

Francis Bacon, from, *The Great Instauration*

Epistle Dedicatory to James I

TO OUR MOST SERENE AND MIGHTY PRINCE AND LORD JAMES, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, KING OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND IRELAND, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, ETC.

MOST SERENE AND MIGHTY KING:

Your majesty will, perhaps, accuse me of theft, in that I have stolen from your employments time sufficient for this work. I have no reply, for there can be no restitution of time, unless, perhaps, that which has been withdrawn from your affairs might be set down as devoted to the perpetuating of your name and to the honour of your age, were what I now offer of any value. It is at least new, even in its very nature; but copied from a very ancient pattern, no other than the world itself, and the nature of things, and of the mind. I myself (ingenuously to confess the truth) am wont to value this work rather as the offspring of time than of wit. For the only wonderful circumstance in it is, that the first conception of the matter, and so deep suspicions of prevalent notions should ever have entered into any person's mind; the consequences naturally follow. But, doubtless, there is a chance, (as we call it,) and something as it were accidental in man's thoughts, no less than in his actions and words. I would have this chance, however, (of which I am speaking,) to be so understood, that if there be any merit in what I offer, it should be attributed to the immeasurable mercy and bounty of God, and to the felicity of this your age; to which felicity I have devoted myself whilst living with the sincerest zeal, and I shall, perhaps, before my death have rendered the age a light unto posterity, by kindling this new torch amid the darkness of philosophy. This regeneration and instauration of the sciences is with justice due to the age of a prince surpassing all others in wisdom and learning. There remains for me to but to make one request, worthy of your majesty, and very especially relating to my subject, namely, that, resembling Solomon as you do in most respects, in the gravity of your decisions, the peacefulness of your reign, the expansion of your heart, and, lastly, in the noble variety of books you have composed, you would further imitate the same monarch in procuring the compilation and completion of a Natural and Experimental History, that shall be genuine and rigorous, not that of mere philologues, and serviceable for raising the superstructure of philosophy, such, in short, as I will in its proper place describe: that, at length, after so many ages, philosophy and the sciences may no longer be unsettled and speculative, but fixed on the solid foundation of a varied and well considered experience. I for my part have supplied the instrument, the matter to be worked upon must be sought from things themselves. May the great and good God long preserve your majesty in safety.

Your majesty's
Most bounden and devoted,

FRANCIS VERULAM, Chancellor