APOCALYPSE AND EXPERIMENT:
THE THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS OF
FRANCIS BACON’S INSTAURATION

By

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretations of Bacon’s Religion</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Approach of this Study</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Overview of the Discussion by Chapter</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 1: CONTEXTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE INSTAURATION CORPUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF TUDOR AND STUART SOCIETY</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puritanism, an Identifiable Category</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Anglicanism”</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with the Continuum</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of the Turmoil and Diversity</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thirty-Nine Articles</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of the English Religious Scene</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader Trends</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Recovery of Patristics</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Recovery of Hebrew</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeticism, Alchemy, and the <em>prisca theologia</em></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Widespread belief in a Providential Age</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FROM PURITANISM TO PATRICSTS: BACON’S THEOLOGY IN TRANSITION</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon’s Puritan Upbringing</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **vi**
Breaking Away from the Godly..............................................................107
Anglican Advice for the Court.............................................................109
At Issue with the Calvinist Norm in Meditationes Sacrae...............116
Bacon’s Confession of Faith: Further Evidence of a Patristic Turn.....133
Logos Theology: The Problem of Bacon’s Mediator.................137
Possible Sources for Bacon’s Logos Theology.........................142
Irenaeus of Lyons...........................................................................146
Other Evidence of “Anti-Calvinism” in the Confession of Faith..............151
Conclusion........................................................................................159

3. FRANCIS BACON’S LITERARY CIRCLE.....................................................160

Identifying the Literary Circle............................................................163
Narrowing the Field -- Eliminating the Non-contributors..............165
Thomas Hobbes -- Notably Atypical...............................................169
Five Unknowns................................................................................172
Lancelot Andrewes........................................................................174
Andrewes’ theology........................................................................175
Andrewes: friend and editor......................................................182
Andrewes, the qualified inquisitor........................................183
The Apospasmatia Sacra.........................................................186
Tobie Matthew.............................................................................188
Henry Wotton...............................................................................193
William Rawley...........................................................................196
John Selden..................................................................................199
George Herbert...........................................................................218
Thomas Bushell...........................................................................221
Concluding Thoughts on the Bacon Circle......................................226

PART 2: THE THEOLOGY OF THE INSTAURATION WRITINGS


The Instauration Corpus: The Instauration as Event, and the Use of the Texts.................................................................231
Sacred History, or The History of Divine Action...............................240
Bacon on the Order of Creation as the Pattern of Instauration........244
Humanity in the Garden................................................................252
The Fall and Knowledge................................................................257
The Calvinist Understanding of the Fall.........................................266
The Fall and its Effects according to Bacon....................................272
5. THE THEOLOGY OF INSTAURATION ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS...317

Patterns in Divine Action..................................................................................................................317
The Significance of Human Agency..................................................................................................326
Apocalyptic Age, but not a Millennium..........................................................................................332
Instauration as “Inaugurated Eschatology”....................................................................................339
Temple and Priesthood......................................................................................................................343
The Two Books..................................................................................................................................349
“The Apotheosis of Error”................................................................................................................353
Aphorism 65 in the Broader Context of the Instauration Corpus:
  Confession of Faith, The Advancement of Learning,
  and Cogitata et Visa....................................................................................................................357
Natural Theology............................................................................................................................369
Capitulation: The Two Books and Aphorism 65 in Light of Sacred
  History.............................................................................................................................................372
Facilitating Hermeticism and a “Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology”..................................................374

6. CONCLUSIONS................................................................................................................................383

Plotting the Line of Best Fit............................................................................................................383
The Significance of Theology and Personal Faith in Seventeenth Century
  Thought...........................................................................................................................................389
Implications for the Reading of Bacon............................................................................................391

BIBLIOGRAPHY................................................................................................................................397

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.............................................................................................................411
ABBREVIATIONS

WFB  The Works of Francis Bacon

DNB  Dictionary of National Biography
This study reevaluates the belief system of Francis Bacon and the role which his theology played in the development of his program for the reform of learning, the *Great Instauration*. Bacon’s Instauration writings are saturated with theological statements and Biblical references which inform and explain his program, yet this aspect of his writings has received little attention. Previous considerations of Bacon’s religion have been drawn from a fairly short list of his published writings. Consequently, Bacon has been portrayed as everything from an atheist to a Puritan, and scholarly consensus is lacking. This study argues that by considering the historical context of Bacon’s society, and particularly the narrower context of his literary circle, his own theology can be brought into clearer focus, and his philosophy more properly understood. Chapter 1 surveys the theological trends of the Tudor and Stuart eras which pertain to Bacon’s life and writings, incorporating considerations from the field of English Reformation history and the
intellectual history of the Renaissance. Chapter 2 focuses on Bacon personally, and identifies a turn in his life away from his Calvinist upbringing toward patristic writings, particularly those of Irenaeus of Lyons. Chapter 3 identifies Bacon as a member of a literary circle including Lancelot Andrewes and others for whom a rejection of the Calvinist norm in favor of more esoteric authorities was common. Informed by this context, chapter 4 reconstructs in chronological order the narrative of Sacred History as Bacon understood it, and relates it to his belief in a providential age in which humans would recover Edenic mastery over nature. Chapter 5 unpacks this theological system and examines its significance for reading Bacon on a variety of topics from his understanding of human free will to his use of hermetic and magical sources, and argues against the common idea that a strict separation of matters of faith and science was one of Bacon’s main contributions to the history of western thought. Bacon’s image as a pioneer of the Scientific Revolution ensures that this study has significant implications for current western cultural identity as well.
INTRODUCTION

What did Francis Bacon believe? How did his beliefs affect his work? In more than three hundred years of scholarship, Bacon has been portrayed as an atheist, a Calvinist, a “puritan,” and one who, whatever his religious beliefs, was unconcerned with matters of faith in his philosophy. That such a range of answers should come forth in three centuries is hardly surprising. The fact that this range of opinions has appeared in major publications within the past decade, however, is a sign of a genuine lack of consensus in the field. Yet the question of Bacon’s faith is significant for understanding his philosophy, for his writings pertaining to the reform of human learning, the program which he entitled the *Instauratio Magna*, or Great Instauration, are saturated with Scriptural quotations and theological arguments used to support his points. Because of Bacon’s constant religious and theological references, his philosophy takes on radically different implications if it is assumed to be written by a Calvinist, or an atheist, or someone who was trying to avoid religious questions altogether in discussing human knowledge. At the most general level, the twin questions of Francis Bacon’s beliefs and how they affected his Instauration writings are the focus of this study.

These questions, of course, have been asked before, and it is precisely the fact that they have been answered in so many different ways that has led to the present state of disunity in the field. Recently, and particularly after the work of Julian Martin, scholars have increasingly acknowledged that a central problem with Bacon scholarship has been that the sheer diversity of approaches to Bacon has led to an overall picture of Bacon’s
thought which is disunified and often profoundly contradictory. Martin wrote of the field in 1992:

The most arresting and continuing feature of Baconian scholarship is that it has produced several Francis Bacons, none of whom significantly overlap. Given the highly specialized character of modern academic training and organization, this state of affairs is hardly surprising. To my knowledge, there has been almost no interest in reintegrating these partial images. Historians and philosophers of the sciences, for example, have usually considered Bacon’s career as a lawyer and statesman to provide little of value for their explanations of his natural philosophy. Indeed, his engagement in public life has often been seen as an embarrassment, and something which repeatedly distracted him from the pursuit of philosophy. Political historians have taken the opposite view, regarding his concerns for philosophy as providing little of value for their explanations of his political career, beyond repeatedly distracting him from the pursuit of the law...and plausibly contributing to contemporary suspicions of his political acumen and to his inability to amass lasting political capital.¹

Julian Martin argued that in order to understand either Bacon the statesman or Bacon the philosopher the two aspects of Bacon must be viewed as interdependent and mutually influential. But there are other “Bacons” which Martin was unable to reintegrate in the scope of his study, one of which, as Benjamin Milner has noted in regard to Martin’s study, is Bacon the Christian intellectual.² Bacon’s Christianity, meaning his own religious doctrines and convictions, is another aspect of Bacon which has often been

¹ Julian Martin, Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2. David Burnett has also discussed the fragmentation of Bacon through academic specialization, and remarked upon the genuine irony that Bacon should become the victim of such specialization, for Bacon’s own understanding was that all knowledge was to be unified, and scholarship required a constant discussion among individual scholars whose differing areas of expertise were to be used to inform and balance each other in the interest of their common goal. (David Burnett, A Thinker for All Seasons: Sir Francis Bacon and his Significance Today (Durham, England, New Century Press, 2000), 132 ff. and 96-100, for a discussion of cooperation in the practice of science.)

² Milner, Benjamin, “Francis Bacon: the Theological Foundations of ‘Valerius Terminus,’” Journal of the History of Ideas vol 58, n2. (April 1997) See Milner’s critique of Martin’s interpretation of Bacon’s view of Church government, pp. 252-53. Martin’s suggestion that Bacon held a pragmatic and entirely secular view of church affairs and his general dismissal of religion as a motivating factor in Bacon’s actions can only stand if Bacon himself would have been remarkably lacking in religious conviction.
dismissed by those who examine his life and thought as having little relation to his philosophical writings or his political career. The various reasons Bacon’s beliefs have been dismissed will be discussed below. It is significant, however, that Bacon did write a great deal on topics of religious and theological concern. The fact that many of his most elaborate theological statements are to be found in the philosophical writings themselves suggests that Bacon regarded matters of faith as having genuine significance for his Instauration program. Recently scholars have begun looking toward Bacon’s religious statements as necessary for understanding the Instauration. However, the answers to the questions of what Bacon believed and how this affected his program have been sought almost entirely through literary analyses of Bacon’s texts. This present study rests on the contention that such textual analyses are of limited use unless the exegesis of Bacon’s texts is consciously set within a twofold historical context. Bacon’s religious and theological writings must be situated both within the broad context of the religious and theological trends of Tudor and Stuart England, and within the narrower context of Bacon’s own literary circle, which contained a number of clergy and theologians as its most prominent members.

This study is designed to be a contribution to the “reintegrated” picture of Bacon called for by Martin. However it is also a contribution to a much larger trend within Bacon scholarship of which Martin’s book is also a part, the collective effort to present Bacon as a creature of his own historical context. Markku Peltonnen mentioned this direction in Bacon scholarship in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, “New and important material has been turned up and anachronistic criteria for assessing Bacon’s philosophy have been abandoned. Several ghosts of nineteenth-century interpretation have been exorcised, and a new detailed account of Bacon’s
philosophy has started to emerge.” If Bacon needs to be knitted back together, as Martin has suggested, then he also must be reattached to his own time and place. Markku Peltonnen stated that the “transformation of Bacon studies” to which he referred had been taking place over the last few decades. The transformation is far from complete, and the anachronistic images of Bacon have proven to have remarkable staying power, but it is now a firmly established feature in the field of Bacon scholarship. The work of Martin, along with Jardine and Stewart’s “warts and all” biography of Bacon, and John Henry’s recent popular survey of Bacon’s thought, *Knowledge is Power*, are among the more recent manifestations of a trend which received its initial impetus in 1957 with the publication of Paolo Rossi’s, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*.

Prior to Rossi’s book, Bacon most commonly appeared as one of the genuine revolutionaries of the Scientific Revolution. The roots of this image can be traced without difficulty to the portrayal of Bacon as the forerunner of the Royal Society in Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society*, but Bacon came to look even more revolutionary as he was remembered by the Encyclopedists of the Enlightenment. For d’Alembert, Bacon, along with Descartes, brought philosophy into its own from the “dark times” or “centuries of ignorance” which went before. In positivistic treatments after the

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2. Ibid., 2.
Enlightenment Bacon retained his identity as the first promoter of a clean break with the unscientific past. For William Whewell, in the nineteenth century, Bacon was the “Hero of the revolution in scientific method,” but even if he was not the single most important figure in the Scientific Revolution, he was still, as R.F. Jones portrayed him in 1936, a key figure in the rejection of the outmoded thought of the “ancients” by the “moderns.”

In his treatment of Bacon, Rossi portrayed Bacon as a product of his own thought world. Rossi demonstrated that Bacon relied heavily upon the very traditions of philosophy and rhetoric which he was credited with rejecting in favor of his new method. Rossi began with the very significant point that Bacon’s vision for the progress of the arts and sciences relied upon the Renaissance traditions of magic and alchemy, and that these traditions held a certain sway over his writing throughout his life. In those parts of Bacon’s writings where magic is denounced and alchemy is condemned, Rossi showed, it is only the lack of rigor in the method and the inherent hubris of believing that an individual alchemist or mage can discover the transformative secrets of the universe alone which is under fire. For Rossi, Bacon was not the “one” who rejected superstition and “pseudo-science” in favor of science, but he represented a stage on the transformation of philosophy “from magic to science,” and in Rossi’s presentation he remained very near to the “magic” end of this continuum. If there are elements which appear modern in Bacon’s writing, there are also those which cannot be reconciled with any ages but his

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9 Ibid., 32.


11 Rossi, 32. “Bacon’s reservations and his censures of magical and alchemical tradition concerned this one aspect only” etc.

12 Rossi, 35, discussed the transformation which Bacon actually did accomplish in moving away from magic, namely a sense of collaboration, institutionalization, and methodical experiment. As for Bacon and magic, Rossi concludes, “though Bacon was finally entangled once again in its snares, the manner and the rules of the race had been changed for ever.”
own. Rossi’s work was a serious challenge to the tendency to bring Bacon forward in
time and portray him as one of the first, if not the first, truly modern thinkers in a pre-
modern world.

Rossi’s voice would soon be joined by others, such as Virgil Whitaker, whose
Clark Lecture on Francis Bacon’s “intellectual milieu” presented a helpful intellectual map
of Bacon’s own era, and proposed a way to situate him within this landscape.\textsuperscript{13} The
concept of Bacon’s reliance upon hermeticism and alchemy, first proposed by Rossi, has
been advanced and refined by others such as Graham Rees, who is one of the foremost
Bacon scholars in the field.\textsuperscript{14} In a series of three articles appearing in Ambix in 1975 and
1977 Graham Rees uncovered a theme of Bacon’s works which had been missed or
ignored even by his seventeenth century readers. Rees demonstrated that in the
Instauration writings Bacon was advocating more than merely a new method of learning
about nature, he was using the Instauration itself to forward his own “backward-looking”
cosmology, which was derived from the hermetic and alchemical traditions of the
Paracelsians. Rees traced this motif clearly through all of Bacon’s philosophical writings,
and demonstrated that although Bacon took his cosmology in innovative directions, he not
only held but promoted what Rees characterized as a “semi-paracelsian” cosmology.\textsuperscript{15} In
the sense that Bacon was relying upon hermetic and alchemical ideas which were, already
in his day, becoming outmoded, Rees presented a view of Bacon which is even less
“modern” than that presented by Rossi. A similar image of Bacon was presented by

\textsuperscript{13}\hspace{1em}Virgil K. Whitaker, \textit{Francis Bacon’s Intellectual Millieu} (Los Angeles, Clark Library, 1962)

\textsuperscript{14}\hspace{1em}Rees, along with Lisa Jardine, is general editor of the new critical editions of Bacon’s works, \textit{The Oxford
Francis Bacon}, and he is one of the “inescapable names” in bibliographies and reference lists.

\textsuperscript{15}\hspace{1em}Rees’ discussion takes place in three articles. The earliest (“Francis Bacon’s Semi-Paracelsian
Cosmology and the Great Instauration.” \textit{Ambix}; v22, n2 (July 1975), 81ff.) introduces the
hermetic/alchemical cosmology as it appeared in Bacon, the second (“Francis Bacon’s Semi-Paracelsian
Cosmology and the Great Instauration.” \textit{Ambix}; v22, n3 (Nov. 1975), 161ff.) demonstrates its prominence
and persistence throughout Bacon’s philosophical writings.
Stanton Linden, who demonstrated that Bacon, in an age in which alchemy and magic were most often the subject of satire and ridicule, went out of his way to give alchemy and magic a “fair hearing.” 16  Linden and Rees have underscored an important hermeneutical point raised by Rossi: namely that Bacon was entirely willing to go against the tide and embrace ideas which were being rejected or marginalized by others.  Rees also demonstrates that although the “semi-paracelsian cosmology” was clearly present in Bacon, it was either ignored or abandoned even during the course of the seventeenth century by those who otherwise very self-consciously fashioned themselves after Bacon. 17  This raises another important hermeneutical point: that even in the seventeenth century Bacon’s reader’s and self-styled disciples could differ significantly with Bacon even on themes which were prominent in his writing.  Bacon and Baconianism, in its many forms, must be kept distinct.

The points made by Rossi, Rees, and Linden are important not only because they are exemplary of the contextualizing trend in Bacon studies, but also because they offer important guidelines for the study of Bacon’s beliefs and theological statements.  Bacon was willing to look backward as well as forward, and although he was a product of his age he was willing to adopt positions which were not necessarily typical of his age. Moreover, the interpretations of Bacon’s later readers, even if they were seventeenth century readers, must not be allowed to overshadow Bacon’s texts as they appeared in his own context.  In other words, the fact that Bacon was read and adopted by both Puritans and atheists should not be allowed to imply than he was either one.


17 This is a key motif of Rees’ third article, “The Fate of Bacon’s Cosmology in the Seventeenth Century.”  Ambix; v24, n1 (Mar. 1977),  27ff., which offers an explanation for how Bacon’s cosmology came to be overlooked by 17th century readers after his death.
Stephen Gaukroger’s recent examination of Francis Bacon’s philosophical system, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy*, offers an explanation for the differences between Bacon’s own philosophy and his reception by later generations of Baconians. Gaukroger began his study with an account of the widely varying interpretations of the significance of Bacon’s work which have arisen since the time of Bacon’s death. By focusing upon those aspects of Bacon’s philosophical writings which were most congruent with their own agenda, later thinkers read him as a radical millennialist, as a forerunner of the Royal Society, as Newton’s precursor and inspiration, as the rationalist predecessor of the Enlightenment in both science and politics, and, among the Romantics, as the bringer of a dark age of cold science and industrialism. After noting that Bacon was genuinely influential upon all of these developments, if not always directly, Gaukroger examined what Bacon’s philosophy actually looked like in context, stripped of the assumptions which later readers have imposed upon Bacon’s philosophy in order to make it accountable for their own theories and conclusions. Gaukroger concluded that one reason Bacon has been significant for so many different groups was that he transformed the image of the philosopher from the contemplative, moral thinker, to the active manipulator of nature, or the “scientist” of the modern age. It was particularly the idea of an experimental natural philosopher working in collaboration with a community of researchers which Bacon added to the development of science in the west. Many of Bacon’s distinctive points, including most of his theories regarding natural philosophy *per se*, were either abandoned or quickly superseded. Bacon did not necessarily hold anything more in common with later generations than the idea that natural philosophy was active, experimental, and collaborative. The generations of

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19 Ibid., 221-226.
readers after Bacon recognized this transformation of the image of the philosopher, and interpreted Bacon differently in order to account for the natural philosophers or the “scientific thinkers” of their own ages. Each generation made Bacon its forerunner. As we will see, this continual adaptation of Bacon to fit the contemporary image of the “scientist” has had a significant impact upon how Bacon’s religious statements have been interpreted, and why there is such a lack of consensus in the field.

As Gaukroger has noted, the adaptability of Bacon’s writings to the doctrines and interests of many different groups is an important issue for Bacon scholarship. This study contends that this adaptability is facilitated by Bacon’s theological statements, which were eclectic, complex, and innovative enough to permit a wide variety of readings, particularly if the context in which Bacon made those statements is left unknown. When that context is considered, however, Bacon’s place within his society, and within his field of literary associates, comes into focus, and the distinction between Bacon’s thought and the thought of later Baconians becomes much clearer as well.

**Interpretations of Bacon’s Religion**

Francis Bacon’s religious beliefs, or his religious disposition, have often been discussed by scholars. However, the discussions are far from being reconcilable with one another. Portrayals of Bacon fall into three general categories which reflect varying levels of concern for his historical context. The first category, which gives the least attention to Bacon’s historical context, portrays Bacon as either an atheist, or perhaps a deist, whose writings clashed with Christianity. The second category, which developed in its most recent form out of a very historical concern for recognizing the overwhelming influence of Christianity in Bacon’s day, presents him as a sincere believer, but makes no further attempt at clarification. The third category, recognizing the overwhelming dominance of Reformed theology both in England during his lifetime and especially in his own family,
presents Bacon as either a Calvinist, or at least one whose statements must be interpreted in light of Calvinist theology. None of these positions is entirely satisfactory, and each leads to its own unique set of problems for interpreting Bacon. However, there is another complicating factor which spans these opinions and goes a long way toward explaining why scholars have not pressed for a resolution of the question of Bacon’s belief. There is a very common opinion that Bacon’s religion or personal beliefs are at best of secondary interest, because, in the words of Markku Peltonnen, “one of the central tenets of Bacon’s defense of learning was his strict separation of science and religion,” and Bacon, of course, was concerned with matters of science in his philosophical writings. This opinion also raises more problems than it solves in interpreting Bacon’s writings, for Bacon then spent a great deal of time and ink making points and arguments in his philosophical writings which have little to do with his philosophy.

In his recent popular survey of Bacon’s thought and influence, Knowledge is Power, John Henry traced the idea that Bacon was an atheist, or at least a deist, to the Enlightenment readers, or misreaders, of Bacon who saw his work as an anticipation of their own thinking. Henry wrote, “Enlightenment thinkers wanted to see the heroic figures in the history of the new science as thinkers swayed only by rational and empirically grounded principles.” Henry’s point has a great deal of merit, for it is certainly true that Bacon was never portrayed as being anything but a Christian prior to the Enlightenment. It is also undeniable that Bacon was canonized by many key figures in the Enlightenment, who went out of their way to portray him as one of their own, and they were often deists or atheists.

20 Peltonnen, 19.

In Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques*, Bacon is the “father of experimental philosophy,” and hence the source of the advances over the past made in Voltaire’s own age.\(^{22}\) Among the Encyclopedists, d’Alembert, as has been mentioned, presented Bacon as being responsible for ending the age of darkness which preceded him. Diderot regarded himself as a true disciple of Bacon, fashioned his own thought and writing after Bacon’s, and gave Bacon credit for the idea and plan of the *Encyclopédie*.\(^{23}\) It is not entirely clear, however, that Bacon’s Enlightenment readers were necessarily willing to portray Bacon *himself* as an atheist or a deist, even if his writings, as they interpreted them, led inexorably to their own positions.

Voltaire, for example, portrayed Bacon as the one who raised the scaffolding of “modern scientific thought,” which got the whole enterprise of the study of nature moving in the right direction, but the scaffolding had been torn down now that Bacon’s own philosophy had been superseded.\(^{24}\) It appears that Voltaire regarded Bacon as very much susceptible to the whims of his own superstitious age, for he ends his discussion of Bacon by noting that Bacon’s *History of Henry VII* was weakened by “this rigamarole that was formerly taken as inspired.”\(^{25}\) In adopting Bacon’s basic plan for division of the sciences in the prospectus for the *Encyclopédie* Diderot preserved all of Bacon’s categories including “*Sciences de DIEU,*** although this category received little space.\(^{26}\) If

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\(^{23}\) Cf. R. Loyalty Cru, *Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought* (New York, AMS Press, 1966), passim. and 244 for crediting Bacon with the idea and plan of the *Encyclopédie*.

\(^{24}\) Voltaire, 58.

