FRANCIS BACON

THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

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EAN 8596547166542

DigiCat, 2022
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INTRODUCTION.

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“The Tvvoo Bookes of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and aduancement of Learning, divine and humane. To the King. At London. Printed for Henrie Tomes, and are to be sould at his shop at Graies Inne Gate in Holborne. 1605.” That was the original title-page of the book now in the reader’s hand—a living book that led the way to a new world of thought. It was the book in which Bacon, early in the reign of James the First, prepared the way for a full setting forth of his New Organon, or instrument of knowledge.

The Organon of Aristotle was a set of treatises in which Aristotle had written the doctrine of propositions. Study of these treatises was a chief occupation of young men when they passed from school to college, and proceeded from Grammar to Logic, the second of the Seven Sciences. Francis Bacon as a youth of sixteen, at Trinity College, Cambridge, felt the unfruitfulness of this method of search after truth. He was the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Queen Elizabeth’s Lord Keeper, and was born at York House, in the Strand, on the 22nd of January, 1561. His mother was the Lord Keeper’s second wife, one of two sisters, of whom the other married Sir William Cecil, afterwards Lord Burleigh. Sir Nicholas Bacon had six children by his former marriage, and by his second wife two sons, Antony and Francis, of whom Antony was about two years the elder. The family home was at York Place, and at Gorhambury, near St. Albans, from which town, in its ancient and its modern style, Bacon afterwards took his titles of Verulam and St. Albans.

Antony and Francis Bacon went together to Trinity College, Cambridge, when Antony was fourteen years old and Francis twelve. Francis remained at Cambridge only until his sixteenth year; and Dr. Rawley, his chaplain in after-years, reports of him that “whilst he was commorant in the University, about sixteen years of age (as his lordship hath been pleased to impart unto myself), he first fell into dislike of the philosophy of Aristotle; not for the worthlessness of the author, to whom he would ascribe all high attributes, but for the unfruitfulness of the way, being a philosophy (as his lordship used to say) only strong for disputatious and contentions, but barren of the production of works for the benefit of the life of man; in which mind he continued to his dying day.” Bacon was sent as a youth of sixteen to Paris with the ambassador Sir Amyas Paulet, to begin his training for the public service; but his father’s death, in February, 1579, before he had completed the provision he was making for his youngest children, obliged him to return to London, and, at the age of eighteen, to settle down at Gray’s Inn to the study of law as a profession. He was admitted to the outer bar in June, 1582, and about that time, at the age of twenty-one, wrote a sketch of his conception of a New Organon that should lead man to more fruitful knowledge, in a little Latin tract, which he called “Temporis Partus Maximus” (“The Greatest Birth of Time”).

In November, 1584, Bacon took his seat in the House of Commons as member for Melcombe Regis, in Dorsetshire. In October, 1586, he sat for Taunton. He was member afterwards for Liverpool; and he was one of those who petitioned for the speedy execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

In October, 1589, he obtained the reversion of the office of Clerk of the Council in the Star Chamber, which was worth £1,600 or £2,000 a year; but for the succession to this office he had to wait until 1608. It had not yet fallen to him when he wrote his “Two Books of the Advancement of Learning.” In the Parliament that met in February, 1593, Bacon sat as member for Middlesex. He raised difficulties of procedure in the way of the grant of a treble subsidy, by just objection to the joining of the Lords with the Commons in a money grant, and a desire to extend the time allowed for payment from three years to six; it was, in fact, extended to four years. The Queen was offended. Francis Bacon and his brother Antony had attached themselves to the young Earl of Essex, who was their friend and patron. The office of Attorney-General became vacant. Essex asked the Queen to appoint Francis Bacon. The Queen gave the office to Sir Edward Coke, who was already Solicitor-General, and by nine years Bacon’s senior. The office of Solicitor-General thus became vacant, and that was sought for Francis Bacon. The Queen, after delay and hesitation, gave it, in November, 1595, to Serjeant Fleming. The Earl of Essex consoled his friend by giving him “a piece of land”—Twickenham Park—which Bacon afterwards sold for £1,800—equal, say, to £12,000 in present buying power. In 1597 Bacon was returned to Parliament as member for Ipswich, and in that year he was hoping to marry the rich widow of Sir William Hatton, Essex helping; but the lady married, in the next year, Sir Edward Coke. It was in 1597 that Bacon published the First Edition of his Essays. That was a little book containing only ten essays in English, with twelve “Meditationes Sacræ,” which

