

VII. Human Proofs

(1) As for human proofs, it is so large a field, as in a discourse of this nature and brevity it is fit rather to use choice of those things which we shall produce, than to embrace the variety of them. First, therefore, in the degrees of human honour amongst the heathen, it was the highest to obtain to a veneration and adoration as a God. This unto the Christians is as the forbidden fruit. But we speak now separately of human testimony, according to which—that which the Grecians call *apotheosis*, and the Latins *relatio inter divos*—was the supreme honour which man could attribute unto man, specially when it was given, not by a formal decree or act of state (as it was used among the Roman Emperors), but by an inward assent and belief. Which honour, being so high, had also a degree or middle term; for there were reckoned above human honours, honours heroical and divine: in the attribution and distribution of which honours we see antiquity made this difference; that whereas founders and uniters of states and cities, lawgivers, extirpers of tyrants, fathers of the people, and other eminent persons in civil merit, were honoured but with the titles of worthies or demigods, such as were Hercules, Theseus, Minus, Romulus, and the like; on the other side, such as were inventors and authors of new arts, endowments, and commodities towards man's life, were ever consecrated amongst the gods themselves, as was Ceres, Bacchus, Mercurius, Apollo, and others. And justly; for the merit of the former is confined within the circle of an age or a nation, and is like fruitful showers, which though they be profitable and good, yet serve but for that season, and for a latitude of ground where they fall; but the other is, indeed, like the benefits of heaven, which are permanent and universal. The former again is mixed with strife and perturbation, but the latter hath the true character of Divine Presence, coming in *aura leni*, without noise or agitation.

(2) Neither is certainly that other merit of learning, in repressing the inconveniences which grow from man to man, much inferior to the former, of relieving the necessities which arise from nature, which merit was lively set forth by the ancients in that feigned relation of Orpheus' theatre, where all beasts and birds assembled, and, forgetting their several appetites—some of prey, some of game, some of quarrel—stood all sociably together listening unto the airs and accords of the harp, the sound whereof no sooner ceased, or was drowned by some louder noise, but every beast returned to his own nature; wherein is aptly described the nature and condition of men, who are full of savage and unreclaimed desires, of profit, of lust, of revenge; which as long as they give ear to precepts, to laws, to religion, sweetly touched with eloquence and persuasion of books, of sermons, of harangues, so long is society and peace maintained; but if these instruments be silent, or that sedition and tumult make them not audible, all things dissolve into anarchy and confusion.

(3) But this appeareth more manifestly when kings themselves, or persons of authority under them, or other governors in commonwealths and popular estates, are endued with learning. For although he might be thought partial to his own profession that said "Then should people and estates be happy when either kings were philosophers, or philosophers kings;" yet so much is verified by experience, that under learned princes and governors there have been ever the best times: for howsoever kings may have their imperfections in their passions and customs, yet, if they be illuminate by learning, they have those notions of religion, policy, and morality, which do preserve them and refrain them from all ruinous and peremptory errors and excesses, whispering evermore in their ears, when counsellors and servants stand mute and silent. And senators or counsellors, likewise, which be learned, to proceed upon more safe and substantial principles, than counsellors which are only men of experience; the one sort keeping dangers afar off, whereas the other discover them not till they come near hand, and then

trust to the agility of their wit to ward or avoid them.

(4) Which felicity of times under learned princes (to keep still the law of brevity, by using the most eminent and selected examples) doth best appear in the age which passed from the death of Domitianus the emperor until the reign of Commodus; comprehending a succession of six princes, all learned, or singular favourers and advancers of learning, which age for temporal respects was the most happy and flourishing that ever the Roman Empire (which then was a model of the world) enjoyed—a matter revealed and prefigured unto Domitian in a dream the night before he was slain: for he thought there was grown behind upon his shoulders a neck and a head of gold, which came accordingly to pass in those golden times which succeeded; of which princes we will make some commemoration; wherein, although the matter will be vulgar, and may be thought fitter for a declamation than agreeable to a treatise infolded as this is, yet, because it is pertinent to the point in hand—*Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo*—and to name them only were too naked and cursory, I will not omit it altogether. The first was Nerva, the excellent temper of whose government is by a glance in Cornelius Tacitus touched to the life: *Postquam divus Nerva res oluim insociabiles miscuisset, imperium et libertatem*. And in token of his learning, the last act of his short reign left to memory was a missive to his adopted son, Trajan, proceeding upon some inward discontent at the ingratitude of the times, comprehended in a verse of Homer's—

“Telis, Phœbe, tuis, lacrymas ulciscere nostras.”