\(^{25}\) Voltaire, 62.

Diderot was unwilling to do much with this category, he would nevertheless have been aware of Bacon’s reasons for including it.\textsuperscript{27}

Regardless of whether the Philosophes or Encyclopedists themselves regarded Bacon as an atheist, they were interpreted as doing so by one of the fiercest early critics of the Enlightenment, Josef de Maistre. Maistre was eager to lay the blame for the errors of his own age upon Bacon’s method, and the \textit{motif} of his \textit{Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon}\textsuperscript{28} is a condemnation of Bacon’s ideas which had, according to Maistre, recently been taken to their logical conclusions and had proven disastrous to throne and altar. Among Maistre’s ultimate criticisms was the charge that Bacon’s method led to atheism, for there was no mistaking in Bacon’s writings “this concentrated hate, this incurable rancour against religion and its ministers, which has particularly distinguished most of the scholars and cultivated minds of our century.”\textsuperscript{29} Positive statements about religion in Bacon’s writings were treated as hypocritical by Maistre, who felt that he had more than enough evidence from Bacon’s writings as well as their impact on his own age to recognize Bacon’s real intent.

Whether the image of Bacon as an atheist (or an opponent of Christianity) had its origin in the Baconians of the Enlightenment or in their critic, Josef de Maistre, John Henry’s point that this idea cannot be traced before the Enlightenment remains firmly in place. Nevertheless, the image of Bacon as an opponent of conventional Christianity has

\footnote{27 Bacon sets out his rationale for this category in book three of \textit{De Augmentis Scientiarum}, and the terms of the discussion are undeniably theistic, and in accord with the general interests of the Church of England of his day. (WFB v. 1, 539ff.)}

\footnote{28 This was published in 1836, a full 15 years after Maistre’s death. The criticism itself, therefore, can be associated with the Enlightenment, while the impact of this book, which has a much harsher treatment of Bacon than Maistre’s earlier \textit{St. Petersburg Dialogues}, must be traced to the early to mid 19th century. Cf. Josef de Maistre, \textit{An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon, Wherein Different Questions of Rational Philosophy are Treated}, trans. and edited by Richard A. LeBrun, (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), Introduction, ix-xv.}

\footnote{29 Ibid., 271 (and Maistre’s discussion following) see also LeBrun’s summary of Maistre, xxiii.}
had a remarkable sticking power. It is one of the common interpretations on the table today, although its supporters tend not to be historians of seventeenth century England.

Among those scholars who set Bacon’s philosophy in opposition to Christianity, thereby making Bacon an early voice for secularism or atheism, there is a common interest, as with Maistre, in using Bacon to explain the secular nature of modernity. The question, and it is not an unimportant one, is “how did we arrive in a culture which puts faith in the power of man, when we began in a medieval world which put faith in the power of God?” As with Maistre, Bacon becomes an obvious target, if for no other reason than the impression of many Enlightenment thinkers that Bacon was the source of a new way of thinking which brought this transformation about.

In *Peace Among the Willows: The Political Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, Howard B. White offers an example of exactly this approach. He begins by explaining that what brought him to the study of Bacon was a concern to find the source of the “secularized faith” which modern man has placed in the human endeavors of politics and science. According to White, Bacon advocated a “civil religion,” which was designed to keep civil peace, so that, for the good of all, progress in the sciences, including the construction of society, could occur. If Bacon advocated the Anglican Church over others, it was a matter of Machiavellian practicality, and Bacon only accepted it “provisionally,” that is, for the social stability which it could provide, and already was providing in England. In particular, the emerging toleration of Anglicanism offered Bacon the promise of a balance between the social stability of conformity and what for him was a very necessary freedom which came through civil peace, or lack of religious conflict.

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31 Ibid., 165, cf. 67-75, and 228.

32 Ibid., 68-70 & 165
emphasized the importance of toleration more than that of conformity, it was because his concern was ultimately not religious orthodoxy, but the “liberation of learning from clerical control” so that learning could progress.\textsuperscript{33} Because Bacon believed so strongly in this advancement of learning, White argues, he accepted the national church, and “he clung to it, like the true believer, the pious Christian he most definitely was not.”\textsuperscript{34}

Jerry Weinberger presents a view of Bacon which is more deistic in form, but is no less at loggerheads with the Christian theology of Bacon's own day. For Weinberger, Bacon occupies a particular place at the beginning of a modern age which will include both the freedom of the scientific project and a rational theology freed from dogmatic constraints.\textsuperscript{35} According to Weinberger, Bacon’s writing contains a consideration of all of the essential elements of the soon to be constructed modern age, along with a careful analysis of their potential tensions and pitfalls. For the practical question of what this implies for Bacon’s own belief and its relation to Bacon’s work, we must note that according to Weinberger Bacon himself had an end goal of moving beyond the constraints of the Christianity of his day to a theology purged of superstition and informed by reason.\textsuperscript{36} Using Machiavelli as a hermeneutical platform as did White, Weinberger presents an image of Bacon who is extremely critical of the negative aspects of Christianity. According to Weinberger Bacon understood the Christian concept of charity as a guise for the institutionalized avarice of the clergy,\textsuperscript{37} and it was inherently inferior to the classical

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 75.


\textsuperscript{36} cf. Weinberger’s conclusions which present Bacon as having an end goal of rational theology, ibid., 323ff.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 110.
concept of charity which promoted political moderation.\textsuperscript{38} The image of the creator God of the Old Testament is presented by Weinberger as particularly problematic for Bacon. Bacon apparently was aware that such an image would always remain in society, and served something of a necessary role as a brake on the hubris of a program for mastery and moral certainty,\textsuperscript{39} but the Christian doctrine of God and sin was also a problematic barrier to the relief of man’s estate through science.\textsuperscript{40}

We may do well to note that Weinberger’s situation of Bacon near the source of a chronological construction called “modernity” is a distinctive reflection of the Enlightenment philosophes’ situation of Bacon at the start of their own narrative of liberation from a past dark age. Weinberger’s stated interest is not to come to an understanding of the historical Bacon, but to use Bacon’s writing as a discursive tool for understanding modernity. As such, Weinberger consciously freed himself from studying Bacon “in terms of some narrow historical context, because he gives an account of our modern history’s nature.”\textsuperscript{41} It is especially clear if the text of Weinberger’s book is compared with earlier statements which he has made that he is presenting the historical Bacon himself as a figure who denied the divinity of the Bible, questioned the relevance of Christianity, portrayed science as the highest human activity, and was fundamentally at odds with the “divines” and the Church of his day.\textsuperscript{42} For Weinberger, Bacon remained the hero of the Enlightenment.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 74ff.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 329.

\textsuperscript{40} cf. Ibid., 198-199, & 66. This is truly a fascinating dialectic which Weinberger has established, and it speaks profoundly to some of the basic tensions in the modern age, but none of this applies to Bacon.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Weinberger’s article, “Science and Rule in Bacon’s Utopia: An Introduction to the Reading of the New Atlantis.” \textit{American Political Science Review}; v70, n3 (Sep. 1976), 865. On the Bible, see p. 876. On the idea that Christianity, or the Incarnation, is superceded by scientific accomplishment see p. 877. On science as the highest human activity see p. 885. On contentions with contemporary Christianity, passim.
Others have built upon the construction of White and Weinberger. David C. Innes, in an analysis of the New Atlantis, examined in some detail the ways in which Bacon’s “hope” is fundamentally incompatible with Christian “hope,” but the operative assumption was that the image of Bacon presented by Weinberger and White is accurate.\textsuperscript{43} Writing as a theologian, it is also noteworthy that Innes compares Baconian hope to Christian belief, but by “Christian” he means his own theological position and he does not account for significant variations between denominations and theological schools regarding what is properly Christian. For example, Innes uses the absence of “missionary concern” among the Bensalemites as evidence that they practice no orthodox form of Christianity.\textsuperscript{44} But this reflects a very distinctive theological perspective. While “missions” is a constant concern of modern Protestants, more than one theologian has been disturbed by the lack of missionary zeal among the Church Fathers of the first seven centuries, and the element of compromise with paganism expressed in the Pastoral Epistle of Gregory the Great, one of few early missionary manuals, is also disturbing to contemporary Christians. Similarly, Innes argues that the wording of the blessing in the Feast of the Family episode in the New Atlantis is “universalist” and “would have been rejected with horror by every professing Christian of Bacon’s day” because it states that in Christ’s birth the faithful are blessed, rather than recognizing that blessing comes only through Christ’s death.\textsuperscript{45} The distinction which Innes is making is a common one in modern Protestant homiletics courses. However, it is a modern distinction. It is


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 16. Innes was at Gordon-Conwell Seminary at the time of the writing of this article, and the particular emphases of evangelical Christianity serve as a benchmark of theology for Innes’ treatment. It must be recognized, however, that to read the developments of three centuries of evangelical theology and discourse back into the seventeenth century is anachronistic. Similarly, the theological concerns which will be discussed in chapters 1-3 are not the marks of present day evangelical Christianity.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 21.
inaccurate to say that “every professing Christian of Bacon’s day” would have a problem with this wording, for Bishop Lancelot Andrewes consistently failed to heed this distinction in his Nativity Sermons before the King. A common buttress of the arguments of White, Innes, Weinberger and others who portray Bacon as being at odds with Christianity is to assert that Bacon’s statements about God and faith cannot be reconciled with Christianity. A key element of the present study is the demonstration that in light of the actual theological language and concerns of Bacon’s day he would not have been, and in fact was not, accused of unbelief by anyone in his time.

It must be said that when viewed from the angle of Bacon’s texts alone, with the assumption of Bacon’s Enlightenment “modernity” in place, the image presented by Weinberger and White is compelling. It very usefully addresses many of questions pertaining to the nature of the modern age itself. However, from a historical point of view, the image of Bacon as an atheist or a deist is untenable. There is no clear historical evidence for portraying Bacon this way, and there is the serious problem of how to account for the mountain of evidence against it. All of Bacon’s prayers, meditations, Scriptural quotations, his personal *Confession of Faith*, and especially his writings against atheism must be understood as hypocritical, or as part of an elaborate web woven to cover Bacon’s true convictions, which he never openly expressed. If, as Antoinette Mann Patterson claimed, Bacon “cloaked his social materialism with Christianity”

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46 Lancelot Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons*, (London, 1632), 1-158. As will be discussed later, Lancelot Andrewes consistently presented the significance of the Incarnation in the form of the Eastern Patristic doctrine of theosis. In theosis, the taking on of human flesh itself, i.e. the birth, is the act which determines man’s blessing and salvation, for only through this hypostatic union of God and Man does man see his ultimate destiny, which is to take on the nature of God and be “deified.” While the cross is part of the whole “incarnation” package and is necessary to make salvation possible, this is comprehended in the birth. As the Christian East summarized God’s salvific activity from the second century onward, “God became man so that man might become God.” The significance of this concept in early modern thought, as well as in the thought of Bacon specifically, will be discussed in the following chapters as well.
(emphasis original) in order to make it acceptable,\textsuperscript{47} we must wonder that no one caught on to this fraud until the Enlightenment. Were Bacon’s pious friends who assisted him with his writing, such as Father Tobie Matthew, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, and his Chaplain, William Rawley, merely fooled by Bacon, or were they unconcerned enough for their friend’s apostasy, and their own ethics, to aid him in his conspiracy? Furthermore, as Charles Webster has shown, the first generations of Baconians after Bacon adopted Bacon’s approach to natural philosophy precisely because of Bacon’s compatibility with their own theism and millennialism.\textsuperscript{48} The incompatibility of Bacon’s writings with the Christianity of the seventeenth century is an interesting assumption for White, Weinberger, Innes, and others, for it was not evident to the seventeenth century Baconians, including those scholars who helped Bacon with the Instauration project itself.

In response to the claim that Bacon was somehow at odds with the Christianity of his day, it is also common for scholars to state very pointedly that Bacon was a sincere Christian, even if they say little more about the nature or details of Bacon’s beliefs. Since so much has been made of the significance of Bacon’s “departures” from Christianity even authors who do not otherwise concern themselves with the question of religion in Bacon have found it helpful to mention the sincerity of his beliefs. This allows an author to proceed with a discussion of Bacon that presents his philosophy, religious statements and all, as an organic whole.

In a lecture delivered on the tercentenary of Bacon’s death C.D. Broad took special notice of the Enlightenment image of Bacon, particularly as Josef de Maistre presented it, dismissed all such opinions as unjustified, and continued with his own

\textsuperscript{47} Antoinette Mann Patterson, \textit{Francis Bacon and Socialized Science} (Springfield Illinois, Charles C. Thomas, 1973), 124.

\textsuperscript{48} Charles Webster, \textit{The Great Instauration:  Science, Medicine, and Reform 1626-1660} (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1975.)
characterization: “It is evident that he was a sincere if unenthusiastic Christian of that sensible school which regards the Church of England as a branch of the Civil Service, and the Archbishop of Canterbury as the British Minister for Divine Affairs.”

Broad’s lecture was otherwise an outline of the argument behind the Instauration and he did not concern himself further with external questions of religion or theology. His claim that Bacon was a sincere Christian, however, was important to his argument, for it freed him to take Bacon at his word, and there was no further need to become bogged down by the implications of what he considered to be anachronistic misreadings. In characterizing Bacon as “unenthusiastic” about his faith, Broad also gave himself room to make no more of Bacon’s theological statements than necessary. Broad’s interpretation is certainly in keeping with the understanding of the English Reformation among academics in 1926, which typically saw “Anglicanism” as a moderate compromise (or “middle way”) between Puritanism and Catholicism. However, more recent Reformation scholarship would suggest that “that sensible school” to which Bacon supposedly belonged was under construction, but not yet in session, during Bacon’s lifetime.

In some more recent works which treat Bacon as a Christian, scholars have made more of the significance of Christianity to Bacon’s writing. Stephen Gaukroger included in his work a detailed discussion of how Bacon perceived that his vision of the imminent

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50 Broad’s particular characterization of the compromise of Anglicanism is more appropriate for the latitudinarian attitudes which developed after the Restoration, as a response to the perception that strong doctrinal positions were themselves implicated in the Civil War. There were those, such as Bacon, Andrewes, Edward Sackville, and others who advocated a broadly tolerant national Church, this was a function of their concern for civil peace alone, for they themselves often had very strong doctrinal convictions. The theme of religious tolerance is a key element shared by the members of Francis Bacon’s literary circle, and we will consider this further in chapter three. This study contends that there was an additional good reason for Bacon and Andrewes to advocate tolerance, as any number of their own doctrinal statements would not have been approved if it had been put to a vote.
reform of human knowledge fit into the Divine plan. Gaukroger’s treatment is a useful summary of the more prominent theological claims which Bacon made to vindicate his philosophy, but once the theological space for the Instauration project has been established theology does not figure significantly. This is sufficient for Gaukroger’s end, which is to survey Bacon’s philosophical project itself, and it represents the most recent and most finely tuned example of a tendency to take Bacon’s theological statements seriously, even if they are not foregrounded.

Allowing Bacon to remain a “sincere Christian” is a very reasonable option for scholars whose interests in studying Bacon lie elsewhere than establishing the theological implications of his philosophy. While recognizing that Bacon was a product of his time and that his theological statements were calculated and significant for his work, it also avoids derailing the main argument by opening the door to the tessaract of Reformation theology. However, recognizing that Bacon’s theological statements are significant only raises the question of how much more insight into Bacon’s philosophy could be gained if

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51 Gaukroger, 74-83. In light of the previous discussion of the opinions of Weinberger, White, and Innes, it is noteworthy that Gaukroger does not take up the question of what Bacon actually believed from an historical perspective. It is important not to read into this the assumption of Antoinette Mann-Patterson that Bacon’s religious statements were merely show. Gaukroger is interested in how the philosophical system operated, not the historical question of Bacon’s belief, and therefore it is adequate for him to note that these ideas were present.

52 Benjamin Farrington is another important example. In his 1951 survey of Bacon’s thought he noted, “The intimate connection between his religious beliefs and his scientific ambitions explains many features of Bacon’s work.” and went on, “Remembering this religious aspect of Bacon’s thought we may hope to find in the religious outlook of his day some light on the background of his thoughts.” The background which interests Farrington however, in 1951, is simply that Bacon was a Christian. Farrington went on to discuss Bacon in terms of the religious context of 1951 (believing in a creating God, belief in the myths of Eden, etc.), rather than an examination of Bacon in the context of the religious issues of Tudor and Stuart England. (Farrington, Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951, pp. 74ff.) In a turn which reflects the move toward greater contextualization in Bacon studies, Farrington addressed, in 1966, the significance of the theological trends in Bacon’s era, including the interest in recovering the real sense of the Scriptures, and the recovery of Hebrew language as a discipline (both of which are predicated of the move toward Protestantism, generally.) However, Farrington’s discussion still serves the end of introducing Bacon’s philosophical writings, and Farrington did not go beyond recognizing that new interest in the Biblical text was significant for Bacon’s thought in general. (Farrington, The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on its development from 1603 to 1609 with new translations of fundamental texts [Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1966.] See also Perez Zagorin, Francis Bacon. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998), 44ff. also John Henry, 82ff.
we were to take a serious and sustained look at how Bacon dealt with the important theological issues of his day.

Many of Bacon’s theological statements pertain directly to a hot topic in Early Modern theology: the nature of God’s relationship to creation. Did God merely create the natural world as something wholly separate from Himself, inanimate, except where He chose to add the “spirit of life?” Did God himself infuse the very fabric of creation so that to study nature was to interact with God Himself? Did God create something distinct from Himself, but with which He was in constant guidance and interaction? These three questions are merely examples, but they are examples which show the intimate relationship which necessarily existed between theology and natural philosophy. The first question strikes at the heart of the problem which Leibniz identified in mechanical philosophy, passive matter, which he countered with his concept of the vis viva. The second question pertains to a belief of the Stoics, but not unique to them, that the cosmos was a living and active organism infused by the divine pneuma, which was not uncommon in the seventeenth century. Most notably, Isaac Newton took up this idea as it came to him via early modern alchemy, and adapted it by postulating that the semi-divine Logos of Arian theology was actually the intermediary by which God acted in the universe. The final question reflects the basic understanding of providence as presented by Calvin, but it also is central to the thinking of the Catholic Malebranche,

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54 See Betty Jo Dobbs, “Newton’s Alchemy and his theory of Matter.” *Isis*, v. 73, n. 4 (Dec. 1982), 511-528. esp. pp. 516-17, & 527-28. The intimate connection between this idea and the hermetic-alchemical tradition should be noted.
who as an “occasionalist,” understood God to be the efficient cause of all activity in the world.  
Bacon did not live in an era when scientific questions could be separated from their theological implications.

The nature of God’s relationship to creation was not only a hot question in the Early Modern period because of its significance for cosmology. It had significant ramifications for many of the doctrinal issues dividing Christians in this era as well, including the various understandings of the Sacraments current among Catholics and Protestants, man’s vocation on earth in relation to nature, the implication of God becoming “flesh,” and the significance of the Edenic Fall in Salvation History, among other theological issues. Throughout the seventeenth century theology and natural philosophy existed in a mutually influential, if not always a mutually supportive, relationship.  

The assertion that Bacon was a “sincere Christian,” must be also be qualified because it suggests that there was something “typical” about his theological statements. However, much of Bacon’s theology is entirely atypical, either because it represents a distinct “minority position” in Tudor and Stuart theology, or because it was unique to


56 The interdependence of natural philosophical and theological discourses in the seventeenth century renders the position of B.H.G. Wormald on the subject of Bacon’s beliefs untenable. Wormald recognized the conflicting images of Bacon presented by other scholars, and then dismissed the question of whether Bacon was a devoted Christian or an agnostic is insignificant: “Since there are no means of checking and so of correcting judgments upon a person’s inner morality or belief, these exercises should be abstained from as unworthy of the breath, ink, or print which is expended.” [B.H.G. Wormald, Francis Bacon: History, politics, and science, 1561-1626 (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15] In the course of Wormald’s study this allows him to conveniently evade the question of whether Bacon’s theological statements can in any way be seen as forming a coherent whole. Each statement is taken as it comes, and religion is not allowed to be a central concern or a motivation for Bacon, no matter what Bacon actually said about his own belief. In a very modern way religion remains but one of the subjects which entered into Bacon’s thought and writing. Such a position is tantamount to either rejecting the significance of religion in the seventeenth century or a lack of concern for Bacon’s seventeenth century context.
Bacon himself. It is only when we recognize which of Bacon’s theological claims were typical and which were radical that we can begin to appreciate the full significance of what he wrote, and its place in history.

An exhaustive discussion of Francis Bacon’s theological statements is not possible within the scope of this study. Neither will it be the concern of this study to examine the connection of Bacon’s theology to his cosmology in any great detail, though it will suggest that Bacon’s theological structure supports the “Semi-Paracelsian cosmology” identified by Rees. The central concern of this study is to propose that by viewing Bacon in the context of his literary circle we will have a powerful interpretive tool for analyzing how Bacon understood the interaction between God and creation. This study will also include a particular consideration of the meaning of Bacon’s own Instauration program for the relationship between God and what Bacon regarded as the most prominent feature of creation, mankind. This study argues that by seeing Bacon’s theological statements as a coherent part of his philosophical system we will bring the entire system into sharper resolution.

It has also become common in recent scholarship to consider Bacon in light of the dominant Calvinist theology of his time and place, and measure him accordingly. There can be no doubt that in Bacon’s England the dominant theological system was Calvinism, or, more properly speaking, that Bacon’s England was dominated by any number of

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57 While this is more common recently, it is not merely a recent development. Throughout the Spedding Ellis and Heath edition of Bacon’s works comparisons are made to Calvinism, and in in 1962 Virgil Whitaker wrote, “I think that the effects of Calvinist views may reasonably be found at the center of Bacon’s thought.” (Whitaker, 22.) However, Whitaker also noted in his day, that no one had done an actual analysis of Bacon’s religion, and suggested a reason, “on Bacon’s doctrinal views we have, so far as I know, no direct evidence.” (ibid., 24). This expresses the basic logic behind associating Bacon with Calvinism, namely that he does say things which are in keeping in Calvinism, and we are otherwise lacking direct evidence. This study contends that the direct evidence has merely been difficult to interpret without the hermeneutical tool of Bacon’s literary circle.
systems of Reformed theology which used Calvin as an authority. This approach is the most promising, and historically conscious, of the three common trends in Bacon scholarship. Not only was Bacon’s society strongly Calvinist, but Bacon’s mother was strong-willed, scholarly, and had marked tendencies toward Nonconformity, and further, Bacon’s mentor at Cambridge was none other than John Whitgift, later Archbishop, who represented a different, but certainly no less Calvinist, side of English religious thought. This approach to Bacon’s religion was taken by Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart in their recent, and widely marketed, biography of Bacon, Hostage to Fortune.

Jardine and Stewart use the solid evidence of Bacon’s Calvinist upbringing to present an image of Bacon as essentially sympathetic to his mother’s very Reformed Nonconformity. When discussing the disappointment of his mother with the state of Francis’ religion as an adult, Jardine and Stewart attribute this disappointment, with good evidence, to the impression which Lady Anne Bacon had that her son had sold out his religious convictions for political gain. However, Jardine and Stewart also note that Bacon’s public writings on the subject, which might be taken to support the image that Bacon departed significantly from his mother’s convictions, were politically conditioned, and not necessarily reflective of Bacon’s own beliefs. If Bacon’s convictions had cooled off in the political arena, Jardine and Stewart still allow his fundamental formation as a

58 Cf. Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987), 1-8. The distinction between “Calvinism” and Reformed theology is an important one, as is noted in chapter one of this study, because Calvin and his writings were never entirely normative, or “confessional” in standing, among the Reformed of England. This becomes especially significant to the discussion in chapter two, because much of the unrest to which Bacon objected in the wake of the Marprelate Controversy was the result of serious doctrinal disagreements between “Calvinists.”

