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The Poetics of Scriptural Quotation in the Divorce Tracts

PETER AUGER

This article examines how Milton creatively adapts biblical quotations in the divorce tracts, particularly in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Tetrachordon*. It argues that these quotations are the ideal place to observe the interlinked poetics, rhetoric, and hermeneutics of Milton's prose, i.e., how its creative, persuasive, and interpretive elements work together. The first section reviews the varieties of scriptural quotation in the tracts, with particular attention to how quotations are marked on the page. Harris Fletcher's *The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose* (1929) provides a valuable starting point for thinking about the repertoire of literary strategies that Milton uses to rework quotations. This section follows Fletcher in discussing common features of Milton's quotational style across the tracts (rather than the development of his style over time), with an implicit emphasis on *Doctrine and Discipline* and *Tetrachordon* as the two tracts that are most engaged with biblical exegesis and so have a higher number of scriptural quotations. In particular, this first section sharpens our focus on the originality of Milton's quotations by showing that whereas indented quotations could be letter-perfect, italicized quotations did not have the same expectation of total accuracy. Italicization of scriptural quotations almost certainly has some authorial basis, and was not just imposed in the print-shop. A second section looks at how creative misquotation proves integral to the tracts' rhetorical and hermeneutic strategies by reviewing a series of specific examples. A brief conclusion considers some wider implications of this assessment of Milton's emergent poetics of quotation for reading both the divorce tracts and his later writing that also sought inspiration from Scripture.

These observations arose from research assistance work that I carried out several years ago for Sharon Achinstein toward her forthcoming Clarendon edition of Milton's divorce tracts. My task was to compile a list of biblical references in the tracts, together with quotations of the same verses from the King James Bible, Geneva, and Latin Junius-Tremellius-Beza texts. Milton primarily quotes from the King James version, but on occasion he also seems to have had the other two versions in mind.¹ This research was designed to enable editorial work that tracks how Milton's use of the Bible shapes the tracts' arguments, which are grounded in close exegesis of biblical passages that mention divorce. The argument in favor of divorce made in the first tract, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), is so concerned with scriptural interpretation that Regina Schwartz remarks that it "could have been justifiably titled *Doctrine and Discipline of Biblical Exegesis*" (39). The subtitle to *Tetrachordon* (1645), the final tract, introduces it as a set of "expositions upon the foure chiefe places in Scripture which treat of Mariage, or nullities in Mariages," and is particularly concerned with demonstrating that Christ did not abrogate the Mosaic law permitting divorce (Deut. 24.1-2) when addressing the Pharisees at Matthew 19.3-11. The other two tracts—*The*

Judgement of Martin Bucer (1644) and *Colasterion* (1645)—quote less often from Scripture but advocate similar interpretive principles.

The tracts make differing arguments for multiple readerships. The exegetical method of the first edition of *Doctrine and Discipline* was apparently suited to an ecclesiastical readership, but the second, 1644 edition was addressed to Parliament. In what follows I primarily quote from the 1644 edition, as the vast majority of scriptural quotations in the 1643 edition are also found in the second edition and the quotational habits in both editions are broadly similar (though I do distinguish between them at several points below).² Like *Doctrine and Discipline*, *Martin Bucer*, a partial translation of Bucer's *De Regno Christi* (1557), was addressed to Parliament too. *Colasterion: A Reply to a Nameless Answer against The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* attacks the nameless answerer who had made a fierce critique of Milton's first tract shortly after its publication. And *Tetrachordon* "was addressed to Parliament, despite being written in an idiom better suited to learned divines like those currently sitting in the Assembly"; "this book is what it seems: a highly technical exercise in biblical exegesis" (Campbell and Corns 171). Despite such differences in their polemical intention, there are nonetheless patterns in how Milton deploys biblical quotations in these four writings printed between August 1643 and March 1645. While being attentive to how each tract is distinct, this article primarily concentrates on Milton's quotational habits across them all, seeking to offer comments about Milton's prose style that can assist those who are reading Milton's quotations in the context of each tract's argument.

Varieties of Creative Quotation

Fletcher's study identified four varieties of scripture use in Milton's prose. The first three do not involve alterations to the Bible text being quoted: "citations of Scriptural passages without quotation," such as "*Exod.* 34. 16. *Deut.* 7. 3. 6." (1644, D1v); "use of Scriptural material with no indication of origin," which includes casual allusions such as "who then shall be able to serve those two masters?" (1644, D4r; cf. *Matt.* 6.24); and "quotations agreeing with a definite text" like "*lend hoping for nothing againe* *Luk.* 6.35." (*Tetrachordon*, H4v). Fletcher's fourth variety, however, is "quotations differing from any recognized text," where "recognized text" usually means the King James Bible. Fletcher offers five further sub-divisions of this category to describe ways that Milton deviates from Scripture: "clipping," "use of marginal notes from a recognized version," "change in phrasing," "Milton's own version of Scripture," and "adaption to fit his context" (14).

As an introductory example of Milton's creative quotation, we can see these techniques of clipping, changing, rephrasing, rewriting, and otherwise adapting Scripture at work in the following quotation from Deuteronomy 14.1–2 and 26.18–19 in *Tetrachordon* (E1v). Milton's quotations are taken from the King James Bible and are framed with the references "Deut. 14" and "Chap. 26":

Moses again of that people to whom hee gave this Law saith, *Deut.* 14. *Yee are the childern* [*sic*] *of the Lord your God, the Lord hath chosen thee to bee a peculiar people to himself above all the nations upon the earth, that thou shouldst keep all his Commandements; and be high in praise, in name, and in honour, holy to the Lord, Chap.* 26.

The passages quoted are:

Ye *are* the children of the LORD your God: ye shal not cut your selues, nor make any baldnesse betweene your eyes for the dead. / For thou *art* an holy people vnto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to bee a peculiar people vnto himselfe, aboute all the nations that are vpon the earth.