(5) Trajan, who succeeded, was for his person not learned; but if we will hearken to the speech of our Saviour, that saith, “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall have a prophet's reward,” he deserveth to be placed amongst the most learned princes; for there was not a greater admirer of learning or benefactor of learning, a founder of famous libraries, a perpetual advancer of learned men to office, and familiar converser with learned professors and preceptors who were noted to have then most credit in court. On the other side how much Trajan's virtue and government was admired and renowned, surely no testimony of grave and faithful history doth more lively set forth than that legend tale of Gregorius Magnum, Bishop of Rome, who was noted for the extreme envy he bare towards all heathen excellency; and yet he is reported, out of the love and estimation of Trajan's moral virtues, to have made unto God passionate and fervent prayers for the delivery of his soul out of hell, and to have obtained it, with a caveat that he should make no more such petitions. In this prince's time also the persecutions against the Christians received intermission upon the certificate of Plinius Secundus, a man of excellent learning and by Trajan advanced.

(6) Adrian, his successor, was the most curious man that lived, and the most universal inquirer: insomuch as it was noted for an error in his mind that he desired to comprehend all things, and not to reserve himself for the worthiest things, falling into the like humour that was long before noted in Philip of Macedon, who, when he would needs overrule and put down an excellent musician in an argument touching music, was well answered by him again—“God forbid, sir,” saith he, “that your fortune should be so bad as to know these things better than I.” It pleased God likewise to use the curiosity of this emperor as an inducement to the peace of His Church in those days; for having Christ in veneration, not as a God or Saviour, but as a wonder or novelty, and having his picture in his gallery matched with Apollonius (with whom in his vain imagination he thought it had some conformity), yet it served the turn to allay the bitter hatred of those times against the Christian name, so as the Church

had peace during his time. And for his government civil, although he did not attain to that of Trajan's in glory of arms or perfection of justice, yet in deserving of the weal of the subject he did exceed him. For Trajan erected many famous monuments and buildings, insomuch as Constantine the Great in emulation was wont to call him *Parietaria*, "wall-flower," because his name was upon so many walls; but his buildings and works were more of glory and triumph than use and necessity. But Adrian spent his whole reign, which was peaceable, in a perambulation or survey of the Roman Empire, giving order and making assignation where he went for re-edifying of cities, towns, and forts decayed, and for cutting of rivers and streams, and for making bridges and passages, and for policing of cities and commonalties with new ordinances and constitutions, and granting new franchises and incorporations; so that his whole time was a very restoration of all the lapses and decays of former times.

(7) Antoninus Pius, who succeeded him, was a prince excellently learned, and had the patient and subtle wit of a schoolman, insomuch as in common speech (which leaves no virtue untaxed) he was called *Cymini Sector*, a carver or a divider of cummin seed, which is one of the least seeds. Such a patience he had and settled spirit to enter into the least and most exact differences of causes, a fruit no doubt of the exceeding tranquillity and serenity of his mind, which being no ways charged or encumbered, either with fears, remorse, or scruples, but having been noted for a man of the purest goodness, without all fiction or affectation, that hath reigned or lived, made his mind continually present and entire. He likewise approached a degree nearer unto Christianity, and became, as Agrippa said unto St. Paul, "half a Christian," holding their religion and law in good opinion, and not only ceasing persecution, but giving way to the advancement of Christians.

(8) There succeeded him the first *Divi fratres*, the two adoptive brethren—Lucius Commodus Verus, son to Ælius Verus, who delighted much in the softer kind of learning, and was wont to call the poet Martial his Virgil; and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus: whereof the latter, who obscured his colleague and survived him long, was named the "Philosopher," who, as he excelled all the rest in learning, so he excelled them likewise in perfection of all royal virtues; insomuch as Julianus the emperor, in his book entitled *Cæsares*, being as a pasquil or satire to deride all his predecessors, feigned that they were all invited to a banquet of the gods, and Silenus the jester sat at the nether end of the table and bestowed a scoff on everyone as they came in; but when Marcus Philosophus came in, Silenus was gravelled and out of countenance, not knowing where to carp at him, save at the last he gave a glance at his patience towards his wife. And the virtue of this prince, continued with that of his predecessor, made the name of Antoninus so sacred in the world, that though it were extremely dishonoured in Commodus, Caracalla, and Heliogabalus, who all bare the name, yet, when Alexander Severus refused the name because he was a stranger to the family, the Senate with one acclamation said, *Quomodo Augustus, sic et Antoninus*. In such renown and veneration was the name of these two princes in those days, that they would have had it as a perpetual addition in all the emperors' style. In this emperor's time also the Church for the most part was in peace; so as in this sequence of six princes we do see the blessed effects of learning in sovereignty, painted forth in the greatest table of the world.