were essays in Latin on religious subjects. From 1597 onward to the end of his life, Bacon’s Essays were subject to continuous addition and revision. The author’s Second Edition, in which the number of the Essays was increased from ten to thirty-eight, did not appear until November or December, 1612, seven years later than these two books on the “Advancement of Learning;” and the final edition of the Essays, in which their number was increased from thirty-eight to fifty-eight, appeared only in 1625; and Bacon died on the 9th of April, 1626. The edition of the Essays published in 1597, under Elizabeth, marked only the beginning of a course of thought that afterwards flowed in one stream with his teachings in philosophy.

In February, 1601, there was the rebellion of Essex. Francis Bacon had separated himself from his patron after giving him advice that was disregarded. Bacon, now Queen’s Counsel, not only appeared against his old friend, but with excess of zeal, by which, perhaps, he hoped to win back the Queen’s favour, he twice obtruded violent attacks upon Essex when he was not called upon to speak. On the 25th of February, 1601, Essex was beheaded. The genius of Bacon was next employed to justify that act by “A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons attempted and committed by Robert late Earle of Essex and his Complices.” But James of Scotland, on whose behalf Essex had intervened, came to the throne by the death of Elizabeth on the 24th of March, 1603. Bacon was among the crowd of men who were made knights by James I., and he had to justify himself under the new order of things by writing “Sir Francis Bacon his Apologie in certain Imputations concerning

the late Earle of Essex.” He was returned to the first Parliament of James I. by Ipswich and St. Albans, and he was confirmed in his office of King’s Counsel in August, 1604; but he was not appointed to the office of Solicitor-General when it became vacant in that year.

That was the position of Francis Bacon in 1605, when he published this work, where in his First Book he pointed out the discredits of learning from human defects of the learned, and emptiness of many of the studies chosen, or the way of dealing with them. This came, he said, especially by the mistaking or misplacing of the last or furthest end of knowledge, as if there were sought in it “a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man’s estate.” The rest of the First Book was given to an argument upon the Dignity of Learning; and the Second Book, on the Advancement of Learning, is, as Bacon himself described it, “a general and faithful perambulation of learning, with an inquiry what parts thereof lie fresh and waste, and not improved and converted by the industry of man; to the end that such a plot made and recorded to memory may both minister light to any public designation and also serve to excite voluntary endeavours.” Bacon makes, by a sort of exhaustive analysis, a ground-plan of all subjects of study, as an intellectual map, helping the right inquirer in his search for the right path. The right path is

that by which he has the best chance of adding to the stock of knowledge in the world something worth labouring for; and the true worth is in labour for “the glory of the Creator and the relief of man’s estate.”

H. M.

THE
FIRST BOOK OF FRANCIS BACON;
OF THE PROFICIENCE AND ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING, DIVINE AND HUMAN.

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To the King.

THERE were under the law, excellent King, both daily sacrifices and freewill offerings; the one proceeding upon ordinary observance, the other upon a devout cheerfulness: in like manner there belongeth to kings from their servants both tribute of duty and presents of affection. In the former of these I hope I shall not live to be wanting, according to my most humble duty and the good pleasure of your Majesty's employments: for the latter, I thought it more respective to make choice of some oblation which might rather refer to the propriety and excellency of your individual person, than to the business of your crown and state.

