



EX ANTE

FRED'S FAVORITES

Like Samuel Johnson the 18th-century lexicographer, Fred Shapiro the 21st-century quotationographer has a wry sense of humor about his work. Just as Johnson famously buried a self-deprecating definition of his vocation in his *Dictionary*, so Shapiro slipped into his new *Yale Book of Quotations* a quotably eloquent brush-off (by English actor Hesketh Pearson) of the whole scholarly enterprise of quoting accurately:

Misquotation is, in fact, the pride and privilege of the learned.
A widely-read man never quotes accurately, for the rather obvious reason that he has read too widely.

But these subtle antics should not be taken as signs of any larger frivolity. As Boswell has shown, Johnson wore himself out in the definition of words, and while Shapiro is alive and well, his decades of dedication to epigrammatic gathering and sifting and sorting are surely a sign of similar commitment.

The *Green Bag* asked Shapiro to give us a few of his favorites from the *Book of Quotations*. After serious consideration, he gave us these:

Julius Henry "Groucho" Marx [as Otis B. Driftwood]:

That's – that's in every contract. That's – that's what they call a sanity clause.

Chico Marx [as Fiorello]:

You can't fool me. There ain't no Sanity Claus.

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John Milton:

As good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye.

Anatole France (Jacques-Anatole-François Thibault):

The majestic equality of the law, which forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.

Learned Hand:

One utterance of [Oliver Cromwell] ... has always hung in my mind. It was just before the Battle of Dunbar; he beat the Scots in the end ... but he wrote them before the battle, trying to get them to accept a reasonable composition. These were his words: "I beseech ye in the bowels of Christ, think ye may be mistaken." I should like to have that written over the portals of every church, every school, and every court house, and, may I say, of every legislative body in the United States. I should like to have every court begin, "I beseech ye in the bowels of Christ, think that we may be mistaken."

J.B. Handelsman: (cartoon caption) Lawyer to potential client:

You have a pretty good case, Mr. Pitkin. How much justice can you afford?

Deborah L. Rhode:
Lawyers like to leave no stone
unturned, provided they can
charge by the stone.



Robert H. Jackson:

But freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom. The test of its substance is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order. If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.

Charles A. Reich:

The good society must have its hiding places – its protected crannies for the soul. Under the pitiless eye of safety the soul will wither. If I choose to get in my car and drive somewhere, it seems to me that where I am coming from, and where I am going, are nobody's business; I know of no law that requires me to have either a purpose or a destination. If I choose to take an evening walk to see if Andromeda has come up on schedule, I think I am entitled to look for the distant light of Almach and Mirach without finding myself staring into the blinding beam of a police flashlight.

● FRED R. SHAPIRO, *THE YALE BOOK OF QUOTATIONS* (Yale 2006); SAMUEL JOHNSON, *2 A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE* 1139 (4th ed. Strahan 1773).