59 This is how Lady Anne’s letter to her other son, Anthony, presents the problem. Cf. Jardine and Stewart, Hostage to Fortune: the Troubled Life of Francis Bacon (New York, Hill and Wang, 1999), 135-36.

60 Cf. Jardine and Stewart, 123-25. esp. p. 125, “Nor can they be taken as being his ‘works’ in any useful sense. These are tracts written to order, their content and arguments not in his control.” On this point this study will argue that these arguments were very much in Bacon’s control, and are congruent with other obvious departures from his childhood religious formation which he made in his early adulthood.
Calvinist to linger as the last word on Bacon’s belief. Thus, when describing Bacon’s political actions on behalf of Tobie Matthew after the latter had converted to Roman Catholicism, they describe Bacon as acting “reluctantly, in view of his own utterly opposed religious convictions.”

It must be acknowledged that discussing Bacon’s thought in light of Calvinism, though historically grounded, is not without serious difficulties. What Jardine and Stewart have attributed to Bacon’s political expediency has been taken by others who have considered Bacon as the product of English Reformed theology as a genuine departure from at least some of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism which he learned in his youth. Perez Zagorin noted that Bacon’s hope for human recovery from the fall into sin, which Bacon expressed at various places in his writing, “was at odds with the religion of his age and his own Calvinistic heritage.” Later, Zagorin also observed that Bacon’s unpublished *Confession of Faith*, in which he outlined all of the essential points of his own belief, “contains no indication that he accepted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and the denial of human free will.” Although Zagorin went on to allow that Bacon mentioned the idea of God’s “election of a small flock,” he is entirely right, as this study will show, in suspecting that this statement is not necessarily Calvinist.

Benjamin Milner, while maintaining that Bacon was at all times firmly in the “reformed tradition” theologically, noted that Bacon freely diverged from Calvin when he

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61 A similar approach was taken by Gary Deason in his dissertation, “The philosophy of a Lord Chancellor: religion, science, and social stability in the Work of Francis Bacon.” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1978). Deason presented Bacon’s theology as fundamentally Calvinist, of a fabric with that of his parents (whose views are often directly predicated of Bacon.) As an adult Bacon merely distanced himself from the rigors of the Puritans. (p.40)

62 Jardine and Stewart, 305.

63 Zagorin, 45.

64 Ibid., 50.
felt it necessary. Milner identified several of Bacon’s departures from Calvinist thinking, including, significantly, the high premium which Bacon placed on human knowledge, and the elevation of natural philosophy as a distinctly human achievement. This latter point is the conclusion of a process whereby the human recovery of mastery over nature gradually, according to Milner, became less the foreordained plan of God and more “secular achievement” of human action itself. Milner takes these departures from Calvin as evidence that Bacon abandoned “his theological foundations for natural philosophy.”

Milner’s claim that Bacon abandoned the theological justification behind his natural philosophy is problematic, because it requires that all of the theological statements which Bacon continues to make in his writings are mere “vestiges,” or perhaps window dressing, for the desacralized Instauration. This study argues that Bacon did not abandon the theological foundations of his natural philosophy at all. Rather, what Bacon abandoned was his Calvinism, and he did so before he began his philosophical writings, but while he was formulating the concept of the Instauration itself. Gradually, during the very years when his mother became concerned over his departure from the faith in which he was raised, Bacon was rejecting most of the distinctive doctrinal features of Calvinism. The theology which replaced Calvinism in Bacon’s writings both justified and motivated his Instauration program. The key to understanding Bacon’s theology, and

65 Benjamin Milner, “Francis Bacon: the Theological Foundations of ‘Valerius Terminus.’” Journal of the History of Ideas; v58, n2 (April 1997), 245ff. Milner’s discussion of how and why Bacon chose to depart from Calvin will be considered at length in chapter two.

66 Milner, pp. 262 & 264 respectively.

67 Milner presents Valerius Terminus as the point at which this tension between divine and human action came to a head, and the program had to be described as an increasingly human one. p. 260.

68 Milner, 264.

69 Julian Martin traces the “formative years” of Bacon’s Instauration program to the early fifteen nineties, after he had taken the road of statesmanship, and his program reflected the political concerns which developed during this period. (Martin, 45ff.) The argument for this timeline is compelling, and it also fits with a shift in Bacon’s theology which is equally evident in his philosophical writings.
particularly its internal consistency with his natural philosophy, is recognizing that there were far more options on England’s theological table than Calvinism, and that Bacon was not alone in turning to these other options. Bacon’s historical significance as an individual has been allowed to eclipse his association with a group of like-minded intellectuals. Bacon’s theology was in some respects unique, but it was also congruent with, and to some extent derived from, the departures from Calvinism which marked the most prominent members of his literary circle. When viewed in the context of those who worked most closely with him on his philosophical writings, the religious motivations and theological assumptions behind the Instauration come into focus.

There is an essential tension in Bacon, which has been noted by a number of authors, between the image of the Instauration as a foreordained and prophesied act of God, which Bacon used to lend divine sanction to his program, and the discussion of the scientific project as a human work -- an act of free will on the part of man to choose to embark upon a new, experimental, method. On the one hand, Bacon continually referred to God’s prophecy in Daniel 12:4 as predicting the coming of his Instauration program. On the other hand, he clearly portrays his new learning as a choice of man to effect his own recovery from his earthly misery.

This tension is nothing other than the inherent tension of free will versus determinism. Much of the current disparity in the field of Bacon studies on the question of his beliefs is a function of this tension in Bacon’s own description of his project. Those who emphasize the experimental nature of Bacon’s program are left with the

70 A very stimulating and thorough discussion of this tension is to be found in Gaukroger (pp. 81-83), where he builds the tension out of the understanding of myth in Bacon identified by Hans Blumenberg. This is also the central problem between the secular and sacred images of the Instauration that Milner has presented in his article (Milner, 245ff.) David Burnett has also identified the fundamental dissonance between Bacon’s program and the determinism of the Calvinist denial of free will (cf. Burnett, 92.), and similarly Julian Martin is clearly aware of the difficulty with reconciling Bacon’s seemingly “millenarian” statements with the concept of free will (Martin, 141ff.).
dilemma of what to do with Bacon’s discussion of his new method as the product of divine providence. Those who focus on Bacon’s appeal to prophecy and providence, and his description of the Instauration as an immanent act of God, must account for the fact that free will is essential to Bacon’s method, and that in other passages he refers to the project itself as anything but inevitable. In resolving this tension some authors have chosen to credit Bacon with the sincere belief that the Instauration as an apocalyptic phenomenon, the fulfillment of specific prophecy.71 Other authors, such as Weinberger and White particularly, have chosen to emphasize it as a program of experiment which was itself experimental, for mankind, in adopting Bacon’s method, was choosing to try a new way.

Those who take the second route resolve the tension by rejecting the sincerity of Bacon’s theological statements wholesale, reading them as a combination of Machiavellian devices for warding off the hostility of contemporary devines, and a clever means of encoding and forwarding his real, secular agenda.72 In the writings of White, Weinberger, and Innes, this resolution entails elaborate explanations of what Bacon really meant. However, many other solutions have been proposed, even if they are not all resolutions.

Julian Martin and David Burnett dealt with this fundamental tension by allowing that, although Bacon may have been a believer, the passages which some interpreted as

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71 This is particularly common in more popular treatments of Bacon, such as those found in Anthony Grafton, New Worlds, Ancient Texts (Harvard University Press, 1992), and John Hedley Brooke, Religion and Science (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also John Henry, The Scientific Revolution, 86. These treatments have given currency to Bacon’s “millennialism,” in popular circles, but in Henry’s own work on Bacon, Knowledge is Power, he acknowledges the problems with this ascription. (p. 102.)

72 Robert K. Faulkner presents a particularly hostile and secular view of Bacon in his treatment of Bacon’s Machiavellianism. By assuming Bacon’s references to Christ are disingenuous, Faulkner depicts Bacon as forwarding a “profoundly evil teaching” derived from Machiavelli that it is precisely a ruler’s “malignity” which accounts for his humanity, and making a concerted argument in favor of tyranny. Bacon’s program for scientific reform is an “alternative to Christianity,” which lies hidden underneath Bacon’s seemingly Christian language. (Robert K. Faulkner, Francis Bacon and the Project of Progress. (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Inc., 1993), 62-65). Josef de Maistre would be proud.
evidence of a millenarian understanding of prophecy in Bacon should not be taken seriously. Martin describes these passages as Bacon “guarding his flank” while Burnett, somewhat more positively, considers them to be Bacon reaching out to those who did have such beliefs in his society.73 The standard forms of millennialism in Bacon’s day were far too deterministic to square with the basic idea of human potential in the Instauration. However, as John Henry has suggested, there may be good reason to look at these passages again, recognizing that Bacon may have something in mind other than standard millennialism.74

Benjamin Milner concluded that Bacon’s inability to reconcile the tension between theology and his secular program led to his celebrated distinction between matters of faith and human knowledge. By separating faith and human knowledge, according to Milner, Bacon felt that he could privilege and exalt the latter without damage to the former. Milner argues that there was damage to the faith in Bacon, however, in that by separating faith and knowledge he denied “any noetic content in faith: of God there is ‘no knowledge, but wonder.’”75 In essence, Milner offers a solution to the problem that is not a resolution. Milner allows the tension to remain, and merely accounts for it with Bacon’s distinction between faith and knowledge. From this point on Bacon’s thinking on the subjects of faith and science can be split, as he has formed them into distinct categories which do not need to be reconciled with one another. Having safeguarded both faith and science he can proceed to concern himself with the latter, which came to be presented in ever more exalted language.76

73 Cf. Martin, 142-3, and Burnett, 92.
74 John Henry, Knowledge is Power, 102.
75 Milner, 261.
76 Ibid., 263-64.
It has become a commonplace in Bacon studies to regard the “separation of faith and science” as one of Bacon’s fundamental contributions to the development of modern, western thought. The ubiquity of this assumption goes a long way toward explaining why more attention has not been given to Bacon’s theological statements: they are regarded as being tangential to his natural philosophy based upon a distinction which Bacon himself appears to have made. However, Bacon’s own words pertaining to this separation must be qualified.

As John Channing Briggs has observed, a clean distinction between faith and science is contradicted by Bacon’s practice of discussing matters of “science” in the loftiest religious language, as well as his habit of providing biblical proof texts for his project of the reform of learning. Charles Whitney has demonstrated that the word *Instauratio* itself was chosen by Bacon for his program because of its theological implications, and elsewhere he has noted that “the context of Christian redemptive history, at any rate, is strongly emphasized throughout the *Instauratio Magna.*”

Another problem becomes evident when we realize that Bacon’s literary circle, those men who helped him most with his project, were themselves not natural philosophers, as Jardine and Stewart have noted, but they were often theologians. Moreover, the

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57 John Channing Briggs noted that the celebration of this as a monumental contribution goes back to Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society.* However, Briggs also notes that Sprat’s history is marked by the same blurring of the distinction that can be identified in Bacon’s own writings. {John Channing Briggs, “Bacon’s science and religion,” in: *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon,* ed. Markku Peltonnen, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172-199.}

58 Ibid., 172-199.


61 Jardine and Stewart, 311.
statement that faith and human knowledge are separate is itself theologically charged, which in the seventeenth century would have implied that Bacon was taking a theological stand in making it, no matter what was meant by it.

This study will include a reexamination of Bacon’s words pertaining to the separation of faith and natural philosophy, and suggest that Bacon never intended the distinction to appear in its modern form, as a divorce of faith and natural philosophy into two separate enterprises. Rather, Bacon was distinguishing between two mutually dependent elements of what for him was a single enterprise: the complete reformation of his society and culture. When seen from a seventeenth-century perspective, Bacon is not separating faith and natural philosophy at all, but recognizing a basic theological distinction which many others had made during his time regarding the boundaries of human reason. John Henry has belled the cat on this issue: “Bacon was not so much concerned that science and religion should not be mixed, but that they should not be mixed the wrong way.”82 This study will take up Henry’s point with an examination of exactly what, in the context of seventeenth century theology, Bacon was saying.

This study contends that for Bacon there was no tension between the Instauration as an apocalypse, meaning, literally, a revelation of the Divine will, and the Instauration as an act of man. This was not because he did not recognize the problem, or because he had divorced questions of faith from questions of science, but because he had dealt with the tension between free will and providence theologically, prior to publishing his philosophical writings. Apocalypse and experiment were both part of the seamless fabric of the Instauration as Bacon conceived it. The manner in which Bacon resolved the tension between free will and providence made his philosophical writings both consistent and unique.

82 John Henry, Knowledge is Power, 86.
The Approach of this Study

Francis Bacon often described the Instauration as a process of building a new edifice after clearing away the old and carefully laying a new foundation. In structure this study owes much to Bacon’s own pattern. Roughly the first half of the study, comprising the first three chapters, consists of preparation for a new look at the question of theological assumptions in Bacon’s corpus of writings dealing with the Instauration. This will involve a consideration of the broader theological context of Tudor and Stuart England as well as a look at those intellectuals who surrounded Bacon as he prepared his philosophical works. The second half of the study, comprising chapters four and five, will look more specifically at Bacon’s writings dealing with the Instauration and examine the theological statements which are found throughout. This study operates with the basic assumption that one of the reasons Bacon’s theology has remained problematic in scholarly literature is that the necessary historical context for his theological statements has not been clarified, or, in Bacon’s imagery, the foundation has not been properly laid.

A key to understanding Bacon’s theological statements is to recognize that he did not make them in a vacuum. Bacon had a context which has not previously received much attention but which is particularly helpful for sorting out the questions of what he believed and how this affected his work. Bacon operated within a field of intellectuals who assisted and advised him on his project. In this group were several notable theologians, and these will receive particular attention in this study, for their writings not only outline the nature of the theological discourse which surrounded Bacon as he was working, but their writings often reflected themes of Bacon’s natural philosophy as well. When viewed in light of the theological interests of his literary circle, Bacon’s own theological statements can be seen to be part of a larger theological discussion. Even those passages where Bacon is forwarding his own unique interpretation of a Scriptural text, or
making a point which others have not made, it is evident that his thinking is informed by the concerns of his group.

Surprisingly, there has been very little scholarly concern for Bacon’s intellectual field, or literary circle. The most extensive consideration of the topic remains that of G. Walter Steeves, an eminent Bacon scholar of the turn of the twentieth century, who in 1910 published, *Francis Bacon: a sketch of his life, works and literary friends.* By combing the correspondence volumes of the Spedding, Ellis, and Heath edition of Bacon’s works and consulting other contemporary or near contemporary sources, Steeves attempted to separate out Bacon’s purely legal and political contacts and establish the names of those individuals who were concerned directly and specifically with Bacon’s literary production. Steeves’ list of a mere thirteen names of Bacon’s “literary friends” requires some revision, particularly after recent discoveries of texts and intervening developments in scholarship, but it is otherwise a very solid point of departure for any study of the Bacon literary circle. However, even within the thirteen to seventeen names which could reasonably be included as Bacon’s literary associates, there were only a handful with whom he worked on a regular basis, as Steeves noted, confirming the image of Bacon as a man of few intimate friends. In the end, the narrowness of Bacon’s literary field works very much to the advantage of this study, for it establishes a very workable scope. We are still awaiting the publication of the new critical edition of Bacon’s correspondence, which may alter the list of the Bacon circle somewhat, but it is not likely that the inner circle will change, for these names have been recognized since Bacon’s own lifetime.

The Bacon circle did not exist in a vacuum either. In order to understand the positions taken by its members it is necessary to recognize what theological ideas were on

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83 G. Walter Steeves, *Francis Bacon: a sketch of his life, works and literary friends* (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1910.)
the Tudor and Stuart table. The theological environment of the era is the matrix out of which the different theologies of the people developed. Whether specific ideas were accepted or rejected by any given individual, the result came about through an interaction of the individual with the greater theological environment. For this reason this study will also begin with a discussion of the dominant theological trends of the era. All specific discussions of the theology of Bacon’s circle and his own writings must be held against such a backdrop to be seen in their proper context.

Bacon himself did not believe that it was possible for any single author to do more than contribute to the project of the comprehensive knowledge of all things. Similarly, while leaving aside Bacon’s belief that a truly comprehensive understanding is possible, this study can be nothing more than a contribution to a current scholarly trend toward a more unified and consistent understanding of Bacon. This study is limited to a discussion of Bacon’s personal beliefs and how these fit in with, as well as advanced and supported, his program for the advancement or recovery of human learning, the Great Instauration. Although these concerns are most directly related to intellectual history and the history of science, this study is also consciously interdisciplinary, as a variety of disciplines contribute to the conclusions.

Two historical questions drove the research prior to the specific exegesis of Bacon’s texts: “How do Bacon’s theological statements and Biblical interpretation fit into the broader context of Tudor and Stuart religion and theology?” and, “What can be learned on these issues from a consideration of Bacon’s literary circle, those intellectuals who worked most closely with him on the project of the Instauration?” While these questions were under consideration, however, a key question from the field of systematic theology was always present alongside, namely, “Can Bacon’s theological statements be discussed as a coherent system in the first place?” If Bacon’s theological statements were
not consistent with one another or merely utilitarian, adapted to serve the particular points which he was making at any given time, then it would be difficult to make a solid case that Bacon’s beliefs can be established at all. Answering this question in the affirmative required a significant amount of literary exegesis, both of Bacon’s texts as well as those of his literary circle. Finally, recent developments in historical theology and the history of religion have greatly advanced our understanding of the English Reformation. Developments in the field of Reformation studies have not previously been much brought into play in considerations of the question of Bacon’s belief, but they are a key to the question of how to locate Bacon and his intellectual circle within the broader trends in their society.

The second half of this study deals more directly with the theological statements of Bacon’s Instauration writings, and constructs from them a theological system which can profitably inform future interpretations of Bacon’s thought, as well as enhance the picture of a unified Bacon which is already emerging in the scholarly world. This study differs from many previous treatments in exegetical scope as well as in its hermeneutical concern for the significance of Bacon’s broader context. Most studies of Bacon’s philosophy and the Instauration program have focused on a fairly narrow list of his published works, such as *The Advancement of Learning* or the *Instauratio Magna*, as being the definitive statements of Bacon’s thought on the subjects at hand. In contrast, this study considers the writings pertaining to the reform of human learning as a broad corpus of Instauration writings which developed over a specific period in Bacon’s life. These writings can profitably inform one another, particularly if they are read with an eye toward their proper context in the history of Bacon’s own life. The extant Instauration writings were produced entirely in the latter half of Bacon’s life, and, for the most part, between 1603 and his death in 1626. As we will see, this timetable is significant in light
of the development of Bacon’s theological ideas after he left Cambridge. The writings
must be also be considered according to their chronological order, for later statements are
often either summaries or cautious refinements of earlier, more detailed treatments. In
addition, the writings must be consciously read against the backdrop of the broader
contexts of Bacon’s life, scholarly field, and society. Often seemingly brief or offhand
statements in Bacon’s writings can take on tremendous significance when the various
aspects of his historical context are considered. Therefore chapters four and five explore
the theology of Bacon’s Instauration both according to the writings themselves and in
light of the historical context established in the first part of this study.

An Overview of the Discussion by Chapter

Part One: The Contextual Foundations of the Instauration Corpus

Chapter 1:
The Context of Religion in Tudor and Stuart Society

Before any new construction can begin, the land must be cleared and leveled, and
all old structures which are obstacles to the new work must be removed. Those old
structures which are not removed must still be renovated to accommodate the new. This
was Bacon’s metaphorical rule in regard to the Instauration of a new method of learning,
but it also applies to this study. Before Bacon can be located on the landscape of English
Reformation theology the basic contours of that landscape must be established, and this is
the objective of the first chapter. Past studies of Bacon, to the extent that they have
addressed the question of his religious beliefs at all, have not significantly engaged the
field of English Reformation studies and have thus tended to explain Bacon’s beliefs
according to outmoded or anachronistic categories. Particularly in the latter half of the
twentieth century, however, tremendous work has been done in the field of the English
Reformation, and we now have a much clearer understanding of the complexity of this
historical phenomenon. Chapter one examines some of the key traits which made the English Reformation an era characterized by turmoil as well as a remarkable diversity of theological thought. This diversity, however, did not mean that it was a free-for-all. There were constraining features of the theological landscape which limited and directed what could be built, and there were specific materials available for use. Chapter one is particularly concerned with the options which were influential upon Bacon and his literary circle.

Chapter 2:
From Puritanism to Patristics:
Bacon’s Theology in Transition

Chapter two moves the focus to Bacon, and begins with a consideration of his childhood religious background in a Nonconformist home. The focus of the chapter then shifts to his religious writings as an adult which, when considered in light of the theological trends established in chapter one, give clear evidence of a rejection not only of his mother’s Nonconformity but also of many of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism. Bacon’s writings show that he took a turn toward another source of authority which was being recovered in early modern Europe, the Church Fathers of classical antiquity. This patristic turn facilitated an understanding of human free will and genuine human agency which permeates Bacon’s Instauration writings and made his particular conception of the Instauration possible, as is demonstrated in the second part of this study. Along with a reverence for patristic authority comes a certain adoption of the worldview of late classical antiquity, including the neoplatonic language and categories which the Fathers used in discussing the cosmos and its relation to the Creator. Only after this patristic turn had been made could the theological support for the Instauration writings, as it is found in those writings themselves, be clearly articulated.
Chapter 3: 
Francis Bacon’s Literary Circle

Chapter three again decenters Bacon to look at the field of intellectuals who surrounded him and assisted him with his work on the Instauration project. Much can be learned about the theological biases of an individual in Tudor and Stuart England by looking to the people with whom they associated which would not be known from a simple examination of that individual’s literary and legal remains. Many of Bacon’s friends and literary associates were theologians, who can be more easily placed in the theological landscape of the era than can Bacon, at least when Bacon is considered in isolation. Chapter three includes sketches of the main figures of the Bacon literary circle according to their own theology and religious preferences. The circle was marked by a general rejection of the dominant Calvinism of the period, as well as, in many cases, an interest in more “catholic” sources of authority, including a preference for the authority of the Church Fathers. The circle was also marked by an irenic tendency to call for tolerance and cooperation among the various religious factions of the day. Given the often nonstandard theological opinions of the members of the circle, such a call for tolerance is entirely understandable. Among the members of Bacon’s literary circle, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes emerges as a figure who was particularly influential upon Bacon’s theological opinions, particularly in regard to the doctrines pertaining to the relationship of Creator and creation. Bacon was a product of the specific religious environment of Tudor and Stuart society, and he also relied upon a group of individuals with theological perspectives similar to his own for assistance with his Instauration writings.
Part Two: The Theology of the Instauration Writings

Chapter 4:
The Theology of Instauration:
The Instauration Event and its Place
in the Narrative of Sacred History

With the hermeneutical scaffolding of Bacon’s context in place, and in light of the patristic turn which Bacon took prior to the turn of the seventeenth century, it is possible to assemble Bacon’s theology into a discernible and consistent system. Chapter four examines how Bacon saw the event of the Great Instauration functioning within the larger scheme of God’s actions in the world. All of Christian theology can be arranged upon the chronological framework of a narrative of sacred history, stretching from creation to the resolution of all things at the end of the world. Throughout the Instauration writings Bacon consciously arranged his vision of an age of earthly recovery upon this framework. This chapter reconstructs in chronological order the narrative of Sacred History as Bacon understood it, and relates it to Bacon’s belief that there would be an age in which the Edenic mastery over nature would be recovered, and human suffering would be minimized. Not only is Bacon’s narrative internally consistent according to the interpretation of Bacon’s writings presented here, but it is also consistent with, and enhanced by, the understanding of Bacon’s context and his patristic turn presented in previous chapters.