Wherefore, representing your Majesty many times unto my mind, and beholding you not with the inquisitive eye of presumption, to discover that which the Scripture telleth me is inscrutable, but with the observant eye of duty and admiration, leaving aside the other parts of your virtue and fortune, I have been touched—yea, and possessed—with an extreme wonder at those your virtues and faculties, which the philosophers call intellectual; the largeness of your capacity, the faithfulness of your memory, the swiftness of

your apprehension, the penetration of your judgment, and the facility and order of your elocution: and I have often thought that of all the persons living that I have known, your Majesty were the best instance to make a man of Plato's opinion, that all knowledge is but remembrance, and that the mind of man by Nature knoweth all things, and hath but her own native and original notions (which by the strangeness and darkness of this tabernacle of the body are sequestered) again revived and restored: such a light of Nature I have observed in your Majesty, and such a readiness to take flame and blaze from the least occasion presented, or the least spark of another's knowledge delivered. And as the Scripture saith of the wisest king, "That his heart was as the sands of the sea;" which, though it be one of the largest bodies, yet it consisteth of the smallest and finest portions; so hath God given your Majesty a composition of understanding admirable, being able to compass and comprehend the greatest matters, and nevertheless to touch and apprehend the least; whereas it should seem an impossibility in Nature for the same instrument to make itself fit for great and small works. And for your gift of speech, I call to mind what Cornelius Tacitus saith of Augustus Cæsar: *Augusto profluens*, *et quæ principem deceret*, *eloquentia fuit*. For if we note it well, speech that is uttered with labour and difficulty, or speech that savoureth of the affectation of art and precepts, or speech that is framed after the imitation of some pattern of eloquence, though never so excellent; all this hath somewhat servile, and holding of the subject. But your Majesty's manner of speech is, indeed, prince-like, flowing

as from a fountain, and yet streaming and branching itself into Nature's order, full of facility and felicity, imitating none, and inimitable by any. And as in your civil estate there appeareth to be an emulation and contention of your Majesty's virtue with your fortune; a virtuous disposition with a fortunate regiment; a virtuous expectation (when time was) of your greater fortune, with a prosperous possession thereof in the due time; a virtuous observation of the laws of marriage, with most blessed and happy fruit of marriage; a virtuous and most Christian desire of peace, with a fortunate inclination in your neighbour princes thereunto: so likewise in these intellectual matters there seemeth to be no less contention between the excellency of your Majesty's gifts of Nature and the universality and perfection of your learning. For I am well assured that this which I shall say is no amplification at all, but a positive and measured truth; which is, that there hath not been since Christ's time any king or temporal monarch which hath been so learned in all literature and erudition, divine and human. For let a man seriously and diligently revolve and peruse the succession of the Emperors of Rome, of which Cæsar the Dictator (who lived some years before Christ) and Marcus Antoninus were the best learned, and so descend to the Emperors of Græcia, or of the West, and then to the lines of France, Spain, England, Scotland, and the rest, and he shall find this judgment is truly made. For it seemeth much in a king if, by the compendious extractions of other men's wits and labours, he can take hold of any superficial ornaments and shows of learning, or if he countenance and prefer learning and learned men; but to drink, indeed, of the true

fountains of learning—nay, to have such a fountain of learning in himself, in a king, and in a king born—is almost a miracle. And the more, because there is met in your Majesty a rare conjunction, as well of divine and sacred literature as of profane and human; so as your Majesty standeth invested of that triplicity, which in great veneration was ascribed to the ancient Hermes: the power and fortune of a king, the knowledge and illumination of a priest, and the learning and universality of a philosopher. This propriety inherent and individual attribute in your Majesty deserveth to be expressed not only in the fame and admiration of the present time, nor in the history or tradition of the ages succeeding, but also in some solid work, fixed memorial, and immortal monument, bearing a character or signature both of the power of a king and the difference and perfection of such a king.