(Deut. 14.1-2)

And the LORD hath auouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, & that *thou* shouldest keepe all his Commandements: / And to make thee high aboute all nations which he hath made, in praise and in name, and in honour, and that thou mayest bee an holy people vnto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

(Deut. 26.18-19)

Comparing these verses with Milton's italicized quotation shows that the author has patched together a description of the people of God from Deuteronomy 14 by silently omitting the second half of the first verse and the first half of the second (i.e., from "ye shal" to "God, and") then joining this verse to another from twelve chapters later. He makes a few smaller amendments ("that are" is cut before "vpon the earth"), alterations ("vnto" to "to"), and rephrasings too, particularly in the final clause. A long quotation from Deuteronomy 4.5-8 follows afterward, which cuts almost a third of the Bible text (and which Milton quotes again in different form on H3r). Milton focuses in on the phrase "holy people vnto the LORD thy God" as he tailors a focused and emphatic description of the people to whom Moses gave the law permitting divorce. These silent adaptations and rearrangements generate more persuasive and eloquent phrasing, while making a series of interpretive decisions.

Thanks to the work of Fletcher and the Yale editors of the divorce tracts, it is fairly simple for readers to study the wide repertoire of techniques that the tracts employ to move words for emphasis and continuity with the prose around them while retaining the core sense of the scriptural passages quoted. Truncation (i.e., what Fletcher calls "clipping") to remove superfluous passages is very common:

Live joyfully, saith he, with the wife[,] whom thou lovest, all thy dayes [the dayes of the life of thy vanitie, which he hath giuen thee vnder the Sunne, all the dayes of thy vanitie:], for that is thy portion [in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest vnder the Sunne]

(1644, C4r; quoting Eccles. 9.9, omitted words supplied in brackets)³

Milton sometimes amends syntax to ease the transition from quotation to argument. For example, the verb "suffer" has already appeared ten times in the same paragraph in which Milton foregrounds the verb when quoting from 1 Corinthians 6.7 (which ends "Why doe ye not rather suffer your selues to be defrauded?"): "*For why doe ye not rather take wrong, saith he, why suffer ye not rather your selues to be defrauded?*" (*Tetrachordon*, I2v). Verbs are re-conjugated: "11. Psalm, *to rain snares*" (1644, F3r [v. 6 "he shal rain snares"]) and "not *to cast a snare vpon us*" (*Tetrachordon*, M1v; 1 Cor. 7.35: "not that I may cast a snare vpon you"). New pronouns are introduced: "his" for "my" in "those words of Christ, *That his yoke is easie and his burden light*" (1644, B3r; Matt. 11.30, also "is" before "light" deleted); "*Let all your things be done with charity, saith St. Paul* : and his Master saith, *Shee is the fulfilling of the Law*" (1644,

A3v; Rom.13.10: “loue is the fulfilling of the Law”).⁴ A singular noun like “necke” in the King James text of Acts 15.10 can become “necks” (1644, E3r), though this particular case could be a rare occasion where Milton prefers a reading from the Geneva Bible (which reads “neckes”). Milton freely adapts whole phrases to create succinct quotations, such as when words from Colossians 3.5 (“Mortifie therfore your members which are vpon the earth: fornication, vncleannesse, inordinate affection, euill concupiscence, and couetousnes which is idolatry”) coalesce into “wee know it the work of the Spirit to *mortifie our corrupt desires and euill concupiscence*” (1644, G3r-v; for another example see 1644, F2r [Rom. 13.3-4]).

Analyzing these kinds of change, Fletcher, like Arnold Williams in the Yale edition of *Tetrachordon*, recognized that few were made to improve the accuracy of translations from Hebrew or Greek. The King James Bible (rather than the Geneva, which Milton may, on occasion, have in mind) is Milton’s main source text from which verse references are taken, though he regularly refers to a Latin text as well, probably either the 1598 or 1624 Junius-Tremellius-Beza texts.⁵ Milton often calls up biblical phrases and allusions from memory, and equally often copies out the King James text: for example, Milton must have looked up Ecclesiasticus 13.16 and 37.27 before reproducing the verses accurately with a full verse citation in *Doctrine and Discipline* (E1r, a citation confirming Milton’s preference for the King James text over the Geneva). Milton does not follow the authority of the King James version blindly, though. He occasionally adapts the translation on linguistic grounds, such as when supplying the phrase “in consent” (rather than “shee bee pleased” [King James] or “she be content” [Geneva]) to his translation of 1 Corinthians 7.12: “*If a brother have an unbeleewing wife, and she joyne in consent to dwell with him*” (1644, D3v). But Fletcher and Williams are correct that Milton’s linguistic abilities influence his quotations only in a minority of cases: when Milton does draw on Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, it is often focused on interpretive cruces announced in the text: Malachi 2.16 (1644, C4r; *Tetrachordon*, D4v), Proverbs 30.21-23 (1644, G4r; *Tetrachordon*, E3r-v), and Matthew 5.32 (“*Saving for the cause of fornication,*” *Tetrachordon*, K2v). In the very many places where Milton consciously adapts the sense of the original Hebrew and Greek through selective or creative quotation, his method is not philological but poetic.

It is worth pausing to note that there are places that the tracts do give letter- and word-perfect quotations, and these places importantly show that Milton and his printer are accurate when they need to be. In most of these cases it is expedient for Milton to be precise simply because he cannot be seen to ignore parts of the biblical text that are not amenable to his argument. The surest method used in the divorce tracts to indicate intertextual identity (i.e., that the quoted text is reproduced accurately) is to isolate quotations from the body text on the printed page. This can be done using indentation, prefatory text, marginal references, or notes. We see this in *Tetrachordon*’s headings and sub-headings (e.g., B1r, B1v, and B4r), which are separated from the text by using indentation or brackets and by providing extra space between adjoining paragraphs. Such quotations, as they merely introduce the text under discussion, are reliably accurate. The minor deviations from the King James text that do occur in these headings are intentional re-translations explicitly justified in the tracts: in particular, Milton significantly drops “the” from “It is not good that

the man should be alone" (Gen. 2.18) throughout in order to broaden the application from Adam (who, as a marginal note in the King James text affirms, is "the man") to all mankind (*Tetrachordon*, B4r; see also 1644, B4v, and cf. Gen. 1.27).

When material is quoted within the body text, however, there is no expectation that the quotation will be word-accurate. It is reasonable to suppose that Milton's first readers would not have held this expectation either. None of the tracts uses quotation marks, which in the first half of the seventeenth century predominantly indicate commonplace phrases marked for potential re-use rather than quotations in the modern sense.⁶ Instead, most scriptural quotations in the body text are placed in italics, a type that is used to announce quotations without implying that they are being reproduced from another text without adaptation. Although we cannot know for sure whether Milton's manuscripts contained italics (or equivalent markings) in all the places they appear in the divorce tracts, or whether some were introduced or modified during the printing process, their frequency and careful integration into the surrounding text make it likely that they do originate with Milton.

