

ON THE NEW FORCERS OF CONSCIENCE UNDER THE LONG PARLIAMENT

John Milton

1646

Because you have thrown off your prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounced his liturgy,
To seize the widowed whore Plurality
From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred,

Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy
Taught ye by mere A.S.¹ and Rotherford?²

Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent
Would have been held in high esteem with Paul,
Must now he named and printed heretics
By shallow Edwards³ and Scotch what d'ye call.

But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
Your plots and packing worse than those of Trent,
That so the Parliament,
May, with their wholesome and preventive shears,
Clip your phylacteries, though baulk⁴ your ears,
And succor our just fears,
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.

The Poetical Works of Milton, Young, Gray, Beattie, and Collins (Philadelphia: John Grigg, 1836):157

¹ Dr. Adam Stewart, leading Church of Scotland divine, who championed religious tolerance

² Samuel Rutherford (-), a chief commissioner of the Church of Scotland and professor at the University of Saint Andrew's

³ Thomas Edwards published several tracts condemning Independency

⁴ *spare*