Chapter 5:
The Theology of Instauration:
Analysis and Implications

This chapter examines the implications of the theological narrative established in chapter four for the Instauration and Bacon’s understanding of the actions of Divine Providence. Whereas the previous chapter focused on establishing the narrative itself, this chapter unpacks the theology and examines its significance for a number of topics
related to Bacon’s beliefs: his reading of Scripture, his understanding of human free will and agency, his understanding of nature as a divinely written book, his understanding of the vocation of the natural philosopher as divinely established, the interpretation of the passages in Bacon commonly taken to signify a separation between faith and science, and Bacon’s use of hermetic and magical sources. The list cannot be exhaustive, and this chapter serves primarily to establish the interpretive power of the argument presented in the preceding chapters.

Chapter 6:
Conclusions

The concluding chapter takes a step back from the detailed examination of Bacon and his Instauration writings. This chapter summarizes the argument of the previous chapters and then returns to a consideration of the significance of personal religious convictions for the study of historical figures such as Bacon. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study as a whole for the reading of Bacon’s philosophical works.
CHAPTER 1
THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF
TUDOR AND STUART SOCIETY

Nothing significant can be said about Francis Bacon’s religion or his theological disposition without serious consideration of the historical context of religion in Reformation England. Above all we must recognize that this was an era of religious turbulence which produced a remarkable diversity of thought and doctrine, especially by the time that Bacon came on the intellectual scene. This turbulence and diversity has been strongly reflected in the scholarly literature dealing with the history of religion in early modern England. A.G. Dickens, who produced a very highly regarded survey of the English Reformation in 1964, wrote the following in his revised edition of 1989:

An ever growing Niagara of books and articles on the English Reformation has poured down upon us since 1964, when the first edition of this book was published.... My aim during the last three years has been to sift this huge mass of new information and criticism, an assignment as tough as any I have confronted during more than fifty years of historical writing. Yet even if I were privileged to continue my revising for a further three years, I might still fail to keep pace with the ever-accelerating productivity of my colleagues, both in Britain and in the United States.1

Of course, every book and article in the flood of literature mentioned by Dickens represents a particular position in the accompanying debates. If one of the foremost scholars of the field can regard merely keeping up with the field as such a daunting task, it is hardly surprising that Bacon scholars have been reluctant to try and make sense of this

seemingly separate field. It will not be possible within the scope of this present
treatment to give a proper overview of English religion in Bacon’s day either by outlining
what we know regarding how it was perceived at the time, or by surveying subsequent
scholarly developments. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider some of the features of
the field which are indispensable for understanding the context of Bacon’s writing and
which have not been fully taken into account in past treatments of Bacon.

Puritanism, an Identifiable Category

Among the developments in the scholarship of Reformation England none is more
germane to the study of Bacon than the debate over a common working definition of
“Puritan.” Given the frequency with which Bacon is either characterized as a Puritan or
associated with them in a significant way, it is important to address the question of what
a Puritan actually was, and in so doing to recognize that any scholarly consensus on this
question has been hard won.

The basic problem of puritanism is nothing new to scholars. Writing in 1903, H.
Hensley Henson demonstrated that the problem of a working definition of puritanism
was one which was present even in the sixteenth century. Henson quotes from a tract of
1622 in order to expound the way in which, even in the Reformation era, the threefold
categorization of “Puritan, Protestant, and Papist” was subject to shifting interpretations.
As the nature of the religious environment at the time is our central concern in this
chapter, this piece of primary material merits some extensive consideration. The author
of this tract cleverly uses verse to juxtapose the ideal categories and what, to his way of
thinking, they have come to represent. The poem begins as follows:

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2 A coverage of both does exist and it has been praised by Dickens (ibid.). It is Rosemary O’Day’s
This is an invaluable introduction to the historiography of the English Reformation from the sixteenth
century proper up to the state of the field in 1985.
Time was, a Puritan was counted such
As held some ceremonies were too much
Retained and urged; and would no Bishops grant,
Others to Rule, who government did want.
Time was, a Protestant was only taken
For such as had the Church of Rome forsaken;
Or her known falsehoods in the highest point:
But would not, for each toy, true peace disjoint.
Time was, a Papist was a man who thought
Rome could not err, but all her Canons ought
To be canonical: and, blindly led,
He from the Truth, for fear of Error, fled.
But now these words, with divers others more,
Have other senses than they had before:
Which plainly I do labor to relate,
As they are now accepted in our state. 3

In the perception of the anonymous author of the tract, these definitions, which were
doctrinal as much as political, became infused with new political implications during the
early Stuart era. Henson summarizes this author’s opinion: “The Puritan is opposed to
Spain, a hater of corruption in Church and State, regular and exact in his religious duties,
an independent member of parliament, not to be frightened by courtiers out of his
ancestral liberty.” 4 The Protestant, by contrast is “all that the Puritan is not, a servile
royalist, an opponent of the reformed cause on the Continent, a supporter of every
established abuse in Church and State, a time server, an Erastian, and an unprincipled
place hunter.” 5 A few verses from the actual poem are worth reproducing here, as they
further clarify the anonymous author’s own view:

3 The tract is entitled The Interpreter, wherein three principal Terms of State, much mistaken by the vulgar,
are clearly unfolded. It is presented as quoted in H. Hensley Henson, Studies in English Religion in the
Seventeenth Century (London, John Murray, 1903), 12. The full poem was also consulted, as it is found
in Sir Charles H. Firth, ed., Stuart Tracts: 1603-1693 (Westminster, Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd.,
1903), 233ff. I found Henson’s interpretation and summaries of this tract to be accurate.

4 Henson, 13.

5 Ibid., 13.
A Protestant is he that with the stream
Still swims, and wisely shuns every extreme;
Loves not in point of faith to be precise;
But to believe as Kings do, counts it wise:

A Protestant is an indifferent man,
That with all faiths, or none, hold quarter can;
So moderate and temperate his passion
As he to all times can his conscience fashion.

His character abridged, if you will have,
He’s one that’s no true Subject, but a Slave!”

In spite of the fact that the longer version of the poem does not let the Puritan get off scot-free (for a Puritan does not always make the best decisions for the nation), it should be clear that the author has a distinct bias in favor of that which is contemporarily called a “Puritan,” as the freedom loving and noble Puritan is distinguished from the groveling Protestant. It should not be surprising that the Papist comes off still worse. As Henson put it: “It needs no saying that he is destitute of any redeeming virtue, but it is worth noting that the anti-nationalist aspect of Romanism is paramount. He is a tool of Spain and the slave of the Pope, ceaselessly at work against the interests of his own country.”

Writing at the turn of the century, Henson allows the opinions of the tract writer to stand unqualified. Subsequent scholarship has made us more sensitive to the idea of an author’s bias, however, and some note must be made of that here. The author is clearly marching down the ladder from best to worst, as he sees it, and hence his definitions, or “interpretations,” as he calls them, cannot be allowed any measure of objectivity. The tract is polemical. The names “Protestant” and “Papist” are charged with invective. The threefold categorization is common enough for the audience of his day that the writer does

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6 Ibid., 13.
7 Ibid., 13-14.
not need to explain that differences exist between these groups, but how he chooses to define the categories is based upon his dislike for the latter two groups and is of limited value for analyzing the actual contours of the religious scene at this time. With regard to Puritans we know from this tract that they were distinct, that their own definition had been modified through time, and that in the author’s opinion what had remained the same about them was their nobility and their wholehearted dedication to the truth and the proper observance of religion. We do not have a clear definition of “Puritan.”

The association of this categorization scheme with invective led Charles and Katherine George, in 1961, to question whether there was any value the category of “Puritan” at all. Citing a number of historical examples of the use of the term by Bishops Laud, Chaderton, and Neile, as well as King James and statements made among the Judges of Assize, the Georges contend that the word “Puritan” could mean any number of negative things:

It may mean that the individual or group described is an enemy to be vilified, a political opponent, a decrier of dancing on Sunday, an adversary of the Canons of 1604, a hypocrite in business transactions, a pompous ass, or a subverter of all things English and a general factionalist.8

The Georges conclude: “Before the Revolution the term [Puritan] was almost invariably pejorative, and if one knows the circumstances surrounding its use, one may easily enough understand why the word is used and what is communicated by that use.”9 Some support may be given to this position by the fact that a number of individuals who were considered “Puritans” during their lifetimes objected to the label, including Thomas Cartwright, who was denounced by Archbishop Whitgift precisely because he held the


9 Ibid., 6.
Nonconformist beliefs which are often called “Puritan” by historians.\(^{10}\) The Georges prefer the term “Protestant” and their study is dedicated to establishing a viable doctrinal definition for what a Protestant was prior to the Revolution, and arguing that the only valid distinction in this era is between Protestant and Catholic. The study has merit as a useful generalization, for there were doctrinal similarities among the vast majority of non-Catholics at the time, and recognizing what was commonly believed by them is of great help in gaining a feel for the era. But the Georges, when they reject the term “Puritan,” have been overly selective with their sources. It is not surprising that known opponents of Puritanism in the government, such as conformist Bishops, Judges, and the King, should use the term pejoratively. Neither should we be surprised that someone like Cartwright, who was denounced by the Archbishop of Canterbury and imprisoned for his beliefs, should object to the terms used in his denunciation. But we have already seen the term used positively by the author of the tract mentioned above, who, notably, used not only the term “Papist” but also the chosen term of the Georges, “Protestant” pejoratively. Similarly, when sir Amias Paulet was assigned to guard Mary Queen of Scots he was favorably described as, “a gentleman of an honourable family, a Puritan in religion, and very ambitious.”\(^{11}\) It is easy enough to see that a different selection of sources could be chosen to challenge the essential reason for the rejection of the term “Puritan” by the Georges. It became fairly common for subsequent writers on the subject of Puritans and puritanism to begin their treatises with a rejection of the opinions of the

\(^{10}\) On Cartwright’s own objection to the term see John F. H. New, Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1640 (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press. 1964), 1. On his uncomfortable position before Whitgift, see Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart, Hostage to Fortune: the troubled life of Francis Bacon (New York, Hill and Wang, 1999), 78-79. For a brief account of the beginning of Cartwright’s troubles with Whitgift, and a more comprehensive discussion of Cartwright’s career and incarceration see Patrick Collinson’s, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967), 243-244, and 403-30.

\(^{11}\) Quoted in Jardine and Stewart, 41.
Nevertheless, their book is a healthy reminder that the use of terms must be qualified by the often invective nature of the context. By showing the common threads among Protestant thought at this time they also highlight just how diverse Protestantism could be without clear lines of division.

In 1964, John F.H. New examined the doctrinal differences between Puritans and “those generally satisfied with the Church’s doctrine, organization, and ceremonial,” called, for convenience, “Anglicans.” Unlike the Georges, New recognizes what was obvious to the writer of the tract, that there is a legitimate doctrinal distinction to be made here. There was a movement in England that was known as “Puritan,” whether they embraced the title or not, and they had a distinctive theological perspective and agenda. If it was not at all times and in all places the same, it was still distinctive and clearly recognizable. New allows a doctrinal definition to emerge through the course of his study of the differences between the Puritans and their fellow Protestants. In his conclusion he sums up what he regards as a proper doctrinal distinction:

Anglicanism separated God from natural man by placing Him above human nature, while at the same time joining God to man through the activity of free justification. Divine perfection, in other words, was both contiguous with man and divided from him. God could elevate man to Heaven by offering grace through the sacraments of the Church. Puritanism, on the other hand, assumed that grace and nature were two theaters of one Divine plan, each distinct and yet each involved with the other, incommensurate realms held in dialectical tension, inextricably entwined, wrestling in the universe and in the souls of men.

New’s discussion has not been widely incorporated into the literature dealing with the Puritan problem, possibly because the theological nature of his study leaves him short on

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13 New, 2.

14 New, 103-104.
concrete answers pertaining to the era. Such a definition is by its very nature only useful to distinguish between the theologians of either group. Their followers would be unaware of the significance of such a difference, though they could easily see the results of this theological difference as they were manifested in the respective behavior, dress, and forms of worship. In other words, we may still ask just how an Anglican and a Puritan could tell each other apart in everyday life, while recognizing that this difference is detectable in the formal theology of each group. Bacon and his literary circle, however, were intellectuals engaged in the theological discourse of their day. They were aware of the theology behind the outward differences. Thus New’s theological distinction applies to our study where it would not be useful to those concerned with a broader social perspective. Furthermore, New has based his distinction specifically on how the Puritan and the Anglican differed in their perception of the relationship between God and creation. This strikes at the heart of the matter of Bacon’s own perspective. New’s distinction reminds us that in Bacon’s day God and nature could not be cleanly separated, for the relationship of God to his creation was a central question for all varieties of Christian theology, no matter how the different the answers may have been.

The insights of the Georges and John New provide us with a valuable dialectic which can aid our understanding of religion in Bacon’s era. On the one hand, the Georges demonstrate that the diversity of Protestant religious thought at the time did not necessarily lead to conflict between clearly defined parties. On the other hand, New reminds us that irreconcilable theological concepts were, in fact, competing in the arena of pre-Civil War England, and that the politically charged conflicts over religion, such as those between the Puritans and those who were opposed to them, were not without a genuine basis in doctrine. However, this dialectic can only serve as prolegomena to the actual study of Bacon in the context of his circle. Theologically oriented works such as
these strive to make sense of religious parties and groups by establishing the most valid possible generalizations -- doctrinal minimums which allow us to use categories, as best we can, to describe what we are studying. However, in the study of individuals, such as Bacon and his associates, generalizations are of very limited value. A general statement which begins “Protestants believed,” or “Anglicans believed,” will always be proven wrong in the particular cases of any number of individuals who are associated with these groups. In the literature dealing with Francis Bacon, the generalizations of theology have too often been allowed to overshadow the historical evidence of Bacon’s own writing in context. This has resulted in the categorizations we have already noted in the introduction, according to which Bacon has been labeled a Puritan, an Anglican, a moderate, and so forth. Any of these may have some merit, but they really say very little about what he personally believed, and reveal nothing about how those beliefs influenced his thought and writing. Most of these labels have been hastily applied. Bacon himself advises us to move from the specifics, very slowly, toward the larger context.15 When we apply this aspect of Bacon’s method to the individuals in the Bacon circle, carefully considering them first as individuals, it will be much easier to recognize their place among the varieties of religious thought in early modern England. Although these individuals espoused many different theological and intellectual currents of the Tudor and Stuart world, there are real obstacles to associating Bacon or his circle with puritanism. In order to understand why, we must first have as clear an understanding of puritanism as is possible, given the inherent problems of the category.

Patrick Collinson has largely emerged as the champion of the Puritan question, and his writings, along with his particular perspective, have come to form a basis for consensus in the field. This may be attributed to the particular care with which Collinson

addressed the subject, neither allowing a preconceived taxonomy to govern his work, nor denying the applicability of the term “puritan” to a particular type of religious experience and outlook in Reformation England. In Patrick Collinson’s landmark treatment of the subject, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, “puritanism” is acknowledged to be just as “loosely defined” and “widely dispersed” as the various uses of the appellation at the time would indicate. Nevertheless, in the course of the Elizabethan era Collinson discerns the rise of a “puritan movement” with a discreet and recognizable agenda, that would manifest itself both within the Church of England and in English politics. One of the primary difficulties, in addition to the diachronic change in definitions that the tract writer had noted at the time, is that the agenda of the Puritans never was stated positively, but rather in terms of that which it opposed or rejected. The following excerpt from a recent collection of essays summarizes this point of Collinson’s and bears witness to his prominence in the field:

. . . the [puritan] movement never really existed as an independent, free standing entity. For much of its history it was an oppositional, agitatory movement, frequently in conflict with the secular and ecclesiastical authorities or with those many sections of local society which did not share its ideals. As such, it was only one component of a set of fluid and dynamic polarities, a fact which has prompted Patrick Collinson to warn that ‘there is little point in constructing elaborate statements defining what in ontological terms Puritanism was and was not, when it was not a thing definable in itself, but only one half of a stressful relationship.’ . . . To a very large degree, therefore, both the nature and extent of puritanism were determined by the changing environment within which it existed, so that, as Patrick Collinson has once again pointed out: ‘No laboratory bench taxonomy of religious types and tendencies in pre-revolutionary England will serve if it sticks labels on isolated and inert specimens and fails to

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16 Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967), 29. Collinson used a lower-case “p” in referring to the movement (e.g. “puritanism,” and “puritan movement”) as a way of acknowledging that the term at the time was nebulous, and not formal. I follow his practice in reference to the movement, but not in reference to individuals and groups who clearly bore the name, hence “Puritan” apart from the broad movement, and particularly when distinctive doctrines are involved, is capitalized in my practice.
appreciate that the very terms themselves are evidence of an unstable and
dynamic situation."17

It would be unfair to read this as asserting that there was nothing that puritans actually
stood for rather than against. Indeed, those within the movement stood for a great many
things, but the movement was, at any given time, most clearly united by that which it
opposed. Elaborate church ceremonies and any of the trappings of the Roman Catholic
liturgy were on this list of things objectionable throughout the existence of the puritan
movement, but we cannot allow this to be the only entry, lest we mistakenly think, as
some opponents at the time did, that puritanism is mainly about external forms.
Collinson agrees with New that the doctrinal basis behind Puritan objections must be
recognized as separating puritans and their opponents as well. Through the course of
Collinson’s treatment in The Elizabethan Puritan Movement Calvinism emerges as the
most common doctrinal foundation of the movement.18 This is not surprising, given the
common scholarly recognition that the roots of Elizabethan puritanism lie primarily with
those exiles from the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary who took refuge in Geneva, Basel,
Zurich and other Reformed areas.19 This should not be construed as suggesting that the
puritan movement looked uncritically to Calvin and Geneva, or any other Continental
source, for guidance. There are numerous examples where it seems that Calvin would
have been considerably more permissive and irenic in practice than certain puritans on
specific issues. But the very fact that their opponents appealed to Calvin in an attempt

17 In Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales [ed.], The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700, (New

18 Collinson, 36-37, 52-53.

19 On the Marian Exiles themselves see Christina H. Garrett, The Marian Exiles (Cambridge, Cambridge
University Press, 1938). Specifically in relationship to the rise of the puritan movement in more recent
scholarship, see Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: a Study in the Origins of Radical Politics
(Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1965), 92 ff., and Collinson, pp. 24, and 52-53 for
concrete examples.
to quiet them and end the debate is evidence that the movement held Calvin in very high regard. We may note that was only with reluctance that Cartwright, when confronted by Whitgift, admitted that there were issues on which he and Calvin would disagree. For this reason it would be better to say, in some ways, that the puritan movement was Reformed in theology, associating it with the branch of Protestantism of which Calvin was the most prominent figure, rather than suggest a specific allegiance to Calvin. To distinguish properly between set and subset, we must follow Collinson and avoid conflating English Calvinism and the puritan movement in any way. There were plenty of English Calvinists who differed from their Puritan contemporaries either in emphasis or degree. Another reason Whitgift quoted Calvin against Cartwright is that Whitgift was a Calvinist himself, as were the majority of English theologians at the time. But the puritan movement was essentially concerned with getting Reformed theology right, both in doctrine and practice, and there were many issues of Reformed theology and practice where the Puritans felt that the institutional church was coming up short. This brings us to another important aspect of the Puritan identity, it’s fundamental and vehement anti-Catholicism. Protestant though Elizabeth’s Church of England was, it was still, for the Puritan in her reign (as it would be in the reign of James), far too Catholic. To this extent, the old definition of Trevelyan still has applicability among the more recent scholarship of Puritanism: Puritanism was, “the religion of all those who wished either to purify the

\[\text{20} \] Ibid., 72, 104. We may also note that these differences were usually matters of casuistry, the practical application of the doctrines themselves, rather than differences of doctrine proper, as is the case of Cartwright on page 104.

\[\text{21} \] Collinson is not concerned with such a subtle systematic distinction, but remains content with simply avoiding calling the puritans “Calvinist.” But this distinction is important if we wish to keep Calvinism in perspective. Calvin gave Reformed theology practical expression in Geneva, and a degree of doctrinal definition which it had not achieved under previous theological leaders. In theological circles to this day, “Reformed theology” and “Calvinist theology” are treated as essentially coterminous when referring to the later sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

\[\text{22} \] Cf. Dickens, 382.
usage of the established Church from the taint of popery, or to worship separately by forms so purified.” In other words, Puritans were those English Calvinists who believed that, on any number of issues, the established church had simply not gone far enough in rejecting Roman forms and religion and adopting the fullness of Reformed theology. The puritan movement took a stand on these issues because they felt them to be of critical importance. As we will see, when we consider both the fact that the core of puritan doctrine was Reformed theology, as well as the issues on which the Puritans felt it necessary to take a stand, there will be no reason to associate Bacon’s personal theology with the Puritans.

The consideration of the topic of puritanism is significant to this present study not only because of the common association of Bacon with the puritan movement, but also because the complexity of the Puritan question reflects the complexity of the era itself. That “Puritan” and other such labels exist at all, Collinson tells us, is “evidence of an unstable and dynamic situation.” We are dealing with a period of religious history that defies the systematization of simple categories. The puritan movement, though nebulous and changing, is unique in English protestantism at this time in that it may be identified and bounded even as well as it has been. For this reason puritanism has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly writing, while so many other features of the Tudor and early Stuart religious scene have not.

“Anglicanism”

Scholars in this field are especially cautionary about the common practice of applying anachronistic categories to different people or trends in an attempt to simplify the situation. Labels such as “latitudinarian,” “evangelical,” and “Anglican” are

23 As quoted in Dickens, 368.

24 In Durston and Eales, eds., 3-4.
problematic because they either belong more properly to the ecclesiastical situation of a later time, or they can easily be confused with their meanings in later disputes. While New discusses the dogmatic differences between “Puritans” and “Anglicans” he does so only after explaining in his introduction that he recognizes that the boundaries of puritanism are a matter of debate and the use of “Anglican” at all is a matter of necessary convenience to separate those Protestants who were not Puritans from those who were.25 There was no such thing as an “Anglican” in the modern sense of the term, but there were those Protestants who did not share the objections and concerns voiced by the Puritans regarding the established institutional religion. Conformity can be regarded as an important component of a working definition of “Anglican” for this time period, as long as it is not forgotten that, as New has shown, the conformist was not merely a political player, devoid of dogmatic conviction. J. Sears McGee gives a very concise definition which parallels New’s use of the term Anglican:

Thus the term ‘Anglican’ may be used to describe those who under a series of labels (each with its own validity and nuances), associated themselves with the Elizabethan Settlement in ecclesiastical policy as interpreted and enforced by Archbishops Whitgift, Bancroft, Laud, and Sheldon and who defended the special relationship between the monarchy and the episcopacy for which Charles I fought and died.26

“Anglicanism” then, has often been used, with qualification, as a convenient label for the vast theological expanse of those who were neither Puritan nor Papist, nor associated with the small, self-defined Anabaptist sects of the time. The complexity of the era has prompted social and cultural historians of Religion to arrange the various theological and ecclesiological positions of the time along a spectrum or continuum, with Roman

25 New, 1-3. See also Collinson’s reluctant use of the term, Collinson, 26ff.

Catholicism at one end, Puritanism at the other, and the “Anglicans” occupying the middle ground and being, to varying degrees, closer to one end or the other as individuals.  

