

MILTON'S SINGULARITY

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OED II. 4. †a. The fact or condition of being alone or apart from others; solitariness. *Obs. rare.*

1607 TOPSELL *Four-f. Beasts* (1658) 189 Goats love singularity, and may well be called Schismaticks among Cattel, and therefore they thrive best lying together in small numbers.

OED 7. a.: The fact or quality of differing or dissenting from others or from what is generally accepted, esp. in thought or religion; personal, individual, or independent action, judgement, etc., esp. in order to render one's self conspicuous or to attract attention or notice. (Common from 1590 to 1700.)

1. Such as will approve themselves unto God, and not deal falsely and unfaithfully in the covenant of God, they must be men of singularity. As they must walk regularly so they must walk singularly, in a way by themselves. ... If you will be Christians in good earnest, and follow the Lord fully, it is the very thing which God requires and expects at your hands, that you be men of singularity. [Rowland Stedman, *Sober singularity, or An antidote against infection by the example of a multitude* (1668), p. 111]

2. How can I hope for your good will, when in all this great assembly I encounter none but hostile glances, so that my task seems to be to placate the implacable? [YP 1.219]

3. For although a poet, soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him, might, without apology, speak more of himself than I mean to do, yet for me sitting here below in the cool element of prose, a mortall thing among many readers of no Empyreall conceit, to venture and divulge unusual things of my selfe, I shall petition to the gentler sort, it may not be envy to me. [YP 1.808]

4. a good man, content with himself, does nothing to make himself known. If he needs commendation, he has always with him that virtue which is the best commender; if defence—and, of a truth, he will be attacked not infrequently with envious detractions and slanders—he surrounds himself with his own integrity and the invincible knowledge of righteous deeds, by which, as if by the strongest bulwark and garrison, he both receives the vain attacks of vicious men and frustrates their spears [YP 4.791; CE 9.214] *neque enim facit quicquam vir bonus ut noscatur, seipso contentus. Si commendato est opus, virtutem semper apud se habet commendatricem optimam; si defenso, obtreccionibus nimirum & calumniis haud raro appetitus, eandem circumdat sibi integritatem suam & invictam recte factorum conscientiam; quo veluti munimento atque praesidio firmissimo, improborum hominum & impetus vanos excipit, & tela frustratur.*

5. Singular indeed is the favor of God toward me, that He has called me above all others to the defence of liberty. [YP 4.735]

Singulare quidem in me divini numinis beneficium, quod me ad defendendam libertatis tam fortiter vindicatae causam praeter caeteros evocasset [CE 9.86]

6. a Commonwelth ought to be but as one huge Christian personage, one mighty growth, and stature of an honest man, as big, and compact in virtue as in body; for look what the grounds and causes are of single happiness to one man, the same yee shall find them to a whole state. [YP 1.572].

7. Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
Within the visible Diurnal Spheare;
Standing on Earth, not rapt above the Pole,
More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
To hoarce or mute, though fall'n on evil dayes,
On evil dayes though fall'n, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compast round,
And solitude; [PL 7. 21-8]

8. yet not alone, while thou
Visit'st my slumbers Nightly, or when Morn
Purples the East: still govern thou my Song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few. [PL 7.28-31]

9. in strength each armed hand
A Legion; led in fight, yet Leader seemd
Each Warriour single as in Chief, expert
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
Of Battel... [PL 6.231-5]

10. Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
Though single. From amidst them forth he passd,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he susteind
Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught. [PL 5. 901-5]

11. The flaming seraph fearless, though alone
Encompassed round with foes [PL 5.875-6]

12. So spake the fervent Angel, but his zeale
None seconded, as out of season judg'd,
Or singular and rash... [PL 6.849-51]

13. Our State cannot be severd, we are one,
One Flesh; to loose thee were to loose my self. [PL 9.
958-9]

14. none among the choice and prime
Of those Heav'n-warring Champions could be found
So hardie as to proffer or accept
Alone the dreadful voyage; till at last
Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd
Above his fellows, with Monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake. [PL
2.423-9]

15. Thus was the welfare, the safety, and within a little,
the unanimous demand of three populous Nations to
have attended still on the singularity of one mans
opinionated conscience [YP 3.368]

16. Walk'd up and down alone bent on his prey,
Alone, for other Creature in this place
Living or liveless to be found was none
[PL 3. 441-3]

17. 'But wherefore thou alone?
Wherefore with thee came not all hell broke loose?'
[PL 4.917]

18. A nice and suttle happiness I see
Thou to thy self proposest, in the choice
Of thy Associates, Adam, and wilt taste
No pleasure, though in pleasure, solitarie.
What thinkst thou then of mee, and this my State,
Seem I to thee sufficiently possesst
Of happiness, or not? who am alone
From all Eternitie, for none I know
Second to me or like, equal much less. [PL 8.399-406]

19. The numerical significance of "one" and of "two"
must be unalterable, and the same for God as for
man... Two distinct things cannot be of the same
essence. God is one being not two. [YP 6.212]

20. Singular things, or individuals, as they are
commonly called, have their own singular and proper
forms; certainly they differ in number among
themselves, which no one denies. But what does it
mean for things to differ among themselves, if not to
differ by reason of their singular forms? For number,
as Scaliger correctly says, is a property consequent
upon essence. Therefore, things which differ in
number also differ in essence, and never do things
differ in number without also differing in essence. *Here
let the Theologians take notice.* [YP 8.233]

*Res etiam singulae, sive individua, quae vulgo vocant, singulas
sibique proprias formas habent; differunt quippe numero inter se,
quod nemo non fatetur. Quid autem, est aliud numero inter se,
nisi singulis formis differre? Numerus enim, ut recte Scaliger, est
affectio essentiam consequens. Quae igitur numero, essentia
quoque different; & nequaquam numero, nisi essentia quoque
differrent. Evigilent hic Theologi.* [CE 11.58]

21. John 10.30, in which Christ states that 'I and the
Father are one' 'declares that he and the Father are one
in the same way as we are one with him: that is, not in
essence but in love, in communion, in agreement, in
charity, in spirit, and finally in glory.' [YP 6.220]

22. 'this I my Glorie account,
My exaltation, and my whole delight,
That thou in me well pleas'd declarst thy will
Fulfill'd, which to fulfil is all my bliss.
Scepter and Power, thy giving, I assume,
And gladlier shall resign, when in the end
Thou shalt be All in All, and I in Thee
For ever, and in mee all whom thou lov'st.'
[PL 6.726-36]

23. Farr less I now lament for one whole World
Of wicked Sons destroyd, then I rejoyce
For one Man found so perfet and so just,
That God voutsafes to raise another World
From him, and all his anger to forget. [PL 11.874.8]

24. 'the praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel
maintained his singularity of virtue against the
scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all
times.' [Samuel Johnson, 'Life of Milton', 1779]

YP= *Complete prose works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. et al., 8 vols. (Yale University Press, 1953-82)

CE= *The works of John Milton*, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, 18 vols. (Columbia University Press, 1931-8)

PL= *Paradise Lost. A Poem in Twelve Books. The Second Edition* (S. Simmons, 1674)