(9) But for a tablet or picture of smaller volume (not presuming to speak of your Majesty that liveth), in my judgment the most excellent is that of Queen Elizabeth, your immediate predecessor in this part of Britain; a prince that, if Plutarch were now alive to write lives by parallels, would trouble him, I think, to find for her a parallel amongst women. This lady was endued with learning in her sex singular, and rare even amongst masculine princes—whether we speak of learning, of language, or of science, modern or ancient, divinity or humanity—and unto the very last year of her life she accustomed to appoint set hours for reading, scarcely any young student in a university more daily or more dully. As for her government, I assure myself (I shall not exceed if I do affirm) that this part of

the island never had forty-five years of better times, and yet not through the calmness of the season, but through the wisdom of her regiment. For if there be considered, of the one side, the truth of religion established, the constant peace and security, the good administration of justice, the temperate use of the prerogative, not slackened, nor much strained; the flourishing state of learning, sortable to so excellent a patroness; the convenient estate of wealth and means, both of crown and subject; the habit of obedience, and the moderation of discontents; and there be considered, on the other side, the differences of religion, the troubles of neighbour countries, the ambition of Spain, and opposition of Rome, and then that she was solitary and of herself; these things, I say, considered, as I could not have chosen an instance so recent and so proper, so I suppose I could not have chosen one more remarkable or eminent to the purpose now in hand, which is concerning the conjunction of learning in the prince with felicity in the people.

(10) Neither hath learning an influence and operation only upon civil merit and moral virtue, and the arts or temperature of peace and peaceable government; but likewise it hath no less power and efficacy in enablement towards martial and military virtue and prowess, as may be notably represented in the examples of Alexander the Great and Cæsar the Dictator (mentioned before, but now in fit place to be resumed), of whose virtues and acts in war there needs no note or recital, having been the wonders of time in that kind; but of their affections towards learning and perfections in learning it is pertinent to say somewhat.

(11) Alexander was bred and taught under Aristotle, the great philosopher, who dedicated divers of his books of philosophy unto him; he was attended with Callisthenes and divers other learned persons, that followed him in camp, throughout his journeys and conquests. What price and estimation he had learning in doth notably appear in these three particulars: first, in the envy he used to express that he bare towards Achilles, in this, that he had so good a trumpet of his praises as Homer's verses; secondly, in the judgment or solution he gave touching that precious cabinet of Darius, which was found among his jewels (whereof question was made what thing was worthy to be put into it, and he gave his opinion for Homer's works); thirdly, in his letter to Aristotle, after he had set forth his books of nature, wherein he expostulateth with him for publishing the secrets or mysteries of philosophy; and gave him to understand that himself esteemed it more to excel other men in learning and knowledge than in power and empire. And what use he had of learning doth appear, or rather shine, in all his speeches and answers, being full of science and use of science, and that in all variety.

(12) And herein again it may seem a thing scholastical, and somewhat idle to recite things that every man knoweth; but yet, since the argument I handle leadeth me thereunto, I am glad that men shall perceive I am as willing to flatter (if they will so call it) an Alexander, or a Cæsar, or an Antoninus, that are dead many hundred years since, as any that now liveth; for it is the displaying of the glory of learning in sovereignty that I propound to myself, and not a humour of declaiming in any man's praises. Observe, then, the speech he used of Diogenes, and see if it tend not to the true state of one of the greatest questions of moral philosophy: whether the enjoying of outward things, or the contemning of them, be the greatest happiness; for when he saw Diogenes so perfectly contented with so little, he said to those that mocked at his condition, "were I not Alexander, I would wish to be Diogenes." But Seneca inverteth it, and saith, "*Plus erat, quod hic nollet accipere, quàm quod ille posset dare.*" There were more things which Diogenes would have refused than those were which Alexander could have given or enjoyed.

(13) Observe, again, that speech which was usual with him,—“That he felt his mortality chiefly in two things, sleep and lust;” and see if it were not a speech extracted out of the depth of natural philosophy,

and liker to have come out of the mouth of Aristotle or Democritus than from Alexander.

(14) See, again, that speech of humanity and poesy, when, upon the bleeding of his wounds, he called unto him one of his flatterers, that was wont to ascribe to him divine honour, and said, "Look, this is very blood; this is not such a liquor as Homer speaketh of, which ran from Venus' hand when it was pierced by Diomedes."

