a word, toleration hath never been the cause of a civil war; while, on the contrary, persecution hath covered the earth with blood and carnage.

The rights of humanity are in all cases founded on the laws of nature, the great and universal principle, both of one and the other, being this, Do nothing to others which you would not have them do to you. Now I cannot see how, on this principle, one man is authorized to say to another, Believe what I believe, and what you cannot, or you shall be put to death.

Montesquieu: Nothing renders the crime of high treason more arbitrary than declaring people guilty of it in indiscreet speeches. * * * * Words do not constitute an overt act; they remain only an idea. When considered by themselves, they have generally no determinate signification, for this depends on the tone in which they are uttered. * * * Since there can be nothing so equivocal and ambiguous as all this, how is it possible to convert it into a crime of high treason? Wherever this law is established, there is an end not only of liberty, but even of its very shadow. * * *

Helvetius, “De L’Homme”: * There are no specious pretexts with which hypocrisy and tyranny have not colored their desire of imposing silence on men of discernment; and there is no virtuous citizen that can see in the pretexts any legitimate reason for remaining silent. * * * To limit the press is to insult the nation; to prohibit the reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either
fools or slaves. Should we to destroy error compel it to silence? No. How then? Let it talk on. Error, obscure of itself, is rejected by every sound understanding. If time have not given it credit, and it be not favored by government, it cannot bear the eye of examination. Reason will ultimately direct wherever it be freely exercised.

Turgot, "Le Conciliateur": One great advantage of a free press is, that it tends to disperse the dangers that culminate in sedition. Bacon said that the surest way to prevent sedition, if the times do bear it, is to take away the matter of them. A great writer has also observed, that "Violence exerted towards opinions, which falls short of extermination, serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious. As men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long, or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence."

Benedict Spinoza, Collected Works (1620-1677): However unlimited, therefore, the power of a sovereign may be, however implicitly it is trusted as the exponent of law and religion, it can never prevent men from forming judgments according to their intellect, or being influenced by any given emotion. It is true that it has the right to treat as enemies all men whose opinions do not, on all subjects, coincide with its own; but we are not discussing its strict rights, but its proper course of action.

Since, therefore, no one can abdicate his freedom of judgment and feeling; since every man is by indefeasible natural right the master of his own thoughts, it follows that men thinking in diverse and contradictory fashions cannot, without disastrous results, be compelled to speak only according to the dictates of the supreme power.

But let it be granted that freedom may be crushed, and men may be so bound down that they do not dare to utter a whisper, save at the bidding of their rulers; nevertheless this can never be carried to the pitch of making them think according to authority, so that the necessary consequences would be that men would daily be thinking one thing and saying another, to the corruption of good faith, that mainstay of government, and to the fostering of hateful flattery and perfidy whence springs stratagems, and the corruption of every good art.

Moreover, such laws are almost always useless, for those who hold that the opinions proscribed are sound, cannot possibly obey the law; whereas those who already reject them as false, accept the law as a kind of privilege, and make such boast of it, that authority is powerless to repeal it, even if such a course be subsequently desired.
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