We can find evidence for Milton's probable involvement with italicization, while clarifying the difficulty of attributing the practice to him solely, by looking at three instances of minor but intentional revisions in the second edition of *Doctrine and Discipline*. They also introduce the diversity of quotational style that takes place within italics. The first and most telling example is from the title page, which includes a quotation from Proverbs 18.13 identical with the King James text (not found in the first edition of *Doctrine*) and a quotation from Matthew 13.52 that deviates in several places:

MATTH. 13. 52. / Every Scribe instructed to the Kingdome of Heav'n, is like the Maister of a house which bringeth out of his treasurie things old and new.
(1643)

MATTH. 13. 52. / Every Scribe instructed to the Kingdome of Heav'n, is like the Maister of a house which bringeth out of his treasury things new and old.
(1644)

Then said he vnto them, Therefore euery Scribe which is instructed vnto the kingdome of heauen, is like vnto a man that is an housholder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.
(Matt. 13.52)

Most of the adaptations ("which is" deleted, "vnto" to "to," "forth" deleted) and the new phrase "Maister of a house" are retained in the 1644 text, but "old and new" becomes "new and old." This reversion to "new and old" of the King James text may show authorial revision, which points toward a probable distinction between purposeful amendments that tighten the sense and phrasing and so are retained in 1644 (i.e., all the phrasal adjustments), and otiose changes ("old and new") that add almost nothing to understanding the passage's meaning and risk looking like solecisms. These title pages also show that giving a full verse reference, which implies that the passage was consulted and makes it easy for readers to check quotations, does not guarantee word-accuracy, or even close resemblance. Elsewhere, for example, even a four-word quotation "*circumcision is in vain*, Rom. 2. 25." (1644, G3r) can be very loosely based on the cited verse ("if thou bee a breaker

of the Law, thy Circumcision is made vncircumcision”; see also, e.g., 1644, F1v [Ps. 94.20] and H2v [Deut. 24.4]).

Milton’s hand in revising an italicized passage for accuracy after consulting the King James Bible also looks likely in this example:

All cannot receive this saying; Every man hath his proper gift, with strict charges not to lay on yokes which our Fathers could not bear

(1643, E1r)

All cannot receive this saying. Every man hath his proper gift, with expresse charges not to *to lay on yokes which our fathers could not beare*

(1644, G3r)

Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke vpon the necke of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to beare?

(Acts 15.10)

The lowering of the majuscule “F” in “fathers” and the new terminal “e” in “beare” in 1644 suggest an attempt to bring the newly italicized text closer to the King James version, as if italics did bring an expectation of accurate transcription. Yet the repetition “to *to*” also shows a blind spot in that eye for detail, perhaps as a compositor misread Milton’s revised manuscript. Still, the desire to italicize the additional words apparently brings with it an expectation of higher fidelity to the source text than if they had remained without italics. The third example contains another possible compositorial error in a passage that italicizes a piece of Milton’s original prose: “the words of Christ are plainly against all divorce, except *in case of fornication*. To whom he whose minde were to answer no more but this, *except also in case of charity*” (1644, E4r). The first italicized phrase is not italicized in the 1643 text (D3v–4r), while the second italicized phrase is original to the 1644 text and not a biblical quotation. Italicizing this phrase, which restates Milton’s fundamental argument using a parallel phrase, is probably an error but could conceivably mark emphasis rather than attribution or could even be a piece of typographical legerdemain to make Milton’s scriptural case look stronger, though false quotations that might be deliberately misleading are very rare. Either way, these passages (and others such as 1644, F3r [Lev. 19.17] and *Tetrachordon*, L1v [Mark 10.26]) suggest that while it is unwise to assume total authorial intention in the tracts’ italics, their introduction, particularly in the second edition of *Doctrine and Discipline*, tends to coincide with closer proximity to the King James text and so increases the likelihood that the author checked the text against the Bible.

Beyond showing the difficulty in attributing sole agency to italics in the divorce tracts, these examples confirm how fluid and dynamic the relationship between the Bible and Milton’s prose is. Regardless of who controlled the final typesetting, italicization in the divorce tracts can broadly be said to denote scriptural quotation, usually from the King James Bible, that may include purposeful intertextual deviation (or, in a few cases, compositorial error). Such italics are essentially different from modern quotation marks in that they create a space for quotations that are expressively different from the quoted text. Milton always has a choice to make about how far he should let the Bible speak for itself, and how far he should speak for the Bible. The result is an ongoing conversation in which Milton assimilates his views and voice with Scripture while persuading readers that he is excavating a deeper

spiritual sense from phrases and not simply misconstruing them to his own advantage. This conversation is recorded in the textual disruptions to the King James text in Milton's poetic quotations.

The Poetics of Quotation

What motivates these creative quotations? Fletcher makes a practical case (23 and elsewhere), noting that Milton's changes often improve the clarity and style of the argument. Williams, meanwhile, believes that Milton's relaxed attitude toward literal quotation was typical for his time. He finds that "Milton considers that all reasonable requirements have been met when he reproduces the sense of the author he is quoting," and that although Milton will include direct translations from Hebrew and Greek on occasion, "the bulk of variations can only be taken as manifestations of Milton's literary independence" (*CPW* 2: 574). There is something to both arguments, and the comments on italics above do suggest that readers would not have expected letter- or word-perfect accuracy.

However, we can fruitfully consider how the poetics of Milton's scriptural quotations coheres with the tracts' purpose: as Mary Orr suggests, "it is not what is repeated, or indeed who repeats, that is intrinsic to quotation, but the how and why of its repetition" (131). Renaissance writers routinely reworked classical, contemporary, and scriptural texts into new forms for manifold practical reasons (Cave 35-77); Shakespeare frequently did so (Maxwell). Heinrich Plett makes the fundamental point that the function of quotation from sacred or otherwise authoritative books is unique because

every subsequent reference text (e.g., biblical commentaries) and every quotation taken from them is subject to a very narrow range of application, usually one of an exegetical character. When a quotation in its claim to authority is not questioned at all, its function may also be regarded as "ideological."