Therefore I did conclude with myself that I could not make unto your Majesty a better oblation than of some treatise tending to that end, whereof the sum will consist of these two parts: the former concerning the excellency of learning and knowledge, and the excellency of the merit and true glory in the augmentation and propagation thereof; the latter, what the particular acts and works are which have been embraced and undertaken for the advancement of learning; and again, what defects and undervalues I find in such particular acts: to the end that though I cannot positively or affirmatively advise your Majesty, or propound unto you framed particulars, yet I may excite your princely cogitations to visit the excellent treasure of your own mind,

and thence to extract particulars for this purpose agreeable to your magnanimity and wisdom.

I. (1) In the entrance to the former of these—to clear the way and, as it were, to make silence, to have the true testimonies concerning the dignity of learning to be better heard, without the interruption of tacit objections—I think good to deliver it from the discredits and disgraces which it hath received, all from ignorance, but ignorance severally disguised; appearing sometimes in the zeal and jealousy of divines, sometimes in the severity and arrogancy of politics, and sometimes in the errors and imperfections of learned men themselves.

(2) I hear the former sort say that knowledge is of those things which are to be accepted of with great limitation and caution; that the aspiring to overmuch knowledge was the original temptation and sin whereupon ensued the fall of man; that knowledge hath in it somewhat of the serpent, and, therefore, where it entereth into a man it makes him swell; *Scientia inflat*; that Solomon gives a censure, “That there is no end of making books, and that much reading is weariness of the flesh;” and again in another place, “That in spacious knowledge there is much contristation, and that he that increaseth knowledge increaseth anxiety;” that Saint Paul gives a caveat, “That we be not spoiled through vain philosophy;” that experience demonstrates how learned men have been arch-heretics, how learned times have been inclined to atheism, and how the contemplation of second causes doth derogate from our dependence upon God, who is the first cause.

(3) To discover, then, the ignorance and error of this opinion, and the misunderstanding in the grounds thereof, it may well appear these men do not observe or consider that it was not the pure knowledge of Nature and universality, a knowledge by the light whereof man did give names unto other creatures in Paradise as they were brought before him according unto their proprieties, which gave the occasion to the fall; but it was the proud knowledge of good and evil, with an intent in man to give law unto himself, and to depend no more upon God's commandments, which was the form of the temptation. Neither is it any quantity of knowledge, how great soever, that can make the mind of man to swell; for nothing can fill, much less extend the soul of man, but God and the contemplation of God; and, therefore, Solomon, speaking of the two principal senses of inquisition, the eye and the ear, affirmeth that the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; and if there be no fulness, then is the continent greater than the content: so of knowledge itself and the mind of man, whereto the senses are but reporters, he defineth likewise in these words, placed after that calendar or ephemerides which he maketh of the diversities of times and seasons for all actions and purposes, and concludeth thus: "God hath made all things beautiful, or decent, in the true return of their seasons. Also He hath placed the world in man's heart, yet cannot man find out the work which God worketh from the beginning to the end"—declaring not obscurely that God hath framed the mind of man as a mirror or glass, capable of the image of the universal world, and joyful to receive the impression thereof, as the eye joyeth to receive light; and

not only delighted in beholding the variety of things and vicissitude of times, but raised also to find out and discern the ordinances and decrees which throughout all those changes are infallibly observed. And although he doth insinuate that the supreme or summary law of Nature (which he calleth “the work which God worketh from the beginning to the end”) is not possible to be found out by man, yet that doth not derogate from the capacity of the mind; but may be referred to the impediments, as of shortness of life, ill conjunction of labours, ill tradition of knowledge over from hand to hand, and many other inconveniences, whereunto the condition of man is subject. For that nothing parcel of the world is denied to man’s inquiry and invention, he doth in another place rule over, when he saith, “The spirit of man is as the lamp of God, wherewith He searcheth the inwardness of all secrets.” If, then, such be the capacity and receipt of the mind of man, it is manifest that there is no danger at all in the proportion or quantity of knowledge, how large soever, lest it should make it swell or out-compass itself; no, but it is merely the quality of knowledge, which, be it in quantity more or less, if it be taken without the true corrective thereof, hath in it some nature of venom or malignity, and some effects of that venom, which is ventosity or swelling. This corrective spice, the mixture whereof maketh knowledge so sovereign, is charity, which the Apostle immediately addeth to the former clause; for so he saith, “Knowledge bloweth up, but charity buildeth up;” not unlike unto that which he deilvereth in another place: “If I spake,” saith he, “with the tongues of men and angels, and had not charity, it were but