This pattern of thinking meshes well with the tendency even in the Tudor and Stuart eras to refer to conformity to the Elizabethan Settlement as a via media, avoiding the dangers of either extreme.  

This is not an idea without merit, for there must be a sense in which, as Christopher Marsh points out, the common people of England at the time felt trapped between two such extremes.  

However, it can be a misleading idea, especially when considering individuals as we are doing in this study. The actual diversity of theology and belief at this time cannot be so easily forced onto a line, but would be more appropriately plotted in a plane at least, if it is possible to graph such things at all. The examples of Edward Sackville and Lancelot Andrewes serve to illustrate this point.

**Problems with the Continuum**

In an essay on Edward Sackville, the fourth Earl of Dorset, David L. Smith has explored some of the difficulties that arise when we attempt to analyze an individual, especially one of the ruling and intellectual elite, according to the categories of the continuum. 

While Bacon and Sackville are different individuals with different religious dispositions, Smith makes a number of important points which will apply equally well to

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28 The anonymous tract writer of 1622 describes the “Protestant” in exactly these terms, “A Protestant is he that with the stream Still swims, and wisely shuns every extreme; Loves not in point of faith to be precise; But to believe as Kings do, counts it wise:” Henson, 13.


our examination of Francis Bacon. The difficulty with the Earl of Dorset is that during his lifetime he “was called everything from a puritan to a papist -- and other things besides.” Dorset himself never kept a diary or made a convenient public announcement in which he said, definitively, what his own religious convictions were. While some scholars have argued that looking to the will of an individual will help determine his true allegiance in religion, Dorset’s will is thoroughly ambiguous. His preamble was a moderately Calvinist statement of faith, his executors were Roman Catholic, and his bequests were made “to wife, children, and staff” and were “apparently not determined by religious considerations.” In the Star Chamber Dorset made a number of statements in behalf of religious toleration, but these, according to Smith, do not reflect a “personal credo,” but a “wider concern to preserve order” in the realm. Lack of clear statements of personal belief should not be construed as suggesting that Dorset did not have deep religious convictions, but it does “mean that we have to look in other, more private, places.” Among other places in which Smith looks he considers the domestic chaplains which were retained by Dorset since, “a lay person would regularly experience his/her chaplain’s services and sermons.” Smith finds it important, however, to distinguish between chaplains who may have been retained because they had close personal contacts with Dorset’s family and those which the Earl may have selected more freely. Smith

31 Edward Sackville (1590-1652) was slightly later than Bacon. Being thirty years younger he was close in age however to Bacon’s younger friends and members of his literary circle, such as William Rawley (1588-1667) and George Herbert (1593-1633).

32 Smith, 115.

33 Ibid., 117.

34 Ibid., 118.

35 Ibid., 121.

36 Ibid., 122.
determines that Dorset possessed what Peter Lake has called a “conformist cast of mind” in which he could avoid extremes and tolerate “a plurality of belief within a broad national church.”37 With no further evidence Smith is unable to say anything more definitive concerning Dorset’s personal beliefs, noting in regard to his general position of conformity that, “people of quite contrasting opinions could claim to be ‘conformists’ in early Stuart England.”38 We are fortunate that there is more evidence for Bacon’s personal beliefs. We will also have to look in “other places” than where previous scholars have looked, but these will not necessarily be more private: they will include the very public corpus of writings which Bacon intended for the Instauratio Magna.

In addition to the type of issues which make it difficult to place a figure like Sackville neatly on the continuum, there are the issues raised by examining someone like Bacon’s friend and mentor, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. Nicholas Lossky has shown that although Andrewes considered himself anything but a Papist, his theology was not typically Protestant either.39 Andrewes was informed almost entirely by his own reading of the Church Fathers, and his theology was shot through with ideas which, while common enough in Eastern Orthodoxy, are neither Protestant nor Catholic. Andrewes could have a great deal of sympathy for the Puritan focus on personal faith, while insisting upon the necessity of Catholic liturgical forms and the Apostolic Succession. However, he was not governed by Western categories or systematic theology, and so he could also have a radical doctrine of free will which would have been condemned by Catholic and Puritan alike. Andrewes will be considered in greater depth later, as he was a key figure in Bacon’s literary circle. For now, it is important to note that neither

37 Ibid., 127-28.
38 Ibid., 128.
Andrewes himself nor his authoritative sources can be understood in simple taxonomical terms like “Catholic” or “Protestant.” Allowing puritanism and Catholicism to stand as the ends of the spectrum is reasonable when analyzing how the Elizabethan Settlement was received in society, because this does reflect the idea of compromise that was perceived in the Settlement at the time. However, it is misleading if it is meant to represent the actual theological climate of the time. There was considerably more on the theological table of early modern England than Calvin’s *Institutes* and the *Summae* of Aquinas, and the questions were much more complex than asking how these two systems should be balanced. Theologians, and intellectuals generally, had before them a smorgasbord of ideas and theological influences that would mix and blend as they were taken up or ignored, assimilated or rejected.

The difficulty with the continuum applies especially to the so-called *via media.* It is true that the majority who were neither Catholic nor Puritan favored, like the Earl of Dorset, a political compromise which would permit tremendous theological breadth. Peter Lake’s ‘conformist mind’ is a strong historical trend at this time, especially in the Bacon circle. But lack of adherence to clear partisan agendas should never be confused with being a theological “moderate” or not being concerned with the pressing issues which divide Christianity. While Puritan and Papist each knew his respective truth, others, less clearly partisan but equally devoted, sought it out. Indeed, they worked it out with rigorous method and genuine reverence for the new edifice that they were constructing: a theology composed of truth, not polemic. Above all, this effort was not considered by these thinkers in terms of “a compromise” as it has come to be remembered in modern texts. They had firm convictions, though not homogenous ones, and some latitude was necessary for good order in the realm. This latitude did not have to include those who were clearly in error, such as the Roman Catholics, and for many, such as Whitgift, there
was no room for the “troublemakers,” the divisive Puritans. While there are enough similarities in the theology of those who were neither Puritan nor Papist for New to discuss legitimately a general “anglican” theology as it was emerging, Collinson rightly characterizes the era as “unstable and dynamic,” marked by political turmoil and ideological diversity.

Sources of the Turmoil and Diversity

The religious situation in England was truly unique for Europe. Much of the turmoil and diversity of England at the time can be understood as what must happen when a Catholic King and “Defender of the Faith” finds it suddenly necessary to break with the Church of Rome for reasons other than religion. In comparison with the Reformation on the Continent, the English Reformation was carried out backward: the break with Rome led, and the theology necessary to justify that break and establish a new ecclesial order followed.

It is important to note that what set the English Reformation apart was not that it was an act of state rather than Church. At some point, the Reformation was always an act of state, as the decree of the ruler was necessary to safeguard the existence of non-Roman Christianity everywhere. The famed cuius regio ejus religio of the Peace of Augsburg was in many respects not an innovative idea, but an acknowledgment of the way things had been going since Elector Frederick of Saxony gave Luther his protection. In the Scandinavian countries, as in England, the Reformation occurred through specific decrees of Kings. Throughout Scandinavia the Reformation occurred from above, and for

40 There is an unfortunate debate within the historiography of the English Reformation over whether the Reformation was primarily an act of state or a religious development. For a summary of the basic ideas involved see J.F. Davis, “Lollardy and the Reformation in England” in The Impact of the English Reformation: 1500-1640. ed. Peter Marshall, (London, Arnold Press, 1997), 37-52. Without opening the argument more than necessary, the contention in this essay is that all reformations were both acts of state and religious if they succeeded at all.
reasons which were far from purely religious.\textsuperscript{41} But in these countries the doctrinal choice was clear: Roman doctrine was being rejected in favor of the doctrine of Lutheranism, as clearly stated in the Augsburg Confession and the mass of writings streaming northward from Wittenberg. Subscription of the Augsburg Confession meant adoption of the Lutheran package \textit{in toto}. In the Palatinate and those parts of Switzerland that adopted the Reformed faith the theological formulations were also clear, though a single normative statement, or set of statements such as the Lutheran Confessions, were often lacking early-on. The distinction between Lutheran and Reformed was established along specific doctrinal lines by the reformers themselves, and although the idea of confessional subscription did not function so rigidly in the Reformed lands, conformity to Reformed doctrine was expected. Geneva adhered to the doctrine of Calvin, after some early disputes, and those who did not adhere were welcome to leave (with some exceptions, of which Servetus is the most notable). There was no clear doctrinal agenda, however, when Henry VIII broke with Rome.

In some measure, the King himself had blocked the possibility of confessional unity in England. Henry’s actions up until 1536 were designed to transfer decision making power from the Roman Catholic authorities to himself. The Ten Articles which were forwarded in 1536 as a doctrinal statement were ambiguous by design, and left room for both Catholic and Lutheran interpretations, though between a Lutheran and a Catholic, the Catholic probably would have been the more comfortable with them, given their interpretation of Sacraments and Tradition. Rather than a positive doctrinal statement, A. G. Dickens writes that “they might rather be used to exemplify our English talent for

\textsuperscript{41} This basic narrative is neither difficult nor disputed. For a brief account which balances political motives with the religious interests of the Lutheran movement see Harold J. Grimm, \textit{The Reformation Era 1500-1650}, (New York, MacMillan, 1954), 235 ff.
concocting ambiguous and flexible documents.”

In the Bishops’ Book of the next year, the doctrinal position is still more Catholic, but subscription was never enforced, and Henry “used it instead to test the theological appetite of the nation.” While the break with Rome encouraged the development of nascent Protestant movements in England, and these movements were fueled by the appearance of Protestantism which came with the dissolution of monasteries and the seizure of Church property, Catholic doctrine was not particularly discouraged, beyond the question of allegiance to Rome. The replacement of Catholic Bishops with Lutheran Superintendents and the enforced subscription of the Augsburg Confession which made it possible for Scandinavian kings to obtain rapid uniformity had no parallel in England. The wholesale adoption of Wittenberg’s pattern of doctrine and liturgy which occurred under the Kings of Sweden and Denmark was not possible for Henry, not the least because he had distinguished himself early-on as an enemy of Luther, but there were other reasons. Alec Ryrie has recently summed-up Henry’s problem with a Lutheran solution which would have brought swift uniformity:

As [Basil] Hall has argued, the king’s suspicion of Lutheranism in general, his loathing of Luther in particular, and his heartfelt attachment to his own authority guaranteed that the English Church would remain beyond Wittenberg’s sphere of influence. Henry’s reformation was, as Richard Rex has recently emphasized, ‘its own thing, folly to Catholics and a stumbling block to protestants.’

42 A.G. Dickens, 200.

43 Ibid., 200.

44 Alec Ryrie, “The Strange Death of Lutheran England” The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, v. 53, n.1 (January 2002), 66-67. Ryrie is summarizing the otherwise elaborately stated opinion of Basil Hall, ‘The Early Rise and Gradual Decline of Lutheranism in England 1520-1660’ Studies in Church History: Subsidia ii, 1979. 104, 110. Ryrie also points out, in his article, that any tendency toward Lutheranism as a settlement among the English protestants themselves was thwarted both by reaction against the king driving Protestant divines toward a more radical position, and by the complicating factor of native Lollardy (85-92). Without Lutheranism being imposed from above, there was already too much diversity among the anti-Roman Catholics themselves for ‘Lutheran moderation’ to be a real option.
Throughout Henry’s reign, the Church of England remained a church without a doctrinal identity. The long-term effect was to allow a tremendous doctrinal diversity to develop.

**The Thirty-Nine Articles**

It is fairly common in theological circles to hear the Thirty-Nine Articles forwarded as an agreement which provided genuine stability and unity to the Church of England. While this is true, as far as it goes, this stability and unity should not be confused with any great degree of doctrinal uniformity. Rather than uniformity in doctrine the Thirty-Nine Articles should be recognized as allowing and establishing tremendous doctrinal latitude within the official Church during this era. The accession of Elizabeth and the actions of Queen and parliament up through the Act of Uniformity of 1571 did establish the Church of England as genuinely Protestant, and the official adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles at this time (in 1562 by Convocation and by Parliament in 1571) was the part of that stabilizing chain of events which addressed doctrine directly. However, it has been often noted that the most remarkable feature of the Thirty-Nine Articles is their ambiguity, which stems partly from the mixture of Lutheran and Calvinist sources in their composition. While genuinely Calvinist in the wording of articles on Predestination and the Lord’s Supper, there is no requirement that

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46 Philip Schaff summarizes very well what Cranmer had done in developing his original forty-two articles from which the Thirty-Nine Articles are taken: “The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, as revised under Elizabeth (1563 and 1571), are borrowed in part, verbatim, from the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and the Württemberg Confession of 1552, but are moderately Calvinistic in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, and on predestination.” (Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 45-46, fn. 1) The Articles to which Schaff refers, 17 and 28 for predestination and the Lord’s Supper respectively, are the only loci where Calvinism is clearly articulated at all. See David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, eds., Religion and Society in Early Modern England: a Sourcebook (London and New York, Routledge, 1996), 64 & 67.
these articles be interpreted according to Calvinist doctrine. Attempts to refine the meaning of the Thirty-Nine Articles by incorporating the Lambeth Articles and rendering the interpretation to be unequivocally Calvinist were rejected both by Queen Elizabeth and, later, King James. With careful reading, the Thirty-Nine Articles themselves could be, and were, interpreted from almost every Protestant Angle. The Thirty-Nine Articles are themselves ambiguous enough to have been embraced by both a thoroughgoing Calvinist, Archbishop Whitgift, and a thoroughgoing anti-Calvinist, Archbishop Laud.47

Another reality of the Elizabethan Settlement was that it neither would be, nor could be, thoroughly enforced. Neither Elizabeth, nor Lord Chancellor Burghley were interested in tactics that would be seen by her subjects as religious persecution. The only group which could claim ill-treatment under Elizabeth by the end of her reign would be the Roman Catholics, and action was only taken against them when it was clear that Roman Catholics were actively working to subvert the realm.48 The bottom line of the Religious Settlement, including the Thirty-Nine Articles, was not doctrinal uniformity, but national unity and the concern of Edward Sackville, an orderly and peaceful realm.49 In application, attempts at forcing uniformity could easily backfire on the local level, leading Bishops to turn a blind eye to religious diversity rather than cause a reaction.


48 Dickens, 382.

49 Robert Manning writes at the conclusion of his local history of the effect of the Settlement in Essex, “Whether one looks at it from the national level or from the local level, compromises and opportunism pervaded every aspect of the Elizabethan religious settlement. The guiding principle of the Elizabethan religious settlement was the determination to preserve the unity of England against the threat of foreign invasion and against the corrosive effect of transcendental ideologies.” {Robert Manning, Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: A study of the enforcement of the Religious Settlement, 1558-1603, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1969), 272.}
against their policies.\footnote{See the discussion in Robert B. Manning. See also Chapter Six of Claire Cross, \textit{Church and People, 1450-1660: The Triumph of the Laity in the English Church}, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1976), 124 ff. Cross argues, “The Queen never abandoned her goal of a totally comprehensive Church, but her churchmen’s efforts to carry out her wishes led quickly to the appearance of dissent and even separation among conservatives and radicals alike.” p. 124. This may be a bit overstated, as Elizabeth even in Cross’ account did not push the issue when opposition appeared to be fracturing the Church, but her discussion does demonstrate that doctrinal uniformity was, as a rule, sacrificed for unity.} King James continued Elizableth’s policy of promoting a broad and tolerant Protestantism.\footnote{Cross, 153.} For King James, just as for Queen Elizabeth, theological squabbles were the lesser threat, and alienating large numbers of his subjects the greater. It would only be in the reign of Charles I, and after the Archeipiscopacy of Laud, that the consequences of forcing controversy underground would be manifest.

The Thirty-Nine Articles lacked the normative control of the Augsburg Confession among the Continental Lutherans, where ministers were often removed for any disagreement with the document, and hence the Articles failed to achieve that level of confessional unity. Similarly, they lacked the common popular assent and enforceable authority of the \textit{Institutes} and the \textit{Heidelberg Catechism} in the Reformed lands. England’s religious diversity was beyond the point where it could still be reined-in with a demand for confessional subscription. However, the ambiguity of the Thirty-Nine Articles served the agenda of national unity well, while recognizing that the Church of England was too diverse for rigid doctrinal unity. The doctrinal ambiguity of the Religious Settlement also served the members of Francis Bacon’s literary circle, who, as members of the intellectual elite engaged and considered the full range of theological and intellectual influences before them, and often embraced ideas which were far from the norm.

\textbf{Elements of the English Religious Scene}

So what was actually available for consideration by the theologians and intellectuals of Bacon’s era? Nicholas Tyacke emphasized the dominance of Calvinism
throughout English society at this time, and this is a crucial first ingredient. The intellectual and theological world of Francis Bacon was a Calvinist world in which the non-Calvinists were a significant minority. We may accept this statement with the same caveat that was applied to Puritanism earlier, namely that “Calvinist” here is used as a cover term for Reformed theology. However, Calvinism must not be allowed to overshadow the host of other trends and influences in Tudor and early Stuart religion. Tyacke also makes it perfectly clear that non-Calvinists did exist. For them, Tyacke has coined the term “Anti-Calvinist,” reflecting the fact that they were in conscious tension with the dominant trend of English theology, and that these opponents to Calvinism predated any movement in England which could legitimately be called “Arminian” as the Anti-Calvinists have often been characterized. Ultimately there was an “overthrow of Calvinism” in 1625, in which Arminianism itself could be said to have taken the field, but Tyacke’s concern is important: we must not ignore the wide variety of thought present among the non-Calvinist minority in England prior to 1625. The Anti-Calvinist movement in England was gaining momentum long before the writings of Arminius were available. There were other alternatives, however. All of the main trends in Continental


53 On the issue of Tyacke’s use of “Calvinist” and “Calvinism” see Sean F. Hughes, “The Problem of ‘Calvinism’: English theologies of predestination c. 1580-1630.” in Belief and Practice in Reformation England: a Tribute to Patrick Collinson by his Students, eds. Susan Wabuda and Carol Litzenberger, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998), 229 ff. Peter Lake’s assessment that too much emphasis has been placed upon predestination (p. 230) is certainly correct. However, Tyacke’s argument cannot be discarded when it bears the weight of the evidence. He has demonstrated that his assessment of the dominance of Calvinist doctrine is in step with the assessment at the time, and with what was being taught at the seminaries, and that it was confronted with an anti-Calvinist movement that triumphed with Charles I and especially Laud is hardly disputable. Recognizing with Hughes that there were many varieties of “Calvinism,” or Reformed theology at work clarifies, but does not change, the basic pattern of events, or the fact that however they differed from one another, the majority of clergy regarded themselves as sympathetic with Calvin in the later Tudor era.

54 Tyacke. On the “overthrow of Calvinism” see p. 8. On the ideological sources for this overthrow see p. 4, and chapters 1-4.
Protestantism can be found in the English literature from this period. Lutheranism, for all of its well-documented death as an option for unifying the Church of England, remained influential as a package of theological ideas throughout our time period.\footnote{Little work has been done on this issue, other than to acknowledge the presence of Lutheran influences. Basil Hall’s article make it clear that the decline of Lutheranism was gradual and never complete. {Basil Hall, ‘The Early Rise and Gradual Decline of Lutheranism in England 1520-1660” in: Studies in Church History: Subsidia ii, 1979.} See also the only major work on the subject, Henry Eyster Jacobs’, The Lutheran Movement in England (Philadelphia: G.W. Frederick, 1890), esp. pp. 343 ff. Jacobs makes it clear that the presence of Lutheran influence is evident, and preferable to asking after whether this or that individual was a “Lutheran.” The Thirty-Nine Articles left plenty of room for all but the most dogmatic Lutherans to fit nicely into non-Calvinist corners of the Church of England.}

Anabaptism is also commonly recognized as a component of the diverse English religious scene in this era. Exponents of the radical reformation of the Continent, the Anabaptists, began emigrating to England soon after Henry broke with Rome. Some of the first immigrants were met with the same reaction they were receiving on the Continent and were promptly burned in St. Paul’s churchyard. At no time were the Anabaptists accepted by the official Church of England, and they were the constant target of authorities both in the Church and State who resented their separatism as much as their radical doctrines.\footnote{Dickens, 262-68. The Anabaptists were the one group other than Roman Catholics clearly excluded by the Thirty-Nine Articles. This was Cranmer’s design when he wrote the forty-two articles. cf. p. 281.} Nevertheless, the English environment proved to be considerably more hospitable to Anabaptists than most areas of the Continent, if for no other reason than that the irenic policy of the Elizabethan Settlement precluded them from being rooted-out wholesale as they were in genuinely Lutheran, Calvinist, or Catholic lands. England served as something of an incubator for Anabaptism. The movement continued underground, and various ideas of anabaptist association floated through the English intellectual scene rather freely before England’s own native Anabaptists would emerge to complicate the strife of the English Civil War.\footnote{Ibid., 23. Note the influence that Dickens describes of Anabaptism upon the development of religious toleration, for example, on p. 379. See also Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution (London & New York: Penguin Books, 1991.)} For the sake of understanding the
doctrinal climate of early modern England it is as important to recognize the Anabaptists for providing the various parties of the Church of England with the unifying influence of having a common enemy as it is to consider their actual contributions to English thought.

Of course, apart from Calvinism, the most active and direct Continental influence was that of the Roman Catholic Church. Reclaiming the island lost to the Papacy was a special project of the Jesuit Order during this period, and its effect is not only to be measured in the number of actual converts to the Roman Church, such as Bacon’s close friend, Sir Tobie Matthew. The continued presence of Roman Catholic voices contributing to, and challenging, the intellectual discourse of Reformation England led the significant figures such as Lancelot Andrewes and Bishop Laud to be very concerned with questions of the continuity of the Church, the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, and generally, the danger of throwing out the baby of Christian Tradition along with the bath water of Roman abuses. Novel and consistent answers had to be found for the challenges of the Jesuits such as “Where was the true Church before Luther?” and, “How can those who do not repent of schism be saved?” Thus the continued Catholic presence served both as a motor for intellectual activity, and an influence upon the development of “high-church” thinking within the Church of England.