(73)

Milton's quotations are arguably cast in an ideological form because he is not challenging the authority of Scripture: biblical quotations serve, in effect, as master *sententiae* in the divorce tracts. But within this theological discourse, Milton's creative quotations illustrate the degree of self-involvement and innovation that follows from the imperative in the Preface of *Doctrine and Discipline* that "the statutes of God be turn'd over, be scann'd a new, and consider'd" (A4r).

Put simply, Milton's practices are justifiable as departures from the words of Scripture only, and never the spirit. Beginning with *Doctrine and Discipline*, Milton promotes generous hermeneutic practices that are responsive to contradictions in Scripture and magnanimous in locating revelation and the Holy Spirit's agency within each reader's conscience rather than in the words of the Bible alone. It is what the title page of the first edition of *Doctrine and Discipline* calls "the Rule of Charity," which according to Theodore Huguélet becomes for Milton "one of the grand axioms of God's scriptural dialectic" (201), that inspires readers to engage wholeheartedly with the text being read. Charitable readers draw on a bank of intellectual, emotional, and practical experience to search deeply for the living presence of the Spirit and enter into dialogue with it. Schwartz identifies imaginative techniques that are associated with charitable reading, namely "[p]ainting descriptions, seeking causes,

offering explanations, exploring motives and delineating consequences to make a fairly unintelligible story intelligible” (45). Several other critics have observed that imaginative, rhetorical, and poetic methods are integral to the interpretive strategies that Milton designs and defends in the tracts: Phillip J. Donnelly refers to Milton’s “Christo-poetic” (169) scriptural reasoning, and James Egan finds a “rhetorical-poetic hermeneutic” (198) manifest in Milton’s argumentative method. Referring to *Doctrine and Discipline*’s preface, Kester Svendsen argues that “Milton indicates at the outset that he intends an imaginative or poetic as well as a formally logical method in his pamphlet” (464).

This “rhetorical-poetic hermeneutic” is especially evident when Milton’s argument comes into contact with Scripture, i.e., when Milton quotes from the Bible, in the divorce tracts. The Preface to Parliament in the second edition of *Doctrine and Discipline* (1644) shows that its author was actively thinking about how best to quote from Scripture as he sets himself against “quotationists and common placers”:

Let the statutes of God be turn’d over, be scann’d a new, and consider’d; not altogether by the narrow intellectuals of quotationists and common placers but (as was the ancient right of Counsels) by men of what liberall profession soever, of eminent spirit and breeding joyn’d with a diffuse and various knowledge of divine and human things.

(A4r)

Although the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of “quotationists” (“a person who habitually uses quotations”) focuses on frequency, the tracts are too rich with biblical quotations for us to think that Milton coined this word to express grievance at how often certain writers use quotations; the author of the tracts does not dispute the frequency, quantity, or distribution of scriptural quotations necessary to interpret God’s laws faithfully.⁷ The trouble with quotationists, as the same passage clarifies, is their custom-eneebled spirit: the author mocks interpreters whose thoughts are riddled with “cranks and contradictions, and pit falling dispenses [i.e., dispensations],” and lionizes those who heed the “divine insight and benignity measur’d out to the proportion of each mind and spirit.” Dayton Haskin reads this passage as “promoting a new openness on the part of ‘ingenuous’ readers,” particularly radical Puritan exegetes: “Along with his new perspective on interpretive work Milton began to draw on the language and categories of experimental religion the better to recommend his arguments” (59–60). That fresh perspective, as the reference to “common placers” suggests, was a movement away from earlier humanist practices in which readers slotted biblical places (topoi) into pre-existing narratives and interpretive patterns. Elsewhere, Milton equates fractious textual scholars with the Pharisees who challenged Christ to interpret Mosaic law on divorce in Matthew 19, and notes that Christ responded by opposing “the doctrine of charity to the crabbed textuists of his time” (A4v). If Milton was increasingly aware of what Haskin calls “a quiet violence to the existing order wrought by an individual talent” (54), then quotationists were defenders of the liturgical and hermeneutic traditions of the established church that suppressed creative ingenuity. Milton’s own biblical quotations were a creative departure from the methods of his opponents.

Milton’s animosity toward excessively literal interpretation and quotation was already apparent in the antiprelatical tracts (see *Of Reformation*, e.g., B2v and F4r; and Knott 107–08) and has a scriptural basis, for example, in Romans 7.6: “we should serue in newnesse of spirit, and not in the oldnesse of the letter.” In each of

the divorce tracts, Milton enacts his polemical defense of experimental interpretive and citational practices in his scriptural quotations. His quotations are the stylistic, structural, and also typographical foundation for his revisionist ideas about spiritual reading and biblical hermeneutics. There was also a close relationship between Milton's citational practices and political rhetoric, as Sharon Achinstein has shown: writing about the quotation from Euripides's *Medea* on the title page of *Tetrachordon*, she observes that "the ethical appeals of citation could run either to bolster or to subvert authority. . . . Views about the meaning of citation open up questions about politics and action" ("Medea's Dilemma" 182). Milton uses citation (i.e., making reference to a text as evidence) and its close relation quotation (i.e., reproducing one text in another) to make ethical appeals—"ethical" referring here both to moral considerations broadly and to rhetorical *ethos* (persuasive appeal of character) in particular—that resist institutional authority by articulating a self that is in vigorous and charitable dialogue with Scripture. Those appeals draw on the author's knowledge and biographical experience, i.e., both the domestic matter of his troubled marriage to Mary Powell and the political problem of managing unsatisfactory contracts; Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns find that *Doctrine and Discipline* "gives every indication of being rooted in harsh personal experience. . . . Milton fashions a version of himself which is wholly to his polemical purpose" (161–62).⁸

As well as constructing an authorial persona, Milton's quotations establish an oppositional rhetoric that possesses moral and political force in its revisionist interpretation of key scriptural passages on divorce. While such methods are consistent with Milton's resistance to the strong Presbyterian presence then active at the Westminster Assembly and in Parliament, they (like the divorce tracts generally) do not necessarily reveal Milton to be among the Independents either: the radical emphasis on personal moral conduct (on "discipline" rather than "doctrine") to an extent dissolved that ecclesiological dichotomy and made Milton, as Edmund Christie White puts it, "self-sufficient by necessity" (149). The practical application of the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, but not the principle itself, is in dispute. In the specific matter of quotational habits, what makes Milton unusually autonomous is not the length or frequency of his quotations, but their poetic quality and concomitant verbal properties. This quality and these properties are activated through Milton's frequent and often substantial adaptation of the biblical texts being quoted, a practice as foreign to humanist scholasticism as to much modern-day non-fictional prose. Yet the Preface to *Martin Bucer* still insists that *Doctrine and Discipline* follows Scripture scrupulously, as Milton declares "only the infallible grounds of Scripture to be my guide, he who tries the inmost heart, and saw with what severe industry and examination of my self, I set down every period, will be my witness" (B2r). Milton had already written in *Doctrine and Discipline* that "what I wrote was not my opinion, but my knowledge" (B4r).