as a tinkling cymbal.” Not but that it is an excellent thing to speak with the tongues of men and angels, but because, if it be severed from charity, and not referred to the good of men and mankind, it hath rather a sounding and unworthy glory than a meriting and substantial virtue. And as for that censure of Solomon concerning the excess of writing and reading books, and the anxiety of spirit which redoundeth from knowledge, and that admonition of St. Paul, “That we be not seduced by vain philosophy,” let those places be rightly understood; and they do, indeed, excellently set forth the true bounds and limitations whereby human knowledge is confined and circumscribed, and yet without any such contracting or coarctation, but that it may comprehend all the universal nature of things; for these limitations are three: the first, “That we do not so place our felicity in knowledge, as we forget our mortality;” the second, “That we make application of our knowledge, to give ourselves repose and contentment, and not distaste or repining;” the third, “That we do not presume by the contemplation of Nature to attain to the mysteries of God.” For as touching the first of these, Solomon doth excellently expound himself in another place of the same book, where he saith: “I saw well that knowledge recedeth as far from ignorance as light doth from darkness; and that the wise man’s eyes keep watch in his head, whereas this fool roundeth about in darkness: but withal I learned that the same mortality involveth them both.” And for the second, certain it is there is no vexation or anxiety of mind which resulteth from knowledge otherwise than merely by accident; for all knowledge and wonder (which is the seed of

knowledge) is an impression of pleasure in itself; but when men fall to framing conclusions out of their knowledge, applying it to their particular, and ministering to themselves thereby weak fears or vast desires, there groweth that carefulness and trouble of mind which is spoken of; for then knowledge is no more *Lumen siccum*, whereof Heraclitus the profound said, *Lumen siccum optima anima*; but it becometh *Lumen madidum*, or *maceratum*, being steeped and infused in the humours of the affections. And as for the third point, it deserveth to be a little stood upon, and not to be lightly passed over; for if any man shall think by view and inquiry into these sensible and material things to attain that light, whereby he may reveal unto himself the nature or will of God, then, indeed, is he spoiled by vain philosophy; for the contemplation of God's creatures and works produceth (having regard to the works and creatures themselves) knowledge, but having regard to God no perfect knowledge, but wonder, which is broken knowledge. And, therefore, it was most aptly said by one of Plato's school, "That the sense of man carrieth a resemblance with the sun, which (as we see) openeth and revealeth all the terrestrial globe; but then, again, it obscureth and concealeth the stars and celestial globe: so doth the sense discover natural things, but it darkeneth and shutteth up divine." And hence it is true that it hath proceeded, that divers great learned men have been heretical, whilst they have sought to fly up to the secrets of the Deity by this waxen wings of the senses. And as for the conceit that too much knowledge should incline a man to atheism, and that the ignorance of second causes should make a more devout

dependence upon God, which is the first cause; first, it is good to ask the question which Job asked of his friends: “Will you lie for God, as one man will lie for another, to gratify him?” For certain it is that God worketh nothing in Nature but by second causes; and if they would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture, as it were in favour towards God, and nothing else but to offer to the Author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie. But further, it is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of men to atheism, but a further proceeding therein doth bring the mind back again to religion. For in the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes, which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passeth on further and seeth the dependence of causes and the works of Providence; then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of Nature’s chain must needs he tied to the foot of Jupiter’s chair. To conclude, therefore, let no man upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the book of God’s word, or in the book of God’s works, divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavour an endless progress or proficience in both; only let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling; to use, and not to ostentation; and again, that they do not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together.