English religion, and especially English Protestantism, however, cannot be understood simply in terms of Continental developments. English theology was always marked by a uniquely English synthesis. Lollardy, in particular, had become thoroughly

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58 The first question is a common challenge of the Jesuits, particularly in Lutheran lands on the Continent. Though it was apparently also found in England, as the tract Luther's predecessours, or, An answere to the question of the Papists : where was your church before Luther? attests. (London, Felix Kingston, 1624.)

mixed-in with English Protestantism by 1540. Although after Wyclif himself it was less of a doctrinal position and more of what Alec Ryrie has aptly termed an “amorphous body of native heresies” Lollardy profoundly influenced the development and direction of English Protestant thought, and added to the complexity of the theological landscape of Reformation England. By the time of Bacon Lollard doctrines could no longer be cleanly separated from broader Protestant discourse, and hence Lollardy per se is of very limited use in analyzing the theology of the Bacon circle. However, the incorporation of Lollardy into the theology of the English Reformation is an important reminder that the contours of English theology were never completely contiguous with Continental theology. From Pelagianism through Lollardy the Island had earned a reputation for unique theological opinions long before the Reformation era. In the Reformation Wyclif and his movement became icons of English theological distinctiveness, and contributed to the justification of England continuing to go its own direction theologically. If the lack of theological definition in Henry’s break with Rome permitted the rise of theological diversity in England, the cultural icons of Wyclif and Lollardy encouraged a type of experimental thinking which only added to that diversity. England did not have to conform to prepackaged ideas in the Reformation any more than it had in the past.

59 There is little reason to argue with three basic points made by A.G. Dickens that: 1) Lollardy survived as a movement until the Reformation, 2) Lollardy prepared the way for Reformation doctrine in England, and 3) Lollardy was quickly supplanted as a movement once the Reformation was underway by “Protestantism” generally. However, Lollard doctrines were not the same as those of Continental Protestantism, and were, as Ryrie argues, as much of an obstacle to Lutheranism as an aid to its reception in England. Ryrie, 79-85.


Broader Trends

All of the above elements of the diversity of the religious environment of Tudor and Stuart England are commonly identified in textbooks and scholarly writing dealing with the era. They are nothing less than specific parties or movements in religious history and are thus easily identifiable. It is not nearly as common for scholars to discuss broad trends that had a significant impact upon the religious thought of the period, such as the recently-emerged fascination with the Hebrew language and Old Testament studies, or the influence of the Greek Church Fathers which were rediscovered by the Humanists, most of which only came into publication during Bacon’s lifetime. This is unfortunate, for many of the differences separating late medieval from early modern thought are based on developments such as these. It is reasonable to believe that many of the past debates in the field of early modern English religion could have been clarified or even resolved if the issues had been expanded beyond taxonomy (what is a Puritan, who was a Calvinist, etc.) to include contextualizing the theological issues of the day within these broad trends. The ability to read Hebrew, for example, was not confined to any religious movement or denominational group within early modern Europe, but it had a profound effect upon early modern theology across the board, and certainly affected the course and outcome of the theological disagreements of the time. Lutheran and Calvinist theology were both forged in part from the study of the Old Testament in Hebrew and the details of the doctrinal statements of Luther and Calvin cannot be fully understood without recognizing this. We will consider four such general trends, starting with two which have received very little scholarly attention: the growth and development of the field of patristics at this time, and the rise of Hebrew and Oriental language studies. These trends comprise an important, though often neglected, foundation for two others which have received considerable attention, but have not been well incorporated into the field: the
early modern interest in Hermeticism and alchemy, and the role of the belief in Providence and the coming of a special providential age. More such trends could be identified and probably should, in a more comprehensive discussion of early Modern religion and theology, but these have specific application to the question at hand. While these four trends shed light on the religious environment of the era generally, they are of particular importance to the study of Francis Bacon and his literary circle, who were, to one degree or another, intimately involved with these trends as they appeared in Tudor and Stuart England.

The Recovery of Patristics

Along with other aspects of the Renaissance movement the fourteenth century saw what Charles Stinger has called a “renaissance of patristic studies.” Thanks to the efforts of the humanists, the writings of the Christian theologians of the first seven centuries, both Latin and Greek, were gradually recovered and made public. Over time,

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62 I have labeled this last concept carefully. While there were many adherents to Millenarianism and the imminent fulfillment of the Johannine Apocalypse, these must be fit into a broader context of belief in the immanent, or recent, coming of a special age of God’s dispensation toward man, which is not necessarily strictly Millennial or Johannine in structure, though it could often be termed apocalyptic. This is a point necessary to make because within the field of Millennial studies a strict definition is often operative which holds, in the words of Howard Hotson, “Millenarianism, strictly defined, is the expectation that the vision described in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation of a thousand-year period in which Satan is bound and the saints reign is a prophecy which will be fulfilled literally, on earth, and in the future.” (Howard Hotson, “The Historiographical Origins of Calvinist Millenarianism” in: Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe, ed. Bruce Gordon, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1996), v.2. p. 160} As we will see in our discussion on the belief in a providential age, there are some significant problems with this definition if it is applied to the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.


64 Occasionally there is some confusion in early modern historical circles regarding the meaning of “Church Fathers.” The time frame of the first seven centuries, stretching into the eighth or ninth in the East, constitutes the “Patristic Era” and is essential to defining who is or is not a “Church Father.” The coincidence with the ecumenical councils of the unified church is not merely coincidental. (cf. Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1984), v.1 pp. 1, 10-12) This was the conventional understanding operating in classical theology already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though it was quite common for Protestants to end the Patristic era a bit earlier, in deference especially to the first four Ecumenical Councils which were considered authoritative by them, and in exclusion of the seventh, which, whatever the status of the fifth and sixth, was considered spurious.
as more and more ancient authorities came into circulation, this dealt a serious blow to the method of medieval scholastic theology. The internally consistent logical formulae of scholasticism were at odds with the theological method, and often the doctrines, of the ancient authorities. Of course, this did not pose a difficulty for the humanists themselves who saw little worth in scholastic method anyway. Erasmus, who stands at the apex of humanist theology, valued the Greek and Latin Fathers precisely because they demonstrated that medieval scholasticism was a novelty. To return to the true vetus theologia, the original theology of Christianity, scholasticism had to be abandoned, according to Erasmus. By the time of the Reformation the interest in the expanding corpus of the Fathers had proceeded so far that the debates of the Reformation are saturated with continual citations of the Greek and Latin Fathers. Among Catholics and mainline Protestants alike, it is difficult to find a scholarly theological work from the

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65 Regarding the preceding decline of patristic theology in the middle ages, especially of the Greek Fathers, see Stinger, 84-93. Stinger also explains concisely how the clash between scholastic theology and the patristic sources came about: “The Fathers, Augustine especially, remained for the late Middle Ages the authoritative sources of Christian doctrine. But the purpose and method of theological inquiry in scholastic thought departed sharply from patristic assumptions, and the scholastics ceased to immerse themselves in patristic writings. Systematic treatment of doctrine through Aristotelian logic and philosophy supplanted the patristic emphasis on Scriptural exegesis.” (p. 93) Although the fathers, especially Augustinian, remained authorities, in the course of the twelfth century they were simply no longer consulted in the practice of theology. It was within the ranks of the scholastics themselves, particularly the Augustinians, that the practice of patristic citation was renewed as a means of supporting scholastic doctrine. (pp. 95 & 97) Petrarch was the first to disregard the assumptions of medieval scholastic theology entirely and look directly at the Early Fathers themselves. In doing so the inherent inconsistencies between patristic and scholastic theology clearly emerged. (pp. 97 ff.)

66 On Erasmus’ concept of the importance of the vetus theologia see the discussion of Istvan Bejczy in, Erasmus and the Middle Ages: The historical Consciousness of a Christian Humanist, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 2001), esp. pp. 24-32, 104-5, 108-17, and 192-4. While many treatments of Erasmus have considered his quest to restore the vetus theologia, Bejczy is really the first to reconcile two seemingly conflicting tendencies in Erasmus, namely his commitment to restoring the true theology of antiquity and his conviction that a true golden age, theological or otherwise, never existed. Essentially, Bejczy’s conclusion is that Erasmus was not interested in repristinating a pure past, but in using the past to get the future right. The Patristic era was not ideal, but it is the point of departure to which theology must return if the errors of the middle ages are to be rectified. (p. 192)
second half of the Sixteenth or the Seventeenth century which does not place tremendous weight upon the opinions of the early Church Fathers.\textsuperscript{67}

The impact of the recovery of the Fathers upon Europe’s intellectual terrain extended far beyond the study of theology proper. The reemergence of the Fathers, and the Greek Fathers in particular, provided Western Europeans with a new field of Christian perspectives that yielded significant contributions to topics as diverse as civics and cosmology. The humanist movement found in the Fathers Christian authorities who themselves lived in classical antiquity, and were thus uniquely situated to justify and guide the humanists’ use of pagan classical sources, especially in such non-religious areas as civics and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{68} The “renaissance of patristic studies” also provided Galileo with a wealth of support for his claim that the physical structure of the Cosmos was not to be determined by the passages of Scripture which had been used against him by Jesuits supporting a Geocentric system.\textsuperscript{69} In addition, the Greek Fathers reintroduced a profoundly Platonic form of Christian theology to the West which would have a significant influence on both the cosmology of humanists such as Pico, and, more generally, on discussions of the place of man in the universe.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{67}I do not count the Anabaptist sects, or other programs of the “Radical Reformation,” among “mainline Protestants.” I am concerned here with Protestant groups such as the varieties of the Reformed, and the Lutherans, whose doctrinal cohesion enabled them to carry-on academic and theological dialogue with one another and with the Church of Rome.

\textsuperscript{68}A point made by Deno Geanakoplos in regard to Basil the Great, particularly, in Constantinople and the West: Essays on the Late Byzantine (Paleologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches, (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 285-87.

\textsuperscript{69}See Galileo’s “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina.” Galileo makes extensive use of Augustine and Jerome as the unassailable authorities of the West, but his argument also benefits from his access to Tertullian and (pseudo) Dionysius. (Maurice A. Finocchiaro [trans. and ed.], The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History, (Berkely and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1989), 87-118.)

\textsuperscript{70}On the first topic, little has been done, though Charles Trinkaus has raised the issue and it warrants more attention. See Charles Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1970) v. 2 pp. 507ff. Trinkaus has discussed the latter topic in depth. See v. 1 pp. 179-199, on the idea of the dignity of Man in the Patristic and Medieval traditions and Petrarch, and v. 2 pp. 459 ff. Doctrines such as the Greek concept of Imago Dei and had a profound effect upon the humanist understanding of man’s place in the universe.
However, the recovery of the Greek Fathers also constituted a crisis in Roman Catholic theology which was formed along the rift between scholastic and humanist. After a period of some seven hundred years without significant influence from the Christian East, a door was opened to a separate Christian culture which had to be interpreted and incorporated into the western Christian identity if the important doctrines of the continuity of the Church and the consistency of its message were to be maintained. The humanists contended, to varying degrees, that scholasticism had erred and humanist method could rectify the situation. By looking critically at both Eastern and Western Fathers, a consensus of the ancient authorities could be identified which constituted the true basis of Christianity in the age of the united Church. The relative merits of scholastic theology could be measured against this patristic consensus.

Non-humanists were faced with a more daunting task of forming a synthesis between scholastic and patristic theology. During the medieval period the vast majority of patristic texts had been either completely absent from Western libraries, or present only in the fragmentary form of books of excerpted quotations, or florilegia. The non-humanist was faced not only with the task of integrating recovered texts, but dealing with the recovery of the original context of those fragments which had been preserved. While not impossible, an acceptable synthesis took time, as is demonstrated by the eighteen years that the Council of Trent

71 It is important to remember that the humanists were not united on the issue of what was wrong with scholastic theology, nor on the issue of the degree to which scholasticism had erred. It was not what the consensus of the fathers was that united humanists but its importance. Traversari, the pivotal figure in the revival of Greek patristic studies in the West, saw the Greek Fathers as restoring a proper focus on piety and spirituality that was lacking in the late medieval Church. He did not believe that the authority of the Fathers constituted a reason to reject the basic doctrinal formulations of scholasticism. Both Valla and Erasmus, as counter examples, believed a more thorough reconstruction of theology was necessary. Erasmus, in particular, was able to lay the entire burden of the moral and theological decline in the West at the feet of scholasticism, thus he is something of a high water mark of criticism of scholasticism by Catholic humanists. (On Traversari and Valla see Stinger, 199-202. On Erasmus, see Istvan Bejczy, 62-103.)
spent mostly in wrestling with issues of just such a synthesis. Before such theological compromises could occur, however, a significant number of theologians had concluded that the gulf between late medieval theology and the purer theology of the Early Church was simply too great, and the unity of Western Christendom was lost.

Protestantism, from its inception, and no less in Bacon’s day, shared with Erasmus the concern for recovering the *vetus theologia*, or theology of the ancient Church. If the theology of the early centuries of Christianity could be identified, then all of the errors of medieval scholasticism, and, for the Protestants, of the Papacy generally, would be clearly seen for the accretions that they were. The Church could then recover its original, and proper, theological emphasis and move forward from there. The Greek Fathers, which were problematic for the Catholic adherents of scholastic theology, were a

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72 I do not agree with the characterization of the Council of Trent as being essentially a rejection of patristic theology, as Stinger concludes. (pp. 226-227.) Certainly, the official sanction given to Thomism severely limited the freedom which the Humanists had once enjoyed in entertaining patristic (especially Greek) ideas, but the authority of the Fathers is retained by the Council, and their doctrines are carefully syncretized with late Medieval theological understandings. Patristics has been ascribed an untimely death by Stinger in Protestant circles as well, and this must be qualified, especially in light of the prominence of the Fathers in Bacon’s England. While it is true that “many Protestant theologians began to return to dialectics to analyze the orthodox creedal formulations of the Augsburg Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism” this does not necessarily imply a rejection of Patristic theology. On the one hand, a significant number of theologians, such as Lancelot Andrewes, showed no interest whatever in returning to dialectic method. On the other hand, even those theologians who have often been singled-out for their rigid adherence to systematic categorization and dialectic, are usually the victims of a convenient though inaccurate stereotype. Johann Gerhard, for example, is often cited as the true systematizer of Lutheran Dogmatics, but convenient categories are simply a starting point for Gerhard as he addresses what he regards as the errors of both the Papacy (systematically laid-forth at Trent) and the systematic response to Catholicism of the Reformed. The tidiness of Gerhard’s dialectic seldom lasts beyond the introduction to a topic. By the end of the discussion catalogues of patristic opinion dominate as Gerhard finds his final answers most often in a “Consensus of the Fathers.” See Gerhard, Johann, *Loci Theologici*, ed. Preuss, (Berlin, Gustav Schwalitz, 1866.)

73 In this emphasis Erasmus’ perspective was close to that of the Protestants. It explains why both Erasmus and the Protestants were not overly disturbed by disagreement among the Church Fathers, after all, theirs was not a perfect age either, just much better than the medieval era. Both Erasmus and the Protestants felt free to reject what they saw as being in error in the Church Fathers, while otherwise relying upon their authority to support reforming agendas. It is an error to see Protestantism as concerned with the simple repristination of the early Church, rather than incorporating what was good (or at least not bad) from the medieval era and moving forward. Istvan Bejczy suggests as much in regard to the difference between Erasmus and Luther. (Bejczy, 192.) Erasmus and the Protestants differed from one another in the same way that the Protestants differed from each other, namely, in where the lines of what should be kept and what discarded were to be drawn.
new arsenal for Protestants engaged in identifying Catholic error and supporting the break with Rome, though the Latin Fathers received equal attention, and the Patristic Era functioned as a unified authority for early Protestants.\textsuperscript{74} (The significant differences in theological perspective between East and West in the early centuries of Christianity were at this time only emerging as an issue.) Closer to the fountainhead of Christianity, the Fathers were purer in their theology, and hence an important key to understanding when and where the Roman Church went wrong. But they were also studied positively, as sources which, as the Protestants saw it, gave clear precedent to Reformation theology and provided necessary insight into the original nature of Christianity. Thus the study of the Fathers was a central occupation of Protestants across Europe, and they were largely responsible for the development of Patristics as a discreet field of academic theology.\textsuperscript{75}

The common Protestant concern for patristic authority must qualify our understanding of the meaning of the famous \textit{sola scriptura} principle among early Protestants. For mainline Protestants such as the Lutherans and the Calvinists the “Bible” was never the sole authority. It was the sole \textit{absolute} authority, or the sole \textit{infallible} authority. It was the authority by which other sources and authorities were to be measured and judged, but authorities such as the Fathers were highly regarded and

\textsuperscript{74} Consider the appeal to Greek Patristics as it functions in Protestant apologetics such as the \textit{Examination of the Council of Trent}, of Martin Chemnitz, and Johann Gerhard’s \textit{Loci}. (Chemnitz, \textit{Examination of the Council of Trent}, trans. Fred Kramer, (St. Louis, Concordia, 1971). Gerhard, Johann, \textit{Loci Theologici}, ed. Preuss, (Berlin, Gustav Schwalitz, 1866.) This may be seen as part of a larger Protestant appeal to the Christian East, which included apologetic references to the continued existence of Eastern Christianity as evidence that the Papal claim to unity and hegemony was invalid. See, for example, Balthasar Meisner, \textit{Ein Catholische Antwort zu dem Ketzerische Frage des Jesuwider}, in: \textit{Zwei Hochnutzklicher Buecher wider das Papstthum}, (Leipzig, Friedrich Lanckschens Erben, 1697). A more interesting example, for our purposes, is a small book put out by Puritans with the very revelatory title: \textit{Differences in Matters of Religion between Eastern and Western Churches}. \textit{Wherein the Romane Church may see her selfe charged with as many errours as shee falsely layeth to the charge of other Churches in Europe}. (“Gathered by Irenaeus Rodoginus,” London, Augustine Mathewes, 1625.)

\textsuperscript{75} Quasten traces the earliest name of the field, \textit{Patrology}, to the Lutheran Johann Gerhard, in 1653. It is interesting in Quasten’s account that his argument that this was not a \textit{new} field in the Renaissance and early modern period requires him to return to examples from the Patristic era itself. (Quasten, v.1 p. 1)
contributed greatly to the doctrinal formation of Protestantism.\textsuperscript{76} Among Protestants of Bacon’s era, a theological argument was seldom considered complete without extensive reference to the opinions and decisions of the Early Church upon a subject.\textsuperscript{77} Just how much authority the Fathers were allowed on any given issue was another matter. In Lutheran and Reformed lands, where there was an established doctrinal agenda for the Reformation, the Fathers were allowed to support the Lutheran or Reformed doctrines, but were rejected when they conflicted with the stated doctrines and confessions of their respective branches of Christianity. Hence, the Lutheran Martin Chemnitz makes use of both Basil and Epiphanius to support his defense of Lutheran doctrine against the Council of Trent, but both are rejected when their statements run afoul of the Lutheran Confessions.\textsuperscript{78} Obviously, according to Chemnitz, these Fathers were already guilty of Romanist errors. Similarly, although Chrysostom is among Calvin’s favorite Fathers to cite in support of the Reformed view of the Sacraments, he carefully distances himself

\textsuperscript{76} In classical Lutheran dogmatics this is the distinction between the \textit{norma normans}, or that authority which is absolute, vs. the \textit{norma normata}, or that authority which is itself circumscribed or governed by the \textit{norma normans}. Scripture alone is the \textit{norma normans}, while various types of tradition, including doctrinal writings and confessions from all periods of church history, are among the \textit{norma normata}. Martin Chemnitz, in his \textit{Examination of the Council of Trent}, lists eight levels of “traditions” seven of which constitute, to one degree or another, genuine authority for the Lutherans, the first of which, Scripture, stands as the source of all truth, and the others are the stream which flows from that source. \{tr. Fred Kramer, \textit{St. Louis, Concordia,} v.1. pp. 223-307\} While this is the only major Protestant divine to enumerate the operative hierarchy of tradition, it is evident that similar hierarchies are operative in works such as Calvin’s \textit{Institutes}.

\textsuperscript{77} For examples consider: the \textit{Catalogue of Testimonies} appended to the Lutheran \textit{Formula of Concord} of 1580 (\textit{Concordia Triglotta}, \textit{St. Louis, Concordia,} 1921.), 1105-1149.) , Note also the study document put out by the theological faculty of Leipzig on the Church’s historic understanding of the role of the clergy, \textit{Vom Beruff und Enturlaubung der Prediger}, (Giessen, Nicolas Hampelius, 1608.) and from England, John Bois, \textit{Vetereis interpretis cum BEZA alisq; Recensoribus Collatio in Quatuor Evangeliis & Apostolorum Actis}, (London, 1640).

\textsuperscript{78} In Chemnitz’ \textit{Examen} he uses Basil and Epiphanius to make the very Lutheran point that doctrinal formulations are derived from the words of Scripture, though they need not be confined to Scriptural wording. However, within the same discussion Chemnitz rejects these Fathers when they make the very Roman Catholic point that there are also important unwritten traditions in the Church. \{\textit{Examination of the Council of Trent}, trans. Fred Kramer, \textit{St. Louis, Concordia,} v.1. p. 257, for the use of these fathers for support, and pp. 287 and 267 for the rejection of the authority of Epiphanius and Basil respectively.\}
from those passages in Chrysostom’s writings which clearly refer to the Lord’s Supper as a “sacrifice.”  What was pure in the Fathers and what was part of the imperfections already present in the early Church was determined by the established agendas of the Lutherans and the Reformed. The Fathers could speak with tremendous authority, unless they were as mistaken as the later Papists about certain issues. In England, where the Reformation had no such clear doctrinal agenda, the Fathers could be, and often were, given much more weight. Jean-Louis Quantin, in an article surveying the reception of the Fathers in seventeenth century Anglican theology, portrays England as more focused upon Patristic theology than any location or group on the Continent, and England was recognized for this Patristic emphasis at the time. Isaac Casaubon saw England as a refuge from both Catholicism and Continental Protestantism where he would be free to follow the theology of the ancient church. Because of England’s interest in, and freedom to follow, patristic theology, seventeenth century London became a powerhouse for the production and publication of critical editions of the Church Fathers. One theologian who gave the Fathers a great deal more authority than was condoned by Continental Protestants was Lancelot Andrewes, who often sided with the opinions of the Fathers over those of the Reformers. English theologians such as Andrewes were free to discuss Apostolic Succession and the authority of Tradition in ways that were theologically

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79 Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.18.11 While Calvin carefully does not mention Chrysostom by name in connection with this “error” it is clear from the Chrysostom laden context that he has Chrysostom clearly in mind. The locations in Chrysostom of which Calvin would have been thinking are helpfully cited by the editor of the Westminster edition of the Institutes. (“Westminster edition:” [tr. Ford Lewis Battles] Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1960. v. 2. p. 1439, n. 19.)

80 See also Stinger regarding the use of the Lutheran doctrine of Justification as a guideline for reading the fathers among Melanchthon and his associates. (p. 227.)

precluded on the Continent. This would have a lasting impact upon the doctrine and practices of the Anglican Church.

The tremendous concern for and interest in patristics in early modern England is attested by the great number of patristic sources to be found in the Bodleian Library from its inception.\(^2\) It seems that nearly everyone who was in any way attached to the intellectual circles of Tudor and Stuart England was somehow engaged in reading the Fathers. Bacon himself almost never refers to the Fathers directly, humbly leaving the discussion of theology to theologians, but he was surrounded by academic friends who were immersed in patristic study, two of whom, Andrewes and John Selden, were among the leading scholars in the field in his day. Bacon’s own mother, Anne, had learned Latin and Greek and was familiar with the Fathers, and her sister Margaret had made a translation of St. Basil’s sermon on Deuteronomy 15.\(^3\) But while Bacon’s mother had turned to the Fathers within the doctrinal constraints of a decidedly Puritan agenda, Bacon’s literary associates were more liable to consider and develop uniquely patristic doctrines pertaining both to the way of salvation and the concept of God and creation. This, in turn, would influence Bacon’s understanding of the purpose and role of natural philosophy.