Having established this intellectual framework for Milton's quotational practices, we are now better placed to turn to specific examples of how Milton renews old texts for new circumstances through fresh, energetic, and original engagement with the Bible. The range of Milton's biblical references is essential to this method. The original 1643 edition of *Doctrine and Discipline* cites or quotes from twenty-seven books of the Bible (fifteen Old Testament, twelve New Testament). The second edition,

which Thomas Kranidas has stressed ought to be treated as an entirely different document, offers a much wider range of reference: a further fifteen books (ten Old Testament, five New Testament, with one book [Hab.] no longer cited) are included, and many more quotations from Proverbs, Romans, and the Synoptic Gospels in particular. *Tetrachordon* has a comparable number and range of biblical allusions to the second edition of *Doctrine and Discipline*, but predictably quotes extensively from the four “chief places” announced on the title page that Milton is synthesizing (Gen. 1.27, 28 and 2.18, 23–24, Deut. 24.1–2, Matt. 5.31–32, 19.3–11, and 1 Cor. 7.10–16) and surrounding passages.

While the process of gathering and assimilating suitable quotations is fundamentally similar to humanist common-placing, Milton’s verbal adaptations vividly display a “rhetorical-poetic hermeneutic” in generating sparks of original interpretation as he shapes verses for poetic and oratorical effect (on Milton’s reading practices in general, see Sauer, esp. 457). For instance, rather than act like a quotationist and copy out four whole verses as separate quotations, Milton’s dynamic union of literary and interpretive reasoning motivates the following heavily edited quotation of Proverbs 12.4, 27.15, 21.9, and 21.21:

Salomon saith that a bad wife is to her husband, as rott’nesse to his bones, a continual dropping: better dwell in a corner of the house top, or in the wilderness then with such a one. Who so hideth her hideth the wind, and one of the four mischiefs that the earth cannot bear.

(1644, I2v)

The typography and grammar here are distinctively early modern in that the italics do not indicate direct speech, nor does “saith *that*” introduce indirect speech that reports a particular utterance. Instead, the italics create a textual space for Milton to weigh up several passages and create a new reading. His two main tools are truncation and juxtaposition. Proverbs 27.15, for example, reads in full: “A continually dropping in a very rain[y] day, and a contentious woman, are alike.” These verbal jump cuts, which have the same effect whether or not the reader recognizes the editing, are rhetorical in that they cite Solomon’s authority on the suffering caused by poor marriages concisely and arrestingly, and illustrate (once more) Milton’s thorough acquaintance with Scripture. They are poetic in introducing a series of striking images, tightening the paragraph structure, and raising the pitch of his prose to achieve something closer to the sonority of the King James text. And these adjustments are simultaneously carrying out interpretive work in harmonizing the four passages and extracting key images and arguments that are being reapplied to a seventeenth-century context. These aspects of Milton’s practice, which are conjoined with the form, content, and persuasive effect of the quotations, are mutually reinforcing.

Milton’s quotations are highly sensitive to context, both to the particular biblical source texts used and to their target text; in this sense, they are an extension of strategies characteristic of John Donne’s hermeneutic practice earlier in the century (see Ettenhuber). Across the tracts, for instance, quotations introduced with “saith” often attract substantial modification because Milton takes the opportunity to gather several sayings together: “*Cast not pearls before swine, saith Christ himself. Let him be to thee as a heathen. Shake the dust off thy feet*” (1644, D3v; Matt. 7.6, 18.17, 10.14).⁹ Quotations from Proverbs are often particularly intrusive as Milton extracts only the text he needs to transplant into his prose. In the following example, Milton chooses

the verb “playing” rather than “rejoicing” (as in the King James and Geneva texts) to translate Proverbs 8.30: “*I was, saith the eternall wisdome, dayly his delight, playing alwayes before him*” (*Tetrachordon*, C1r). He weaves the quotation into the surrounding prose by using similar images like “God himself conceals us not his own recreations” and “wisdom is as a high towr of pleasure.”

This example from Proverbs is relatively unusual because Old Testament quotations seldom exert direct verbal influence on Milton’s lexicon. When Milton makes unitalicized and unattributed allusions or references (Fletcher’s second category) to the Old Testament, he usually maintains distance by not borrowing individual words: “*Assyrian blasphemmer*” (1644, A3r; i.e., Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19.22), “the jaylor of his innocent and only daughter” (1644, B1v; i.e., Jephthah, Judg. 11.30–40); “*God gave Quails in his wrath*” (1644, G2v; Num. 11.31–33); and “that passage in *Hosea*” (1644, F3v, Hos. 1.2–3). By contrast, Milton borrows many more phrases from the New Testament, particularly in unitalicized quotations, which lend an evangelical air to the authorial voice: “As little must he offer to bind that which God hath loos’n’d, as to loos’n that which he hath bound” (1644, A3v; cf. Matt. 16.19 and 18.18) and “mystery of joy and union” (1644, C4v; cf. Eph. 5.31–32). These borrowings allow Milton to invoke biblical precedents efficiently: when Milton quotes the phrase “one jot or one tittle” (Matt. 5.18) he directly invokes Matthew’s Gospel without needing to quote the whole passage (1644, F1r, H4r; *Tetrachordon*, G2v). Such moments reduce the distance between Milton’s prose and Scripture, binding the two together.