II. (1) And as for the disgraces which learning receiveth from politics, they be of this nature: that learning doth soften men’s minds, and makes them more unapt for the honour and exercise of arms; that it doth mar and pervert men’s dispositions for matter of government and policy, in making them too curious and irresolute by variety of reading, or too peremptory or positive by strictness of rules and axioms, or too immoderate and overweening by reason of the greatness of examples, or too incompatible and differing from the times by reason of the dissimilitude of examples; or at least, that it doth divert men’s travails from action and business, and bringeth them to a love of leisure and privateness; and that it doth bring into states a relaxation of discipline, whilst every man is more ready to argue than to obey and execute. Out of this conceit Cato, surnamed the Censor, one of the wisest men indeed that ever lived, when Carneades the philosopher came in embassage to Rome, and that the young men of Rome began to flock about him, being allured with the sweetness and majesty of his eloquence and learning, gave counsel in open senate that they should give him his despatch with all speed, lest he should infect and enchant the minds and affections of the youth, and at unawares bring in an alteration of the manners and customs of the state. Out of the same conceit or humour did Virgil, turning his pen to the advantage of his country and the disadvantage of his own profession, make a kind of separation between policy and government, and between arts and sciences, in the verses so much renowned, attributing and challenging the one to the Romans, and leaving and yielding the other to the

Grecians: *Tu regere imperio popules*, *Romane*, *memento*, *Hæ tibi erunt artes*, &c. So likewise we see that Anytus, the accuser of Socrates, laid it as an article of charge and accusation against him, that he did, with the variety and power of his discourses and disputatious, withdraw young men from due reverence to the laws and customs of their country, and that he did profess a dangerous and pernicious science, which was to make the worse matter seem the better, and to suppress truth by force of eloquence and speech.

(2) But these and the like imputations have rather a countenance of gravity than any ground of justice: for experience doth warrant that, both in persons and in times, there hath been a meeting and concurrence in learning and arms, flourishing and excelling in the same men and the same ages. For as ‘for men, there cannot be a better nor the hike instance as of that pair, Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar, the Dictator; whereof the one was Aristotle’s scholar in philosophy, and the other was Cicero’s rival in eloquence; or if any man had rather call for scholars that were great generals, than generals that were great scholars, let him take Epaminondas the Theban, or Xenophon the Athenian; whereof the one was the first that abated the power of Sparta, and the other was the first that made way to the overthrow of the monarchy of Persia. And this concurrence is yet more visible in times than in persons, by how much an age is greater object than a man. For both in Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Græcia, and Rome, the same times that are most renowned for arms are, likewise, most admired for learning, so that the greatest authors and philosophers, and the

greatest captains and governors, have lived in the same ages. Neither can it otherwise he: for as in man the ripeness of strength of the body and mind cometh much about an age, save that the strength of the body cometh somewhat the more early, so in states, arms and learning, whereof the one correspondeth to the body, the other to the soul of man, have a concurrence or near sequence in times.

(3) And for matter of policy and government, that learning, should rather hurt, than enable thereunto, is a thing very improbable; we see it is accounted an error to commit a natural body to empiric physicians, which commonly have a few pleasing receipts whereupon they are confident and adventurous, but know neither the causes of diseases, nor the complexions of patients, nor peril of accidents, nor the true method of cures; we see it is a like error to rely upon advocates or lawyers which are only men of practice, and not grounded in their books, who are many times easily surprised when matter falleth out besides their experience, to the prejudice of the causes they handle: so by like reason it cannot be but a matter of doubtful consequence if states be managed by empiric statesmen, not well mingled with men grounded in learning. But contrariwise, it is almost without instance contradictory that ever any government was disastrous that was in the hands of learned governors. For howsoever it hath been ordinary with politic men to extenuate and disable learned men by the names of *pedantes*; yet in the records of time it appeareth in many particulars that the governments of princes in minority (notwithstanding the infinite disadvantage of that kind of state)—have nevertheless