Despite the numerous and far reaching effects of patristic texts in the early modern period, we lack a body of scholarly literature which deals with the impact of the recovery of the Fathers upon Western European thought. The landmark volumes of essays edited by Irena Backus in 1996 have gone a long way toward “opening the field” as she intended, but the studies therein are introductory at best, and the publication of

\(^2\) cf. the first printed catalog of the Bodleian Library: Thomas James, *Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Publicae quam vir ornatissimus Thomas Bodlaius Eques Auratus in Academia Oxonensi nuper institut; continet autem Libros Alphabetice sipositos secundum quattuor Facultates* (Oxford, 1605.)

\(^3\) Jardine and Stewart, 25.
these volumes primarily highlights the failure of earlier scholars to properly address these
issues. In monographs we have been limited either to discussions of a very narrow focus
dealing with the impact and use of patristic theology in the writing or work of an
individual, or to discussions of parallel topics which nevertheless relate to the
“renaissance of patristic studies.” When dealing specifically with the reception of the
Greek Fathers in the West, the field narrows still more. The topic of the use of the Greek
Fathers in Western Europe is especially worthy of serious scholarly consideration
because it is insufficient to merely recognize that Greek philosophy and theology
impacted the West through the reading of the Fathers. Important issues are raised by
asking how the West read the Fathers. The West read the Greek Fathers with concerns
and assumptions which were far removed from the cultural context of the Fathers
themselves, and hence western thinkers often used the Fathers to draw conclusions which
would have been foreign to the intent and understanding of the early Christian East.
When considering the influence of Patristic thought upon Francis Bacon and his literary
circle, we must bear in mind that we are dealing not with the Fathers themselves, but with
a syncretism of Patristic writing with early modern issues and concerns.

Irena Backus, ed., The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the
xi. While her intent was to ensure that the focus was on patristic theology, some essays fall short of the
mark, as, for example, Manfred Schulze’s essay on Luther (v. 2, pp. 573 ff.) which traces how Luther
interpreted and understood certain ideas and heresies from the early church rather than considering the
influence of the Fathers upon his thought. Schulze dismisses any serious use of the Fathers by Luther and
closes his essay, trusting that Luther’s negative comments about Erasmus suffice to show that he
discounted patristics. (This does not help explain the Patristic theology which has been clearly identified In
Luther’s writings by Gustav Wingren, Tuomo Manermaa and others in the field of Luther studies.) More
work, and in some cases, work of a much higher caliber, needs to be done.

Stinger’s work on Treversari (op. cit.) comes closest to a direct look at the overall reception of the
Fathers in the Renaissance, but his interest is still Treversari and he ends his general coverage when a
proper context for Treversari has bee achieved. Charles Trinkaus’ massive treatment of humanist thought, In
Our Image and Likeness, takes patristic influence into account, but his work has not been followed in this
area. Other than these two books, biographical works such as Istvan Bejczy’s treatment of Erasmus, (op.
cit.) which includes a consideration of his use of the Fathers, are more typical.
The Recovery of Hebrew

Another important intellectual development in this era has received even less scholarly attention, namely the Christian rediscovery of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew Scriptures. This trend had profound effects upon Christian theology and the Christian world view in the early modern era. At stake was the meaning of two thirds of the Christian Scriptures, and there were, again, implications for natural philosophy as well as theology, particularly since the creation accounts of the book of Genesis were involved.

The Christian interest in Hebrew among the Protestants of Bacon’s era is best understood as a desire to recover the original sense of the Old Testament through a return to the sources. As with nearly every project designed to recover lost knowledge by a return ad fontes, the blossoming of the Christian interest in Hebrew in the early modern era had its beginning among the humanists of the Italian Renaissance, and in particular with Giannozo Manetti and Pico della Mirandola. Manetti was led to the study of Hebrew, and the project of making new translations of parts of the biblical text in order to clear up some confusion over the meaning of the Vulgate Old Testament.

Fortunately for this study the only serious contender for a worthy overview of the topic happens to be a book which has as its primary focus the rise of Hebrew studies in Tudor and Stuart England: G. Lloyd Jones, The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: a third language (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983). Jones is writing at least partly in response to the call issued decades earlier by Israel Barroway for serious consideration of the topic of Hebrew studies among Christians in England, given the subsequent cultural importance of developments such as the King James Bible (“Toward Understanding Tudor-Jacobean Hebrew Studies” in: Jewish Social Studies, v. 18, n.1 (January 1956). [Offprint]) Jones’ work remains the only answer to that call. Thus, Jones’ text serves as the main secondary resource for consideration of this topic.

G. Lloyd Jones does not give particular place to Manetti, but focuses entirely on Pico as the father of Christian Hebraism. Based upon the discussion of Manetti by Charles Trinkaus, however, I believe that including him in the narrative gives a more properly balanced view of the motivations of the Humanists. (Cf. Jones, 19 ff., and Trinkaus, v. 2 pp. 578 ff.)

This is at least ostensibly his motive. There is reason to believe, however, that Manetti felt that he could improve on Jerome. (Trinkaus, v. 2, pp. 584-85.)
Manetti and Pico, Pico was by far the better Hebraist.\textsuperscript{89} For Pico, however, the interest was not in recovering the original meaning of the Scriptures, but first a “scholarly and cultural interest in rabbinic literature,"\textsuperscript{90} followed by an intense interest in the mystical writings of the Jewish Cabbala, to which Pico was introduced by his Jewish teachers. Pico was fascinated by the promise of secret magical power and the recovery of a lost ancient wisdom in the Cabalistic writings.\textsuperscript{91} Thus the motivations for studying Hebrew among the humanists were double: a concern with Scripture on the one hand, and with arcane magical knowledge on the other. The latter interest was also the main motivation for Pico’s greatest disciple, Johannes Reuchlin.\textsuperscript{92} On the other hand, Biblical study was the sole motivation of the Dominican Sanctes Pagninus, perhaps the greatest hebraist of the next generation, who undertook a new translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew in 1524, arguing that the ancient sources used by Jerome were admitted by Jerome himself to be unreliable, and that the Church now had access to the resources to do a better translation. In spite of the inherent criticism of the Church’s official version of the Scriptures at a time when Protestants were busy criticizing the same, Pagninus’ work


\textsuperscript{90} Jones, 19.

\textsuperscript{91} G. Lloyd Jones writes of Pico and the Cabala: “His Jewish teachers introduced Pico to the Kabbalah, the secret meaning of the Written law revealed by God to the elect in the distant past and preserved by a privileged minority. Kabbalistic teachings fall into three main categories. First, they contain doctrines about the relation between God and creation based on Neoplatonic and Gnostic schemes of emanation. In this way they try to explain the immanent activity of a transcendent God. Second, they contain messianic and apocalyptic doctrines of a more specifically Jewish character. Finally, they offer techniques of spiritual exegesis which are intended to enable the reader to discover profound spiritual significance and hidden meanings in the most trivial passages of Scripture,” and in the Kabbalah Pico “believed that in it he had found an original divine revelation to man which had been lost. He regarded it as authoritative because he accepted the claim of the Jewish mystics that their writings were based on a secret tradition that went back in oral form to biblical times.” (pp. 21 & 23.)

\textsuperscript{92} Reuchlin met Pico in Florence in 1490, and had there taken up Pico’s passion for the Kabbalah. (Jones, 23.)
received praise and sanction from Popes Leo X, Adrian VI, and Clement VII. In spite of
the weight of the Papal imprimatur behind Pagninus’ work, the study of Hebrew was
suspect among the Roman Catholics of the early sixteenth century, and not only because
of the less than wholesome interest in the Cabala which often motivated it.

As with the reading of the Greek Fathers, the intellectuals of the Christian West
who undertook the study of Hebrew were entering into a separate cultural tradition, and
they came to it laden with the early modern concerns and biases which would shape and
color what they found in the Hebrew Scriptures. But in the case of the study of the Old
Testament in Hebrew, there was yet another complicating cultural factor: the Christian
scholars who undertook it had to rely entirely upon the theologians of another religion in
order to carry it off. The keepers of the Hebrew language were Jewish, and the Hebrew
texts to which the Christian scholars turned were the product of generations of rabbinic
transmission, and a pre-packaged rabbinic interpretive tradition came along with them.
Because of the need to rely upon Jewish sources, the study of Hebrew was by far the
most controversial humanist undertaking to Roman Catholic theologians. Scholars who
pursued the discipline were in the midst of a constant debate. Critics of the study such as
Johannes Pfefferkorn, himself a converted Jew, roundly decried practitioners such as
Reuchlin as the polluters of the true faith. While Pfefferkorn and his Dominican
associates stoked fires with Hebrew texts, Reuchlin found his fellow humanists often
reluctant to join him in an unqualified defense of the study of Hebrew. Even among
those who generally supported the study of Hebrew there was a concern over just how

93 Jones, 40.

94 See the discussion of the Reuchlin/Pfefferkorn affair in Jones, pp. 26-36 The tremendous complexity of
the issues involved, ranging from the varying degrees of anti-Semitism involved to the ambivalent attitude
of Erasmus, all add into the point that the endorsement of Hebrew as a field of study was far from settled in
the Roman Church at this time.
much a Christian scholar could trust or rely upon rabbinic commentaries or the cabbala.95

Finally, there was a pervasive attitude among those not directly involved in the controversy over Hebrew that regardless of the fascinating insights which Hebrew might offer, the study of Hebrew could only be of limited usefulness. For many, Hebrew had some value as a missionary and apologetic tool for the conversion of the Jews, but there could be no real point in redoing what Jerome had gotten right in the first place.96

Objections to the study of Hebrew were almost non-existent among the Protestants, who were not at all convinced that Jerome should have the last word on the Old Testament. The study of Hebrew meshed well with the Protestant concern for getting the interpretation of the Scriptures right, and reforming the Church around the proper sense of the Sacred Text. Thus the study of Hebrew by Christians came into its own among the Protestant movements. G. Lloyd Jones summarizes the Protestant interest in Hebrew:

The Renaissance had attempted to highlight the importance of Hebrew for the Biblical exegete; the Reformation emphasized it still further. It was the Reformation which gave the study of the language among Christians its true significance by providing it with a definite goal: namely, a serious and impartial understanding of the Holy Scriptures freed from the mediaeval hermeneutic. Since the dissemination of vernacular versions of the Bible based on the original texts was high on their list of priorities, Hebrew scholarship came to play an increasingly important part in the educational pattern of the leading Protestants.97

The study of Hebrew took off in Protestant centers of learning such as Wittenberg, where Reuchlin’s precocious nephew, Philip Melanchthon, taught, and Basel, which was

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95 Jones, 31.

96 This, for example, is the objection raised by Leonardo Bruni to Manetti. See Trinkaus, v. 2 pp. 578 ff. See also Jones, pp. 25, 26.

97 Jones, 56.
turned into a center of Protestant Hebrew studies by Sebastian Münster, and later Oxford and Cambridge. The reliance upon Talmudic interpretations, or rabbinic authority generally, however, was still very much suspect among the Protestant scholars. Luther, for example, was thoroughly convinced of the value of Hebrew, but was equally convinced that rabbinic exegesis had no place among Christians. Calvin was cautiously ambivalent about the value of rabbinic sources. On the other hand, Sebastian Münster’s approach drew heavily upon the rabbis of all eras as authorities in Old Testament interpretation, although he much was criticized for this. Münster’s work was particularly influential upon English Hebraists, and this ensured that rabbinic sources were also available for consideration in England. However, this should not be understood as suggesting that all English Hebraists necessarily shared Münster’s view of the appropriateness of rabbinic sources, for Calvin’s negative-leaning caution was more common.

As a result of the simultaneous rejection of Jerome and the rabbis as proper interpreters of the Hebrew text, there was a prevailing sense among the Protestants that the true Old Testament theology, the true meaning of the original text, was currently being recovered in its fullness. As a result, there was a great deal of variation, and even some genuine fluidity, in Protestant Old Testament exegesis which was lacking in that of Roman Catholics or Jews. Thus, the net effect of the early modern recovery of Hebrew may be regarded as a trend toward less uniformity in textual interpretation, rather than greater precision. More options were on the table than ever before, multiplied not only

98 Ibid., pp. 56-66, esp. 59-60 on rabbinic exegesis.
99 Ibid., pp. 76-77, 78-79.
100 Ibid., 44-48.
101 Ibid., 48.
by Jewish exegesis but also by the different theological agendas of the various Protestant
groups. (One profitable avenue for research into the rise of Hebrew among early modern
Christians would be to consider the divisions among Protestants according to their
varying readings of the Old Testament, or principles of Old Testament interpretation.)
Whatever the proper interpretation of the Old Testament was, the key to obtaining it was
the Hebrew language.

Concerned as Bacon was with the study of Creation, the question of how the first
chapters of Genesis should be understood is critical to understanding Bacon’s religious
assumptions in the writings of the Instauration corpus. But these are by no means the
only sections of the Old Testament upon which Bacon drew to form the theological
underpinnings of his project. Bacon turns to the prophets, the Psalms, and the histories
of the Old Testament throughout his writings in order to establish the foundation of his
work and impress its urgency upon his audience. Indeed, the entire Instauratio Magna
can be regarded as constructed around Bacon’s own unique reading of the Old Testament,
facilitated by the unsettled state of Protestant Old Testament interpretation at the time.
Bacon himself had no ability in Hebrew, but it is significant that he had among the most
common readers of his Instauratio corpus two of the preeminent Hebrew scholars of their
respective generations in England, Lancelot Andrewes and John Selden.

**Hermeticism, Alchemy, and the prisca theologia**

The rediscovery of Greek patristic literature and the rise of the study of Hebrew
both facilitated another important trend: the incorporation of Hermetic and alchemical
traditions (including Cabalism) into the intellectual fabric of the Christian West. It is not
the interest of this study to examine the influence of Hermeticism and alchemy *per se* on
the thought of Francis Bacon and his contemporaries. That is a subject which continues
to be handled by a small army of competent scholars. It is very much in our interest,
however, to weave these influences back into the context of early modern religion from which they have unfortunately become dissociated.

Since the landmark work of Paolo Rossi there has been a common scholarly agreement that Hermetic and alchemical traditions were influential upon the development of Francis Bacon’s thought.\textsuperscript{102} However, beyond this point the issue becomes muddied by a lack of consensus on the nature and degree of influence which these traditions had upon Bacon’s method and program. The situation was complicated by a much larger debate over the role of Hermeticism in the rise of science generally, which was precipitated by the claims made by Francis Yates in her book, \textit{The Rosicrucian Enlightenment}.\textsuperscript{103} The subject of Bacon’s scientific thought wound up in an unfortunate position at the center of that debate.

In an earlier book, \textit{Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition}, Francis Yates had brought-up the influence of Hermeticism upon astronomy and cosmology, but had ascribed a definite \textit{terminus ad quem} to the influence of Hermetic tradition on science, namely, when Isaac Casaubon demonstrated in 1614 that the Hermetic writings were not truly the ancient documents that they were supposed to be.\textsuperscript{104} In \textit{The Rosicrucian Enlightenment} Yates breathes life back into the Hermetic tradition and states that it did, in fact, continue to have a great influence on science through the secret society of the Rosicrucians which spanned the European Continent and was dedicated to perpetuating the Hermetic and alchemical philosophy of experimentation. In this second book Bacon is portrayed as the English manifestation of a parallel secret movement keeping the


\textsuperscript{103} Francis Yates, \textit{The Rosicrucian Enlightenment} (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.)

Hermetic and magical tradition of John Dee alive. Bacon is bolstered by a hot and cold running relationship with his Rosicrucian counterparts, whom he both respects and regards as too extreme. Bacon is particularly secretive about his own Hermetic and alchemical ties because of the politically unstable environment of the Stuart Court and the disfavor into which his philosophical progenitor, John Dee, had fallen.\footnote{The full story is chapter ix of \textit{The Rosicrucian Enlightenment}, pp. 118-129.}

While a fascinating story, Yates’ basic understanding of Bacon, along with her buildup of the prominence of the Rosicrucians, is very close to pure conjecture. Her book elicited a harsh reaction from many members of the scholarly community who, among other things, seemed to feel that she had laid a lot at the feet of a convenient secret society which we can know little to nothing about.\footnote{For an account of the turmoil which developed around the work of Yates, see Floris Cohen’s discussion, \textit{The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry}. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 171-2.} More particularly, there was a strong reaction against the emphasis which had been placed on Hermeticism up to that point. Scholars such as Robert S. Westman and J.E. McGuire dug in their heels and insisted that much of the influence which had been ascribed to the Hermetic tradition in the rise of science should be entirely rethought.\footnote{See the Clark Lectures of 1974. Westman and McGuire, \textit{Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution}, (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1977). Westman is concerned with reexamining the supposed influence of Hermeticism upon Bruni’s cosmology, and McGuire seeks to show that Hermeticism is not required for Newton’s science.} Among the most vocal and influential critics of Yates was Paolo Rossi, who had, in his own influential and careful study, first demonstrated the connection between Bacon and the magic traditions. In particular, Rossi objected to the reduction of scientific method to an aspect of the Hermetic tradition, when much more was involved.\footnote{See Paolo Rossi, “Hermeticism, Rationality, and the Scientific Revolution” in \textit{Reason, Experiment, and Mysticism in the Scientific Revolution}, eds.: M.L. Righini Bonelli and W.R. Shea, (New York, Science History Publications, 1975), 247-273.} Rossi was expressing what was evidently a fairly
widespread concern that early modern science was becoming eclipsed by the alleged occult interests of the scientists. The strength of the reaction, however, was unfortunate. For even if most of Yates’ conjecture is unhelpful to those concerned with demonstrable connections, she was addressing the very real issue that Hermeticism and magical traditions lasted far longer than Casaubon’s work on the Corpus Hermeticum. The influence on Newton in particular can not be denied. In Bacon scholarship the fallout of the debate on Hermeticism and the rise of science has been a bifurcation of the field into those who continue to work on establishing the alchemical and Hermetic influences upon Bacon’s philosophy, and those who do not. In the latter category it is not uncommon to see scholars reverting to the basic point of Rossi: that there was an initial influence of magic upon Bacon’s method, but that he quickly moved beyond it to genuine scientific thinking, though he reverted, in the end, to a more credulous, and less modern, position. The issue may lose some of its fire, however, if we consider the magical and alchemical elements in Bacon in light of the theological climate which permitted, and to some degree encouraged, the consideration of these occult or esoteric trends.

It is possible that the reaction against Yates’ work was the more vehement because she allowed too much of the perplexing strangeness that the modern thinker feels when confronted with these ‘occult’ topics to remain in her discussion of the early Modern world. Understood properly, these trends were not as strange or irrational as

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110 That there are such influences, and that they were not entirely displaced by “science” is clear from the studies of scholars such as Stanton Linden (“Francis Bacon and Alchemy: The Reformation of Vulcan,” Journal of the History of Ideas; v35, n4 (Oct.-Dec. 1974), 547 (14)) and Graham Rees (“Francis Bacon’s Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology and the Great Instauration.” Ambix; v22, n, (July 1975), 81 (20).)

they seem to us today. Many people were drawn to Hermeticism, alchemy, and the Cabala, and many more rejected them in the strongest terms, but for the most part they were not accepted or rejected for reasons which would resonate with us today. Negative reactions on our part are most likely due to the fact that these trends contradict what we now believe to be true about the world as a result of our scientific perspective. In the early modern period these traditions were rejected because they were seen to be incompatible with the orthodox religion, as the critics understood it. When Hermetic and alchemical ideas were embraced it was because their proponents truly believed that they were entirely compatible with, and even complementary to, the Faith. Giordano Bruno is a notable exception, but he is notable precisely because his rejection of the Faith was exceptional. For almost all others, Christianity was the ultimate measure and test of all new ideas. All ideas in the seventeenth century were theological in their implications, if not in their very nature. That there was such a profound difference of opinion over whether Hermeticism and alchemy were acceptable, and just how much of these traditions could be accepted, is a further testimony to the tremendous turbulence and diversity of early modern religious opinion. What was at stake in the consideration of Hermeticism, alchemy, and natural magic was not merely how the universe was conceived, but how God was understood to interact with the Universe to keep it going. Thus when Ficino rediscovered the Corpus Hermeticum he believed that he had found a true source of the prisca theologia, the ancient and pure theology.112

Stephen McKnight has addressed the issue of occult traditions in the early modern period by suggesting that while one trend of early modern theology was toward God’s “radical transcendence,” another trend, represented by the prisca theologia formed an

McKnight’s approach has a distinct advantage in that Hermeticism and its associates never become divorced from their theological context. The recovery of this supposedly ancient body of otherwise lost wisdom was very much in keeping with the idea recovery of lost learning that was driving the humanist movement in the Renaissance. That important theological works could suddenly be recovered was not shocking, it was common, as our discussion of the recovery of the Fathers has shown. There is a kinship between Ficino’s notion of a *prisca theologia* and Erasmus’ concern for the recovery of the *vetus theologia*. That the material of this *prisca theologia* should be accepted as genuine Christian source material was a matter of real debate, however. Its proponents such as Ficino were assisted somewhat by the fact that the attitude of the Church Fathers toward the *Corpus Hermeticum* was ambiguous, and could be seen as quite positive. But proponents of the *prisca theologia* were assisted far more by the fact that the Greek Church Fathers in particular held the same platonic and neo-platonic views of an immanent God which are found in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and which are the basis of alchemy itself. “Immanentism” was not confined to the *prisca theologia*, but had a solid pedigree in genuine Christian writings. The recovery of Hebrew had opened many new doors, as well, and it was not obvious to men like Pico and Reuchlin that the pious writings of the Cabala which seemed compatible with the Faith, and were written in the very language which the Holy Spirit had used for the Old Testament, should not be mined for all that they had to offer. Opponents, such as Isaac Casaubon, focused on the inconsistencies between the *prisca theologia* and an established understanding of orthodox theology, while between proponents and opponents many considered this body of ideas and embraced that which was found to be acceptable to the Christian worldview, even if the tradition itself was far from pure.

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113 Ibid., 3.
In this context, the question of Bacon’s reliance upon Hermetic and alchemical traditions may be reintroduced without fear of overstating the relationship. For we can see in Bacon’s writings clear marks of the influence of the *prisca theologia*, and it is difficult to find evidence of a complete rejection of these ideas. In the *Instauration* writings we see a mind wrestling with just how useful and compatible the occult traditions are when exposed to the light of rational and theological scrutiny. In the context of Bacon’s theologically charged literary circle we can see both the immanentism and the theological openness which permitted Bacon to wrestle with these concepts in the first place. While these trends were far from the approved direction of the Church of Rome or the Church of England, they were not at this time seen as inherently contradictory to the Faith, and many of the sharpest minds of early modern Europe were also far from our own offhand rejection of the “pseudo-sciences.” Those who seriously considered the merits of Hermeticism, alchemy, and natural magic in early modern Europe, usually syncretized the ideas therein with their Christianity. The key question in regard to Bacon, for we know that he seriously considered these ideas, is the degree to which he syncretized and consequently felt free to incorporate them into his natural philosophy.

**The Widespread belief in a Providential Age**

*Muti Pertransibunt et Augebitur Scientia* (Dan. 12:4.)