Moreover, Milton’s italicized quotations from the New Testament tend to be more accurate than those from the Old. Crucial quotations are almost always reproduced exactly to emphasize solidarity with established precepts: “*What God hath joy’n’d let no man put asunder*” (1644, G2v, Matt. 19.6).¹⁰ Milton’s intertextual identity with Paul—quoting him accurately to reduce contextual difference and stress that Milton’s voice is one with the Apostle’s—may not be total (Milton’s voice can be heard in 1644, K1r [1 Cor. 7.11] and D3r [1 Cor. 7.6, 25], for instance), but still makes a strong argument for his affinity with scriptural precedent, particularly in Paul’s letters. Milton frequently weaves quotations from Paul into his prose that are accurate except for slight adjustments for fitting.¹¹ The vital passage in 1 Corinthians 7 is quoted fluently and precisely throughout *Doctrine and Discipline*: “we know St. Paul saith, *It is better to marry then to burn*” (v. 9, C2r).¹² Milton also incorporates various short unitalicized phrases inspired by Paul such as “belly-doctrines” (*Tetrachordon*, B1v, Rom.16.18), “we are but crackt cimbals” (*Tetrachordon*, G2r; 1 Cor. 13.1), and, in the final words of *Doctrine and Discipline*, “the feet of Charity” (1644, M1v; 1 Cor.15.27 and 1 Tim.1.5).¹³ On one occasion Milton accurately quotes Paul’s comment on Deuteronomy 25.4 in 1 Corinthians 9.8–10, but applies it to a modified quotation from Deuteronomy 22.9–10 instead (1644, D4v). This moment typifies how Milton’s interpersonal rhetorical engagement with scriptural words and images fixes his interpretive outlook in place as he applies it to new situations. The stylistic expressiveness of Milton’s quotation argues that Milton is pursuing the Apostle’s words and reasoning to the letter.

These varieties of engagement do not seek authority through verbal consistency with traditional readings (an approach associable with “quotationists” and “crabbed textuists”) but instead allow biblical injunctions to be assessed in the author’s conscience against the higher divine laws of nature and charity while retaining a strong Pauline emphasis. These original quotations show Milton sifting out crucial points in Scripture, deliberating using empathy and experience as interpretive tools, and

presenting them in eloquent forms that enable rational connections with claims about divorce law and divine commandment. Poetic borrowing and close attention to phrasing play their part in this process. So does rhetorical analysis, which is a sharp tool for identifying suitable passages and guiding verbal changes and the scope of application. Identifying scriptural zeugma, for example, gives Milton the chance to isolate the sense of a phrase and then recast it to create more concise and emphatic wording: “Wherefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, and iust and good” becomes “*the Command is holy, and just, and good, Ro. 7. 12.*” (1644, G1r). Milton will also introduce zeugma to epitomize a longer passage. In this quotation it makes the misogynistic sentiment all the more pungent: “*The head of the woman, saith he, 1 Cor. 11. is the man: he the image and glory of God, she the glory of the man: he not for her, but she for him*” (*Tetrachordon*, B2r [1 Cor. 11.7; the first five words are from 1 Cor. 11.3]). Milton similarly favors the flexible copula “to be,” and will sometimes simplify or reformulate statements for emphasis. For example, Milton casually removes “I haue seene” from Ecclesiastes 5.13 (“There is a sore euill *which* I haue seene vnder the Sun”) to focus the sense: “the Wise-man, if he were alive, would sigh out in his own phrase, what a *sore euill is this under the Sunne!*” (1644, B1v–2r; see also G1v [2 Tim. 2.13]). Similarly, “*all men cannot receive all sayings, verse 11*” (*Tetrachordon*, L1v) turns “this saying” in Matthew 19 to “all sayings.” And the same effect is achieved by simply removing “her” from “the couenant of her God” (Prov. 2.17) so that the phrase applies to all humankind: “*mariage is more then human, the Couenant of God, Pro. 2. 17*” (1644, E2v and see also *Tetrachordon*, E4r). Revisions like these are all manifestations of the doctrine of charity in that they help Milton to re-apply biblical quotations in fresh contexts: verbal and intellectual interplay records a process of reflection and adaptation that conveys the spirit of these passages afresh.

Milton’s methods demonstrate a high degree of control in quoting from different books and adapting quotations in ways that are consistent with imaginative and interpretive processes. These restraints create the conditions for moments of originality, such as when Milton apparently coins the verb “mis-yoke” (see *OED*, *misyoke, v.*): “saith the Apostle 2 *Cor. 6[.14]. Mis-yoke not together with infidels*” (1644, D1v). The verb-form is justified shortly afterward: “Yea the Apostle himself in the forecited 2.*Cor. 6. 14.* alludes from that place of Deut. to forbid mis-yoking mariage; as by the Greek word is eident” (1644, D4v). This example again shows how literary and interpretive innovations are interdependent: this new verb apparently arises from exegetical work with the Greek text of Corinthians and Hebrew of Deuteronomy 22.9–10. “Mis-yoke,” which encapsulates the concept of flawed unions essential to Milton’s argument for divorce, reverberates not just in Milton’s tracts (see 1644, K3v and *Tetrachordon*, B3r), but in the aggressive response to the first edition of Milton’s first tract, *An Answer to a Book, Intituled The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644): “But you say, *Paul 2 Cor. 6.* alludes to that of *Moses*, and applies it to mis-yoking in mariage, as say you *by the Greek word is eident*” (F4v).

The answerer’s response is typical of the hostility toward Milton among London-based Presbyterians at the time: he takes this claim about mis-yoking as an example of Milton mis-applying Scripture in his “frothie discourse” (G1r) that in places is “not only intolerable abuse of Scripture, but smels very strongly of little lesse then blasphemie against Christ himself” (E2v). He singles out Milton’s man-handling of Romans 13.10 (“loue is the fulfilling of the law”):

But let us see, have you any Scripture for this your new Gospell: yes, enough, say you, often repeated: yea, what is, that? The words of *Paul* forsooth, *Love only is the fulfilling of every commandment.* / You must remember you put in the word only, and so adde to the Scripture.

(F3r)

Milton's word choice may well have been influenced by "commandment" in the previous verse in Romans (alluding to the second commandment), but when Milton responds in *Colasterion* he contends that he was not citing a particular verse, but speaking a "general sense":

Whereas hee taxes mee of adding to the Scripture in that I said, Love only is the fulfilling of every Commandment, I cited no particular Scripture, but spake a general sense, which might bee collected from many places.