excelled the government of princes of mature age, even for that reason which they seek to traduce, which is that by that occasion the state hath been in the hands of *pedantes*: for so was the state of Rome for the first five years, which are so much magnified, during the minority of Nero, in the hands of Seneca, a *pedenti*; so it was again, for ten years' space or more, during the minority of Gordianus the younger, with great applause and contentation in the hands of Misitheus, a *pedanti*: so was it before that, in the minority of Alexander Severus, in like happiness, in hands not much unlike, by reason of the rule of the women, who were aided by the teachers and preceptors. Nay, let a man look into the government of the Bishops of Rome, as by name, into the government of Pius Quintus and Sextus Quintus in our times, who were both at their entrance esteemed but as pedantical friars, and he shall find that such Popes do greater things, and proceed upon truer principles of state, than those which have ascended to the papacy from an education and breeding in affairs of state and courts of princes; for although men bred in learning are perhaps to seek in points of convenience and accommodating for the present, which the Italians call *ragioni di stato*, whereof the same Pius Quintus could not hear spoken with patience, terming them inventions against religion and the moral virtues; yet on the other side, to recompense that, they are perfect in those same plain grounds of religion, justice, honour, and moral virtue, which if they be well and watchfully pursued, there will be seldom use of those other, no more than of physic in a sound or well-dieted body. Neither can the experience of one man's life furnish

examples and precedents for the event of one man’s life. For as it happeneth sometimes that the grandchild, or other descendant, resembleth the ancestor more than the son; so many times occurrences of present times may sort better with ancient examples than with those of the later or immediate times; and lastly, the wit of one man can no more countervail learning than one man’s means can hold way with a common purse.

(4) And as for those particular seducements or indispositions of the mind for policy and government, which learning is pretended to insinuate; if it be granted that any such thing be, it must be remembered withal that learning ministereth in every of them greater strength of medicine or remedy than it offereth cause of indisposition or infirmity. For if by a secret operation it make men perplexed and irresolute, on the other side by plain precept it teacheth them when and upon what ground to resolve; yea, and how to carry things in suspense, without prejudice, till they resolve. If it make men positive and regular, it teacheth them what things are in their nature demonstrative, and what are conjectural, and as well the use of distinctions and exceptions, as the latitude of principles and rules. If it mislead by disproportion or dissimilitude of examples, it teacheth men the force of circumstances, the errors of comparisons, and all the cautions of application; so that in all these it doth rectify more effectually than it can pervert. And these medicines it conveyeth into men’s minds much more forcibly by the quickness and penetration of examples. For let a man look into the errors of Clement VII., so lively described by Guicciardini, who served under him, or into the

errors of Cicero, painted out by his own pencil in his Epistles to Atticus, and he will fly apace from being irresolute. Let him look into the errors of Phocion, and he will beware how he be obstinate or inflexible. Let him but read the fable of Ixion, and it will hold him from being vaporous or imaginative. Let him look into the errors of Cato II., and he will never be one of the Antipodes, to tread opposite to the present world.

(5) And for the conceit that learning should dispose men to leisure and privateness, and make men slothful: it were a strange thing if that which accustometh the mind to a perpetual motion and agitation should induce slothfulness, whereas, contrariwise, it may be truly affirmed that no kind of men love business for itself but those that are learned; for other persons love it for profit, as a hireling that loves the work for the wages; or for honour, as because it beareth them up in the eyes of men, and refresheth their reputation, which otherwise would wear; or because it putteth them in mind of their fortune, and giveth them occasion to pleasure and displeasure; or because it exerciseth some faculty wherein they take pride, and so entertaineth them in good-humour and pleasing conceits towards themselves; or because it advanceth any other their ends. So that as it is said of untrue valours, that some men’s valours are in the eyes of them that look on, so such men’s industries are in the eyes of others, or, at least, in regard of their own designments; only learned men love business as an action according to nature, as agreeable to health of mind as exercise is to health of body, taking pleasure in the action itself, and not in the purchase, so that of all men they are

the most indefatigable, if it be towards any business which can hold or detain their mind.