(15) See likewise his readiness in reprehension of logic in the speech he used to Cassander, upon a complaint that was made against his father Antipater; for when Alexander happened to say, "Do you think these men would have come from so far to complain except they had just cause of grief?" and Cassander answered, "Yea, that was the matter, because they thought they should not be disproved;" said Alexander, laughing, "See the subtleties of Aristotle, to take a matter both ways, *pro et contra*, &c."

(16) But note, again, how well he could use the same art which he reprehended to serve his own humour: when bearing a secret grudge to Callisthenes, because he was against the new ceremony of his adoration, feasting one night where the same Callisthenes was at the table, it was moved by some after supper, for entertainment sake, that Callisthenes, who was an eloquent man, might speak of some theme or purpose at his own choice; which Callisthenes did, choosing the praise of the Macedonian nation for his discourse, and performing the same with so good manner as the hearers were much ravished; whereupon Alexander, nothing pleased, said, "It was easy to be eloquent upon so good a subject; but," saith he, "turn your style, and let us hear what you can say against us;" which Callisthenes presently undertook, and did with that sting and life that Alexander interrupted him, and said, "The goodness of the cause made him eloquent before, and despite made him eloquent then again."

(17) Consider further, for tropes of rhetoric, that excellent use of a metaphor or translation, wherewith he taxeth Antipater, who was an imperious and tyrannous governor; for when one of Antipater's friends commended him to Alexander for his moderation, that he did not degenerate as his other lieutenants did into the Persian pride, in uses of purple, but kept the ancient habit of Macedon, of black. "True," saith Alexander; "but Antipater is all purple within." Or that other, when Parmenio came to him in the plain of Arbela and showed him the innumerable multitude of his enemies, specially as they appeared by the infinite number of lights as it had been a new firmament of stars, and thereupon advised him to assail them by night; whereupon he answered, "That he would not steal the victory."

(18) For matter of policy, weigh that significant distinction, so much in all ages embraced, that he made between his two friends Hephæstion and Craterus, when he said, "That the one loved Alexander, and the other loved the king:" describing the principal difference of princes' best servants, that some in affection love their person, and other in duty love their crown.

(19) Weigh also that excellent taxation of an error, ordinary with counsellors of princes, that they counsel their masters according to the model of their own mind and fortune, and not of their masters. When upon Darius' great offers Parmenio had said, "Surely I would accept these offers were I as Alexander;" saith Alexander, "So would I were I as Parmenio."

(20) Lastly, weigh that quick and acute reply which he made when he gave so large gifts to his friends and servants, and was asked what he did reserve for himself, and he answered, “Hope.” Weigh, I say, whether he had not cast up his account aright, because *hope* must be the portion of all that resolve upon great enterprises; for this was Cæsar’s portion when he went first into Gaul, his estate being then utterly overthrown with largesses. And this was likewise the portion of that noble prince, howsoever transported with ambition, Henry Duke of Guise, of whom it was usually said that he was the greatest usurer in France, because he had turned all his estate into obligations.

(21) To conclude, therefore, as certain critics are used to say hyperbolically, “That if all sciences were lost they might be found in Virgil,” so certainly this may be said truly, there are the prints and footsteps of learning in those few speeches which are reported of this prince, the admiration of whom, when I consider him not as Alexander the Great, but as Aristotle’s scholar, hath carried me too far.

(22) As for Julius Cæsar, the excellency of his learning needeth not to be argued from his education, or his company, or his speeches; but in a further degree doth declare itself in his writings and works: whereof some are extant and permanent, and some unfortunately perished. For first, we see there is left unto us that excellent history of his own wars, which he entitled only a Commentary, wherein all succeeding times have admired the solid weight of matter, and the real passages and lively images of actions and persons, expressed in the greatest propriety of words and perspicuity of narration that ever was; which that it was not the effect of a natural gift, but of learning and precept, is well witnessed by that work of his entitled *De Analogia*, being a grammatical philosophy, wherein he did labour to make this same *Vox ad placitum* to become *Vox ad licitum*, and to reduce custom of speech to congruity of speech; and took as it were the pictures of words from the life of reason.

(23) So we receive from him, as a monument both of his power and learning, the then reformed computation of the year; well expressing that he took it to be as great a glory to himself to observe and know the law of the heavens, as to give law to men upon the earth.

(24) So likewise in that book of his, *Anti-Cato*, it may easily appear that he did aspire as well to victory of wit as victory of war: undertaking therein a conflict against the greatest champion with the pen that then lived, Cicero the orator.