(D3r)

Milton claims here that he has not added to, subtracted from, or otherwise edited Scripture but has understood the passage's underlying sense, which he arrived at by assimilating various commonplaces. The method of creating the new phrase and its meaning are mutually reinforcing because, as John R. Knott states, the "general sense" here is none other than the "common doctrine that charity is the end of all Scripture" from which Milton's "extraordinarily flexible hermeneutic principle" originates (115-16). Milton's innovation here, as we have seen in so many of his quotations in other tracts, is to redefine the appropriate scope of a phrase in order to apply it to a new personal and public context: in this case Milton recognizes "love" as being the fulfillment not just of legal obligations, but of divine commands too. As such, Milton's justification applies much more broadly to his endeavor to identify the higher, "general sense" of passages without "adding" to the text.

The answerer's conservative habits of quotation are associable with "the narrow intellectuals of quotationists," and so provide an excellent contemporaneous contrast to Milton's disruptively original practices across the tracts. Though the author criticizes Milton for relying on his knowledge of biblical languages to an extent that makes his argument inaccessible to less educated readers, he is manifestly more reliant on philological argument than Milton is: on the opening page he compares the meaning of the word "divorce" in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (B1r); he sets translations of Deuteronomy 24.1 from the Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, and Junius-Tremellius versions and French against each other (D2r); he gives citations from the Junius-Tremellius Bible (which differ slightly from the King James Bible), and offers original translations from the Latin (e.g., 1 Cor. 7.13 on B3r). The answerer also draws widely on medieval texts such as Justin Martyr's *Apology* and the Gregorian Decretals (C1r) that Milton dismisses as "choice Antiquities" in *Colasterion* (C2v). He combines word-perfect quotations from the King James Bible with his prose (see E1v, quoting phrases from Matt. 19.3-8), enforcing a strict distinction between both texts, and such slight deviations as do occur from the King James Bible text (e.g., "*such should have troubles in the flesh*" [B4v, cf. 1 Cor. 7.28, "*such shall haue trouble in the flesh*"]) are essentially alternative translations rather than creative adaptations. The overall effect of such strategies is to present the tract's use of the Bible as more obeisant to extant church tradition and philological readings, and more systematic than Milton's intensely subjective approach. While Milton's quotations are no less

learned or attentive to scriptural detail or exegetical traditions than the answerer's are, his rationale and method are, by comparison, extravagantly poetic in their textual encounter with Scripture.

Although Milton's English version of Martin Bucer's *De Regno Christi*, *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*, cannot be compared directly with the others because it is a translation, Milton's method is nonetheless analogous to the quotation practices considered in the other tracts. Here the translator intrusively chooses which chapters to translate as he presents only the material that supports the argument of *Doctrine and Discipline*. In *Martin Bucer* the translator cuts swathes of the whole work: he begins at Chapter 15 of the second book (C1r), followed by "Chap. XVII. toward the end" (C1v), while, further on, Chapter 20 is omitted because, as the heading declares, it "[c]oncerns only the celebration of marriage" and the heading to Chapter 32 records that the question being addressed in *De Regno Christi* "was not handl'd in the Doctrine and discipline of divorce; to which book I bring so much of this Treatise as runs parallel" (D2v). In the postscript, Milton writes that "I deny not to have *epitomiz'd*: in the rest observing a well-warranted rule, not to giue an Inventory of so many words, but to weigh thir force" (F1r). As Williams notes, Milton also modifies Bucer's prose within chapters: "Milton ruthlessly prunes away Bucer's verbiage, skipping whole clauses, sentences, and even paragraphs, and recasting the whole" (*CPW* 2: 419, and see 808–18). These techniques include removing superfluous scriptural quotations and replacing images with simple statements where they clarify the argument. While these changes to some degree strip the text of some of its literary qualities, they make Milton's translated prose livelier and more cutting. Indeed, Williams's comments on Milton's response to *Martin Bucer* substantially apply to his scriptural quotations in *Doctrine and Discipline* and *Tetrachordon* too: "Is it translation, paraphrase, or summary? Actually, it is all three. It has, in addition, the vigor and immediacy of original composition" (818). *Doctrine and Discipline* and *Tetrachordon*, in much subtler ways than the translation of *De Regno Christi*, also show Milton shaping the biblical material he encounters to bring control, charisma—more or less in its literal, theological sense denoting a gift of grace—and the immediacy of living truth to his prose.

Conclusion

Doctrine and Discipline claims that "a meet and happy conversation is the chieftest and the noblest end of mariage" (1644, B4v) and describes love as "a pure and more inbred desire of joy[n]ing to it selfe in conjugall fellowship a fit conversing soul" (1644, C2v). Although "conversation" and "conversing" refer here to cohabitation and companionship rather than familiar discourse ("conversation," *OED* n. 2 and 7a), these terms bring to mind the similarities between the marital partnerships that Milton envisages in the tracts and the textual engagements with Scripture contained in them. In both kinds of "conversation," the partners should share an intellectual or spiritual affinity, and obedience should grow from kindred sentiment. Though Milton may not advocate the same free obedience for wives that he does for male readers of the Bible, Ben LaBreche's emphasis on how liberty in both marriage and speech was empowering in the domestic sphere is still instructive: "liberty of divorce and liberty of discourse come together as two related ways in which the household could legitimate private citizens" (982). Liberty in quotation practices was a comparable way to legitimize and validate the devotional work of suitably knowledgeable private individuals.