(6) And if any man be laborious in reading and study, and yet idle in business and action, it groweth from some weakness of body or softness of spirit, such as Seneca speaketh of: *Quidam tam sunt umbratiles*, *ut putent in turbido esse quicquid in luce est*; and not of learning: well may it be that such a point of a man's nature may make him give himself to learning, but it is not learning that breedeth any such point in his nature.

(7) And that learning should take up too much time or leisure: I answer, the most active or busy man that hath been or can be, hath (no question) many vacant times of leisure while he expecteth the tides and returns of business (except he be either tedious and of no despatch, or lightly and unworthily ambitious to meddle in things that may be better done by others), and then the question is but how those spaces and times of leisure shall be filled and spent; whether in pleasure or in studies; as was well answered by Demosthenes to his adversary Æschines, that was a man given to pleasure, and told him "That his orations did smell of the lamp." "Indeed," said Demosthenes, "there is a great difference between the things that you and I do by lamp-light." So as no man need doubt that learning will expel business, but rather it will keep and defend the possession of the mind against idleness and pleasure, which otherwise at unawares may enter to the prejudice of both.

(8) Again, for that other conceit that learning should undermine the reverence of laws and government, it is assuredly a mere depravation and calumny, without all

shadow of truth. For to say that a blind custom of obedience should be a surer obligation than duty taught and understood, it is to affirm that a blind man may tread surer by a guide than a seeing man can by a light. And it is without all controversy that learning doth make the minds of men gentle, generous, manageable, and pliant to government; whereas ignorance makes them churlish, thwart, and mutinous: and the evidence of time doth clear this assertion, considering that the most barbarous, rude, and unlearned times have been most subject to tumults, seditious, and changes.

(9) And as to the judgment of Cato the Censor, he was well punished for his blasphemy against learning, in the same kind wherein he offended; for when he was past threescore years old, he was taken with an extreme desire to go to school again, and to learn the Greek tongue, to the end to peruse the Greek authors; which doth well demonstrate that his former censure of the Grecian learning was rather an affected gravity, than according to the inward sense of his own opinion. And as for Virgil’s verses, though it pleased him to brave the world in taking to the Romans the art of empire, and leaving to others the arts of subjects, yet so much is manifest—that the Romans never ascended to that height of empire till the time they had ascended to the height of other arts. For in the time of the two first Cæsars, which had the art of government in greatest perfection, there lived the best poet, Virgilius Maro; the best historiographer, Titus Livius; the best antiquary, Marcus Varro; and the best or second orator, Marcus Cicero, that to the memory of man are known. As for the accusation of

Socrates, the time must be remembered when it was prosecuted; which was under the Thirty Tyrants, the most base, bloody, and envious persons that have governed; which revolution of state was no sooner over but Socrates, whom they had made a person criminal, was made a person heroical, and his memory accumulate with honours divine and human; and those discourses of his which were then termed corrupting of manners, were after acknowledged for sovereign medicines of the mind and manners, and so have been received ever since till this day. Let this, therefore, serve for answer to politiques, which in their humorous severity, or in their feigned gravity, have presumed to throw imputations upon learning; which redargution nevertheless (save that we know not whether our labours may extend to other ages) were not needful for the present, in regard of the love and reverence towards learning which the example and countenance of two so learned princes, Queen Elizabeth and your Majesty, being as Castor and Pollux, *lucida sidera*, stars of excellent light and most benign influence, hath wrought in all men of place and authority in our nation.

III. (1) Now therefore we come to that third sort of discredit or diminution of credit that groweth unto learning from learned men themselves, which commonly cleaveth fastest: it is either from their fortune, or from their manners, or from the nature of their studies. For the first, it is not in their power; and the second is accidental; the third only is proper to be handled: but because we are not in hand with true measure, but with popular estimation and conceit, it is not amiss to speak somewhat of the two former. The derogations therefore which grow to learning from the