(25) So, again, in his book of Apophthegms, which he collected, we see that he esteemed it more honour to make himself but a pair of tables, to take the wise and pithy words of others, than to have every word of his own to be made an apophthegm or an oracle, as vain princes, by custom of flattery, pretend to do. And yet if I should enumerate divers of his speeches, as I did those of Alexander, they are truly such as Solomon noteth, when he saith, *Verba sapientum tanquam aculei, et tanquam clavi in altum defixi*: whereof I will only recite three, not so delectable for elegancy, but admirable for vigour and efficacy.

(26) As first, it is reason he be thought a master of words, that could with one word appease a mutiny in his army, which was thus: The Romans, when their generals did speak to their army, did use the word *Milites*, but when the magistrates spake to the people they did use the word *Quirites*. The soldiers were in tumult, and seditiously prayed to be cashiered; not that they so meant, but by expostulation thereof to draw Cæsar to other conditions; wherein he being resolute not to give way, after some silence, he began his speech, *Ego Quirites*, which did admit them already cashiered—wherewith they were so surprised, crossed, and confused, as they would not suffer him to

go on in his speech, but relinquished their demands, and made it their suit to be again called by the name of *Milites*.

(27) The second speech was thus: Cæsar did extremely affect the name of king; and some were set on as he passed by in popular acclamation to salute him king. Whereupon, finding the cry weak and poor, he put it off thus, in a kind of jest, as if they had mistaken his surname: *Non Rex sum, sed Cæsar*; a speech that, if it be searched, the life and fulness of it can scarce be expressed. For, first, it was a refusal of the name, but yet not serious; again, it did signify an infinite confidence and magnanimity, as if he presumed Cæsar was the greater title, as by his worthiness it is come to pass till this day. But chiefly it was a speech of great allurements toward his own purpose, as if the state did strive with him but for a name, whereof many families were vested; for *Rex* was a surname with the Romans, as well as *King* is with us.

(28) The last speech which I will mention was used to Metellus, when Cæsar, after war declared, did possess himself of this city of Rome; at which time, entering into the inner treasury to take the money there accumulate, Metellus, being tribune, forbade him. Whereunto Cæsar said, “That if he did not desist, he would lay him dead in the place.” And presently taking himself up, he added, “Young man, it is harder for me to speak it than to do it—*Adolescens, durius est mihi hoc dicere quàm facere*.” A speech compounded of the greatest terror and greatest clemency that could proceed out of the mouth of man.

(29) But to return and conclude with him, it is evident himself knew well his own perfection in learning, and took it upon him, as appeared when upon occasion that some spake what a strange resolution it was in Lucius Sylla to resign his dictatorship, he, scoffing at him to his own advantage, answered, “That Sylla could not skill of letters, and therefore knew not how to dictate.”

(30) And here it were fit to leave this point, touching the concurrence of military virtue and learning (for what example should come with any grace after those two of Alexander and Cæsar?), were it not in regard of the rareness of circumstance, that I find in one other particular, as that which did so suddenly pass from extreme scorn to extreme wonder: and it is of Xenophon the philosopher, who went from Socrates’ school into Asia in the expedition of Cyrus the younger against King Artaxerxes. This Xenophon at that time was very young, and never had seen the wars before, neither had any command in the army, but only followed the war as a voluntary, for the love and conversation of Proxenus, his friend. He was present when Falinus came in message from the great king to the Grecians, after that Cyrus was slain in the field, and they, a handful of men, left to themselves in the midst of the king’s territories, cut off from their country by many navigable rivers and many hundred miles. The message imported that they should deliver up their arms and submit themselves to the king’s mercy. To which message, before answer was made, divers of the army conferred familiarly with Falinus; and amongst the rest Xenophon happened to say, “Why, Falinus, we have now but these two things left, our arms and our virtue; and if we yield up our arms, how shall we make use of our virtue?” Whereunto Falinus, smiling on him, said, “If I be not deceived, young gentleman, you are an Athenian, and I believe you study philosophy, and it is pretty that you say; but you are much abused if you think your virtue can withstand the king’s power.” Here was the scorn; the wonder followed: which was that this young scholar or philosopher, after all the captains were murdered in parley by treason, conducted those ten thousand foot, through the heart of all the king’s high countries, from Babylon to Græcia in safety, in despite of all the king’s forces, to the astonishment of the world, and the encouragement of the Grecians in times succeeding to make invasion upon the kings of Persia, as was after purposed by Jason the Thessalian, attempted by Agesilaus the Spartan, and achieved by Alexander the Macedonian, all upon the ground of the act of that young scholar.

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