Stephen Fallon's observation that "[r]hetorical practice mirrors theme in the divorce tracts" (69; qtd. in Achinstein, "Medea's Dilemma" 183) applies to the themes of divorce and scriptural interpretation in these early treatises. In them, the author is working out his preferred interpretive and quotational practices, and more could be written about the development of these practices across the tracts. In addition, this article's observations will hopefully assist those working with the new edition of the tracts who seek to understand how Milton's use of the Bible inflects the nuances of each individual tract's argument. The tracts are substantially consistent with the argument in the contemporaneous *Areopagitica* (1644) against the cultural stagnation that pre-publication censorship inflicts: "Truth is compar'd in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick'n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition" (D2v). They are a significant step in Milton's intellectual development, providing the basis for his later engagement with Scripture. *De Doctrina Christiana* is the work in which Milton's scriptural quotations are densest, and they have been investigated closely: John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington note that Milton omits conjunctions and particles, and that "[c]hanges of syntax . . . are often due to his fusion of a quotation with the thoughts he himself was expressing" (1: xlix). Cullington notices a "large number of apparently intentional departures from Tremellius" in *De Doctrina* that cannot be explained as scribal errors, and places containing "a torrent of rhetoric in which the biblical starting-point is almost lost sight of" (61, 67). Finally, Mary Ann Radzinowicz offers one path into thinking about how this article's comments about Milton's prose might correspond to his poetry when she writes that "[w]hat Milton uniquely did among the seventeenth century's great religious poets was to become as far as possible a biblical poet himself, not reproducing the language but reconstituting the themes, genres, and stylistic figures of Scripture within his own religious poetry" (205).

David Ainsworth stresses that a key to understanding Milton's scriptural thinking is the strong emphasis on how readers use books: books "are a tool, a prod, a part of a process of thought, an instrument of God, but Milton clearly does not ascribe virtue to books themselves" (22). This article has shown how Milton's processes of thought operate in specific verbal and textual forms (in different editions and in italicized passages) and intellectual circumstances (rhetorical, exegetical, political) as the author adopts an imaginative logic that harnesses his literary sensitivity and interpretive energy. At the end of Book 1 of *Doctrine and Discipline*, Milton criticizes the "alphabetical servility" of certain scriptural interpreters whose literal-minded approach to the Bible closes their minds to application of biblical precedent, just as it closes their prose to the influence of biblical phrasing. The fruits of that charitable engagement are encapsulated in neologisms like the noun "quotationist," which condemns efforts to regulate and direct scriptural interpretation into prescribed patterns that fitted established institutional agendas, and the verb "mis-yoke," which also shows Milton taking control of the terms of the argument. In the divorce tracts, Milton conducts an enterprising and disciplined argument with Scripture to discover its best application to contemporary life and to explore new possibilities for his scriptural writing. The resulting text is persuasive precisely because it is so closely involved with the author's political and personal concerns, and so original in its dialogue with Scripture.

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¹ For this reason, biblical quotations throughout this article are taken from the King James Bible (1612; STC 2220) unless otherwise stated. I am very grateful to Sharon Achinstein for advice, encouragement, and comments on a first draft. Thanks also to Edmund Christie White and *MQ*'s anonymous readers for helpful suggestions.

² Quotations from *Doctrine and Discipline* are therefore from the second edition (abbreviated to "1644"), unless specific reference is made to the first edition (abbreviated to "1643"). All references to the remaining divorce tracts are from the seventeenth-century editions listed in the Works Cited. References to Volume 2 of the Yale *Complete Prose Works* (indicated by *CPW* followed by volume and /or page numbers as deemed necessary) concern observations made by specific editors about Milton's practices.

³ More examples: 1644: F2v (Deut. 25.19), G1v (Gen. 18.23–25), G3r (Gal. 5.3), G4v (Mark 10.5), and H2r (Matt. 19.11–12); *Tetrachordon*, B2r (Col. 3.18 and Eph. 5.24), G2v (Jer. 3.1), and H3r (Lev. 18.3), M2r–v (1 Tim. 5.8).

⁴ More examples: for alternative verb forms see 1644, A2v (Phil. 1.18) and G3r (Mark 16.16); for pronouns see 1644, C2v (Song of Sg. 8.6–7) and F2r (Rom. 3.20), and *Tetrachordon*, L3r (2 Cor. 6.14).

⁵ When checked against the lists of textual variations in Norton (180–355), none of the quotations in the divorce tracts allows us to know which edition of the King James Bible Milton used. On possible Latin editions, see the discussion in Hale and Cullington 1: xlix.

⁶ See de Grazia esp. 58–60 and Hunter. For a good example of how quotation marks could be used that is contemporary with Milton, see Edward Browne's *Sacred Poems, Or Briefe Meditations* (1641), which uses marginal quotation marks to indicate extensive and otherwise unannounced borrowings from Josuah Sylvester's *Divine Weekes* (1621 edition), a practice that the paratextual materials to the book jokingly associate with thievery and plagiarism.

⁷ On other agent nouns using the suffix "-ist" that Milton invents, and his fondness for creating words through affixation, see Neumann 113–14.

⁸ On Milton's marriages see Suzuki; and for the parliamentary context, see Achinstein, "A Law."

⁹ Other examples: 1644, F3r (Prov. 29.5 and 26.28) and *Tetrachordon*, D1r (Gen. 2.23; 1 Cor. 10.17; Eph. 5.30).

¹⁰ See also, e.g., 1644, G1v (Matt. 5.48), H1r (Gen. 2.18 and 23–24, Mark 10.7–8), H1v and I3v (Matt. 19.4–5).

¹¹ E.g., 1644, D1r (1 Tim. 4.1, 3), F2r (Rom. 5.20, 1 Tim. 1.5); *Tetrachordon*, B1v (Col. 2.14, "having cancell'd" for "blotting out"), B4v (1 Cor. 7.1), D1v (Eph. 5.32, "of," King James "concerning"), H3v (Rom. 7.7, also 1644, F3r), and N4r (1 Cor. 13.3).

¹² Other examples: D3r (v. 12), D3v (v. 16), D3v–4r (v. 24), and I4r (v. 15).

¹³ More examples from New Testament: 1644, F1v (Gal. 3.24, "School-master"), G1r (1 Cor. 7.9, "him who cannot contain"); *Tetrachordon*, D1v (2 Thess. 2.7, "mystery of iniquity"), G1v (Matt. 12.1 or Mark 2.23, "pluck the corne"). And for comparable italicized examples: 1644, I4v (Col. 3.14, "*bond of perfection*") and M1v (Luke 13.16, "*whom Satan had bound eighteen years*"). There are some Old Testament examples too, such as *Tetrachordon*, E1v (Ps. 19.9, "*are true and righteous altogether*," attributed to David), 1644, F4r (Exod. 24.17, "*devouring fire*"), and I2v (Esth. 1.22, with reference also to verses 1.10–22).

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