This is the Biblical reference which appeared on the Frontispiece of Bacon’s *Instauratio Magna* in 1620. Charles Webster has shown that this verse had significant millenarian implications for the

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This reading varies from the Vulgate which reads: “*plurimi pertransibunt et multiplexerit scientia.*” Although this difference could be ascribed to an aesthetic preference, it is likely that Bacon has also adjusted it to more clearly fit what he is proposing in the *Instauratio Magna*, namely, an augmentation (and correction) of the method of knowledge already in existence. Adjusting the words in this way should not be taken as an impious act, but merely as an act of interpretation. This type of interpretation was, and is, not uncommon in Christian sermons where a text is paraphrased to render its meaning more clear.
Puritans who would inherit Bacon’s scientific agenda. This raises an interesting dilemma, for while Bacon’s followers were clearly interpreting this verse according to millenarian presuppositions, the secondary literature on Bacon rarely even considers any millenarian tendencies in Bacon himself. One obvious solution to this dilemma would be to suggest that millenarianism and the Baconian program were simply two trends which met and mingled in the years leading up to the Civil War. There can be no denying that this did happen. However, the manifest similarities between the coming golden age of the millenarians and Bacon’s own coming age of man’s recovery of dominion suggest that more can and should be said.

The silence on the subject of Bacon and millenarianism is most likely due in part to the difference in focus between scholars writing on the thought of Bacon and those writing upon the social and cultural phenomena of early modern millenarianism and apocalypticism. Almost all of the literature dealing with millenarianism and apocalypticism as trends in the early modern period is primarily concerned with popular movements and groups as subsets of a broader society. To recognize these groups and

115 Webster, 9 ff.

116 Complete silence on the subject is most common in treatments of Bacon’s thought, though there are what might be called “partial” considerations of the topic. In his recent book, Stephen Gaukroger notes that Bacon’s view of the restoration of man’s dominion over nature is markedly different from the millenarian idea of a coming golden age, while Katharine Firth and Charles Whitney, as we will see below, both note the affinity between Bacon’s thought and popular apocalyptic or millenalist trends. (Gaukroger, 77-78.)

117 Charles Webster, being concerned with matters other than Francis Bacon’s own thought and writing, is careful not to go beyond the obvious conflux of these trends. Hence he begins his discussion: “At the inception of the English Revolution two themes were brought together which had come to assume particular importance among English Puritans. The first was millenarian eschatology and the second, belief in the revival of learning.” (p. 1.)

118 A survey of this literature reveals that the judgment of Margaret Jacob on the subject in 1973 is still fundamentally true: “When historians have dealt with seventeenth-century English millenarianism they have invariably focused on the political ideologies and religious aspirations of the radical sectaries.” Margaret C. Jacob, “Millenarianism and Science in the Late Seventeenth Century” in: Philosophy, Religion and Science in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, ed. John W. Yolton, (Rochester, New York, University of Rochester Press, 1990), 493 ff. There are, however, an increasing number of exceptions to that rule, as Jacob herself was beginning to notice.
movements as distinct from the rest of early modern society these scholars make use of very narrow and specific definitions of “millenarianism” or “apocalypticism,” and confine themselves to very narrow aims. Howard Hotson uses a fairly typical example of a narrow definition: “Millenarianism, strictly defined, is the expectation that the vision described in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation of a thousand-year period in which Satan is bound and the saints reign is a prophecy which will be fulfilled literally, on earth, and in the future.”

Although authors dealing with “apocalypticism” are not as prone to forging narrow definitions, most are still concerned with the same types of broad social movements that interest the scholars of millenarianism and the end result is a narrow focus. While they allow “apocalyptic” to be broadly defined, their interest remains focused on those movements and groups who were obsessed with the literal reading of the book of Revelation and the imminence of the eschatological events described therein. The interest is still, centrally, Johannine apocalypticism and eschatology. One evident difference between millenarianism and apocalypticism is that the former has a distinct interest in the idea of a literal “thousand year period.” However, in the practice of historians this distinction is not always observed. While such definitions are useful in social and cultural history, they can never be entirely true to the history of


120 Richard Bauckham, for example, begins with the broadest possible definition of apocalyptic, but soon moves to in depth discussions of Revelation and the literal descent of the New Jerusalem, etc. (Richard Bauckham, Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century apocalypticism, millenarianism, and the English Reformation (Sutton Courtmey Press, 1977). cf. pp. 14-6 and the ensuing course of the discussion.) Katharine Firth and Paul Christianson are two other examples of the same trend. (Katharine R. Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain: 1530-1645. (Oxford University Press, 1979). Paul Christianson, Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the Civil War, (University of Toronto Press, 1978).) While other Biblical texts are also considered “apocalyptic” (Daniel, 2 Thessalonians, etc.) the trends being described involve a Johanine reading of these texts as well. Christianson made a commendable effort to separate the definitions of “apocalyptic,” “millennialism,” “millenarianism,” etc. (p. 6) but the subject of his book remains limited to a certain interesting pattern of literal interpretations of John and common ideas from Daniel.
the source material for the movements and groups discussed, the ancient apocalyptic writings themselves. The Apocalypse of John itself was just one text from a much broader and older tradition of apocalyptic, which permeated the cultures of the Biblical authors and is present, to one degree or another, throughout the received books of the Christian Canon. Very few early modern millenarians used Revelation 20 as their sole sedes doctrina for their expectation of an imminent golden age. This was a theme which was recognized throughout the Scriptures, as different individuals emphasized different parts of this tradition a wide variety of millenarian and apocalyptic thought developed, only some of which became the foundation for specific groups or movements. A strict and universally applicable understanding of the terminology involved in millenarianism/apocalypticism is not possible, because the movements and ideas themselves are not rigidly bounded. The definitions must always be tailored to the concerns of the historian, and those who are dealing with individual intellectuals are best served by recognizing the breadth of influence which apocalyptic and millenarian ideas have had. The narrow definitions which delineate millenarian groups and their leaders, or which identify a trend toward a specific type of apocalypticism in early modern society, can often obscure the very real variations of apocalyptic thought which were unique to individuals such as Bacon.

To be clear, within the scholarly writings which deal specifically with apocalyptic tendencies in the eras of Second Temple Judaism and the early Christian era, apocalyptic is a literary genre with many characteristic features of which the eschatological speculation which primarily interests scholars of early modern apocalypticism and “millenarianism” is just one example. An operative list of such features may be found in E.P. Sanders, “The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses” in: David Hellholm (ed.), Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), 456-7. See also the useful comments on early Christian manifestations of apocalypticism by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Wayne A. Meeks in the same volume (pp. 295 ff., and 687 ff. respectively.) The actual extent of apocalyptic influence on early Christianity can be much better appreciated, however, from the studies in Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (eds.), Apocalyptic and the New Testament, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989). As we will see, if read with the idea of a new age of earthly restoration in mind, the Apocalypse of John is just one Biblical source for this doctrine, and it was by no means necessary to consult it at all to support a coming ‘golden age.’
Margaret Jacob noted already in 1973 that studies were beginning to emerge which set aside narrow governing definitions and identified “millenarian beliefs and speculations” of individual intellectuals who were commonly considered “social conservatives” and who were not associated with radical millenarian groups and movements. The findings of these studies supported observations that Jacob herself had made and led her to conclude that “millenarianism was more widespread than has generally been assumed.” In light of the main current of scholarship on “millenarianism,” however, this statement must be qualified. In particular, Jacob’s definition of “millenarianism” was remarkably broad, potentially including any expectation of a golden age instituted by God. As the association with an actual “millennium” is optional in Jacob’s definition, it would probably be preferable to speak of a particular kind of widespread “apocalypticism” and reserve “millenarianism,” “millennialism” and “chiliasm” for those varieties of apocalypticism which are connected to a coming age of a thousand years.

122 “Very recent scholarship, however, has brought to light the millenarian beliefs and speculations of such disparate social conservatives as Richard Baxter, Isaac Newton, and Thomas Hobbes.” Jacob, 493. Jacob is referring especially to work on Hobbes by J.G.A. Pocock, work on Richard Baxter by William Lamont, and the works on Newton’s religion by L. Trengrove and Frank Manuel. While Jacob’s point in regard to this development in the field is significant, we should not lose sight of the different focus of these studies which focus on the individual, and the interests of other scholars who are primarily concerned with movements and broad social trends. The shift from the group to the individual is essential for understanding the trend which Jacob describes.

123 Jacob, 493.

124 Because of its applicability to Bacon’s own thought, Jacob’s definition is worth reproducing in toto: “Millenarianism simply means a belief in an approaching millennium or earthly paradise, an event foretold in the Scriptural prophecies, and in turn capable of being predicted either by specially enlightened saints or by cautious and exacting scholarship. This new state of human existence would be instituted by divine intervention. The dates of its arrival, the method chosen by God for its enactment, the beneficiaries in the ‘new heaven and the new earth,’ the joy or fear induced by the contemplation of this fundamental alteration in the human condition--on these important aspects of millenarianism we readily admit enormous differences among seventeenth-century believers. . . . Furthermore, the millenarian vision of churchmen placed the church, and not simply the saints, as triumphant in the ‘new heaven and the new earth.’ In the millenarian paradise, and consequently in the historical process that would lead to its creation, the church and the more powerful and prominent members of its laity would lead the nation and finally the world along the stable and peaceful course preordained and guided by providence.” (Jacob, 494.)
Francis Bacon has yet to be the subject of the type of study which Jacob describes. However, in two important studies with other foci, the apocalyptic currents of Bacon’s thought have been noted. Katharine Firth, in her survey of apocalypticism in Reformation Britain, was primarily interested in examining a broad Johanine cultural trend, but she also took care to consider how intellectuals fit in with, or related to, that trend. In looking specifically at Bacon, she identified a certain tendency toward apocalyptic in his thought, though not of a variety which could be clearly identified with the millenarianism which Webster describes. In terms of the broader “apocalyptic tradition Francis Bacon would be classed as a cautious moderate.”

Charles Whitney took a far more direct look at the question of millenialism and Bacon’s thought and suggested a far stronger tendency toward millenialism. Whitney made the important point that in the sixteenth century the books of the early Church Father Irenaeus of Lyon, entitled *Contra haereses*, were published and widely distributed. This is especially significant since the last five chapters, long suppressed by Church authorities, is an extended chiliastic (or millennialist) treatise and these were included in the versions to

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125 Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain: 1530-1645*. (Oxford University Press, 1979), 205-06. The bottom line for Firth is that some form of synthesis of the Baconian program and millenarianism by later thinkers (some form of the “obvious solution” mentioned above) is the best explanation of the situation which Webster describes.

126 Irenaeus is the most significant potential influence on Bacon, but he is not the only patristic source to have entertained the idea of an earthly ‘golden age’ as a thoroughly orthodox idea. See Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London, Routledge, 1997), 53; and Michael St. Clair, *Millenarian Movements in Historical Context* (New York, Garland, 1992), 76-79. While Irenaeus is often called “millenarian,” he may not have been interested in a literal thousand year term. Seldom was Jewish or early Christian apocalyptic concerned with being too literal about anything in regard to the eschaton. I have some doubt about just how literally Irenaeus meant his own speculations to be taken by his readers. Regardless, however, of how “literal” the thousand years was understood to be by Irenaeus, or, even less likely, the writer of the New Testament Apocalypse, there was a doctrine of a literal “thousand years” which set apart certain groups in the medieval and early modern periods. For Irenaeus’ own words see Grant, pp. 176-82. The scenario of a restored world is central to Irenaeus’ thought, the actual numbers seem incidental.
which Bacon and his circle had access.\textsuperscript{127} The reemergence of the complete \textit{Contra haereses} was significant, Whitney noted, because it lent Patristic support to a shift in attitude toward the millennium that was taking place in English culture.\textsuperscript{128} Bacon’s works, according to Whitney, must be placed within this millenialist context as representative of the increasing belief in an imminent restoration or transformation of the world. However, in regard to Bacon proper, Whitney has other interests, and he does not pursue the millenarian or apocalyptic connection further. With the qualification, again, that “millenialist” is probably not the ideal word for what he is describing, Charles Whitney has seconded Margaret Jacob’s argument that the expectation of an imminent “golden age” was not the exclusive property of a radical fringe, but was a dominant theme of the thought and literature of early modern England.

Useful as they are, social and cultural histories of millenarian movements and trends of apocalyptic thought can obscure the fact that the specific movements and trends being considered are but elements of a much broader trend. It is too easy, for example, for the modern reader of these histories to forget that the early modern critics of millenarian sects were themselves steeped in a culture of apocalyptic expectation and speculation, and held ideas which we would recognize as very similar to those which they were

\textsuperscript{127} As with most aspects of the Patristic impact upon early modern Europe, the influence of the publication of all five books of Irenaeus’ \textit{Contra haereses} upon the development of millenarian speculation among intellectuals has yet to be examined. Whitney is not correct when he ascribes to Erasmus a “more complete text” of Irenaeus than was present in the middle ages. \{Charles Whitney, \textit{Francis Bacon and Modernity}, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986), 44.\} Erasmus’ text still lacked the critical last five chapters. The first to include them was the edition by Fuardenti in 1575. This, and its subsequent editions through 1596, was actually the most influential version of \textit{Contra haereses}, and it was Fuardenti’s work, according to publication date, which was represented in the Bodleian collection. \{Cf. the critical history of the text transmission in Migne’s \textit{Patrologia Graeca}, Paris, 1844 ff. v. col. 1208 ff. and the 1605 Bodleian catalogue, James, Thomas, \textit{Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Publicae quam vir ornatissimus Thomas Bodlaius Eques Auratus in Academia Oxoniensi naper instituit; continet autem Libros Alphabetice sapositos secundum quatuor Facultates Oxford, 1605.}\}

\textsuperscript{128} Whitney, \textit{Francis Bacon and Modernity},. 44, 50ff. See Webster’s mention of Irenaeus as well. (\textit{The Great Instauration}, 20-21.)
denouncing in the sects. Central to the apocalypticism of the early modern period was the belief in a providential age. Throughout early modern Europe there was a widespread belief that a special age had or would soon come upon them in which momentous changes, wrought by the hand of God, would transform the world, and to one degree or another, such an age was foretold in the Scriptures. This belief in an important and glorious providential age was pervasive among Protestants especially, who saw the Reformation as the threshold of just such an age.\textsuperscript{129} It was also a concept which was informed by the tremendous political changes which were taking place in early modern Europe. The emerging sense of national identity in Europe was enmeshed with ideas of divine favor or disfavor, and the common belief that God was raising-up a particular chosen people for His special work. This was an age when the Providential hand of God was beginning to operate within the bounds of nations. The sailing of the Armada, to the Spanish, was “God’s obvious design,” while the English saw the obvious design of God in its failure.\textsuperscript{130} In Bacon’s own writing as well as that of his literary circle, there can be found the conviction that Britain, her King, and her people, were set aside by God for a particular glorious destiny.

Bacon’s own vision of what was to come was highly developed, undergirded with Biblical ‘evidence,’ and considerably more specific in detail than a mere vague belief in

\textsuperscript{129} The images used in Reformation polemic make the apocalyptic significance of the Reformation vividly clear. See Charles Scribner, \textit{For the Sake of Simple Folk} (Cambridge University Press, 1981), passim. Consider also the discussion of Jaroslav Pelikan “Some uses of Apocalypse in the Magisterial Reformers” in \textit{The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature}, eds. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittrich, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 74-88. Margaret Jacob has made a similar observation. (Jacob, 494) For Catholics, who interpreted the Reformation differently, the sense of an imminent change was neither so pervasive nor so positive, though among Catholics as well there was a widespread expectation that God would soon deal with schisms and restore the unity of Christendom. Also consider the more overt forms of Catholic millenarianism discussed in Karl A. Kottman ed., \textit{Catholic Millenarianism: from Savonarolla to the Abbé Grégoire}, (Dodrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001.)

\textsuperscript{130} After the death of Mary Queen of Scots Philip’s ambassador in Paris wrote that it was “God’s obvious design” to use him and give him the kingdoms of England and Scotland. (P. Gallagher and D. W. Cruikshank eds., \textit{God’s Obvious Design} (London, 1988), pp. vii, 167.)
British destiny. As Charles Whitney has suggested, Bacon’s thoughts on this subject are, by his own admission, a key motivating factor in his Instauration program, and hence his unique apocalypticism may be regarded as an essential part of his intellectual legacy. While this essay is concerned primarily with Bacon as an individual thinker, Bacon is its subject precisely because of the impact which his writings have had upon later generations of thinkers and ultimately upon the formation of Western culture as we know it today. Bacon stands as the fountainhead of Baconianism, his own movement, and future research could be profitably turned toward discussing the unique, inherent apocalypticism of Baconianism.

Conclusion

The focus of this discussion has been to highlight important features of early modern English religion which are essential to understanding Bacon and his circle in their proper context. Not all of the elements discussed here had a direct bearing upon the thinking of Bacon and his literary circle. Anabaptism, for example, was not a factor. Other trends, such as the recovery of Hebrew language, were significant, but in an indirect way: opening the possibility of new interpretations of the Old Testament text. What is most important for understanding Bacon is that a unique constellation of religious and cosmological ideas came together in his era, and particularly among the members of his literary circle, which informed and permitted the development of Bacon’s program for the restoration and advancement of the sciences. The features of the religious context which have been emphasized provide a platform from which we may examine how Bacon and his circle fashioned their own theological positions in an environment of tremendous, though not limitless, diversity. Identifiable landmarks such as Puritanism, Roman Catholicism, the Church Fathers, and Calvinist doctrine can help us place Bacon and those immediately around him in a discernible context, but Bacon himself, and most of his
literary circle, took advantage of the liberty which a general atmosphere of latitude and
tolerance offered. In the next chapter we will place Bacon into the context of the people
around him, family and literary associates, and examine how Bacon and his circle both
promoted and benefited from the remarkable diversity of the Tudor and Stuart religious
environment.
CHAPTER 2:
FROM PURITANISM TO PATRISTICS:
BACON’S THEOLOGY IN TRANSITION

As David L. Smith has observed in regard to Edward Sackville, locating an individual within the context of Tudor and Stuart religion may not be a simple task, especially when that individual was known to be politically cautious. Francis Bacon was certainly such an individual, but in his case we have more to go on than most Bacon scholars have acknowledged. Francis Bacon came from a religious home, surrounded himself as an adult with theologians and scholars who had distinctive perspectives, and left a body of writings which are saturated with theological statements and Biblical quotations. The ultimate focus of this present study will be the theological statements and arguments which Bacon used to support his *Instauratio Magna*. However, the position which these statements delineate was developed in the context of an ongoing theological discourse which began in his family and continued in both his political sphere and his literary circle. This chapter traces the gradual shift in Bacon from his early Nonconformist upbringing to a very different position just prior to the period when he produced most of his writing pertaining to natural philosophy.

**Bacon’s Puritan Upbringing**

One aspect of Bacon’s context which has been considered is the early influence of his family, and particularly of his mother, Anne. Bacon was brought up in a decidedly Protestant household. Francis’ father, Nicholas, was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal for Queen Elizabeth by the time Francis was born. He was a loyal subject, and little can be
known of his personal religious convictions, other than the evidence of his public support of the Queen. Several scholars have noted the applicability of the family motto “mediocria firma” in expressing Nicholas’ predilection for the wisdom of the middle, or moderate way, particularly on religious questions. However, Nicholas could not have been without some sympathy for the more reformist trends in English Protestantism. He had a reputation among the Continental Reformed as a devout man, his children from his previous marriage were often associated with the Puritan cause, but also, and perhaps most significantly, he did have a notably happy relationship with his second wife, Francis’ mother, Anne. Anne, for her part, was far from moderate in her religious convictions, and she it was, being both strong willed and well educated, who ensured that her children were conversant in the faith.

In their biography of Francis Bacon, Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart consider Anne Bacon’s religious convictions in some depth. Anne’s father, Sir Anthony Coke, had been one of the many Protestants who sought refuge in Geneva during the reign of Queen Mary. As we have noted in regard to the ‘Marian Exiles’ generally, this places Anne’s father among those who would have formed the nascent puritan movement of Elizabeth’s reign upon his return. Jardine and Stewart show that the later reputation of the Bacon family on the Continent is that of devout Reformed Christians, and this was apparently

1 Jardine and Stewart, 32. Cf. Gary Deason on Nicholas Bacon, “The philosophy of a Lord Chancellor: religion, science, and social stability in the Work of Francis Bacon.” (Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1978.) Also, this is the essential position of Julian Martin on Nicholas, asserting that Bacon followed his father in adopting a genuinely non-partisan approach to religious questions (Martin, 38ff.)

2 The high regard in which Nicholas held Anne, and something of the compatibility of their relationship as intellectuals, is evident from an extant poem which Nicholas wrote to his wife, in which he expresses appreciation for her learned conversation as well as her “good cheer.” (Cf. Benjamin Farrington, Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1951), 20-21, for the poem and its context.)

3 Jardine and Stewart, 32ff. & passim.

4 Jardine and Stewart, 83.
as much the result of the good name of Anne and her father in Calvinist circles as the reputation (and political office) of Sir Nicholas. Calvin’s successor at Geneva, the accomplished Greek scholar Theodore Beza, hosted both Edward Bacon (Sir Nicholas’ third son by his previous marriage), and Anthony as favored house-guests.

With some encouragement from Anthony, Beza dedicated his published meditations on the penitential Psalms to Anne, praising her family’s piety as well as her own scholarship in reading the Church Fathers.

At home in England, Lady Bacon patronized and publicly defended nonconformist preachers. When Archbishop Whitgift launched his assault on Nonconformity, and with the Queen’s backing demanded that all clergy subscribe fifteen articles which required “absolute submission to the English church,” Lady Bacon’s protest was noteworthy. She wrote immediately to her sister Mildred’s husband, who happened to be Lord Burghley, Secretary of State to the Queen. She objected to this high-handed maneuver by stating that

she had ‘profited more in the inward feeling knowledge of God his holy will, though but in a small measure, by such sincere and sound opening of the Scriptures by an ordinary preaching,’ than ‘by hearing odd sermons’ at Paul’s Cross for ‘well nigh twenty years together.’

Jardine and Stewart note that this attempt to defend the Nonconformists “serves as testimony to Lady Bacon’s continued and active involvement in Puritan politics.”

5 Cf. Edward Bacon’s reception throughout Europe, as well as the concerns which Amias Paulet has for Francis travelling in Catholic lands, Jardine and Stewart, 62-63.

6 Ibid., 82-3.

7 Ibid., 83.

8 Ibid., 96.

9 Ibid., 96.

10 Ibid., 97.
their claim is reasonable that “both Anthony and Francis were given a solid grounding in the severer sort of radical Protestantism.”

Anne’s influence may have ensured that Francis Bacon’s earliest political connections would, as much as possible, be men of “sincere faith,” by her definition of the term, but this was not really within her power to regulate, once Bacon was at court. Jardine and Stewart note the influence of the diplomat Sir Amias Paulet, in whose service Bacon spent significant time on the Continent from 1576-79, who was such a zealous Puritan that Mary Queen of Scots protested the selection of him as her keeper during her detention. Paulet (and thus Bacon, during the years in which he was associated with him on the Continent) was part of the information-gathering circle of Sir Francis Walsingham, who was characterized as “a strong and resolute maintainer of the purer religion.”

However, it is important to bear in mind that the court of Queen Elizabeth was far from a Puritan stronghold, and men like William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who was Bacon’s uncle and did much to advance his fortunes, were capable of prospering under the Catholic Queen, Mary Tudor, as well as Queen Elizabeth.

Jardine and Stewart state that Anne’s religious convictions were “her most significant and enduring contribution to the fortunes of her two sons,” and paint a picture of Francis’ faith in the image of his mother’s. For evidence of Francis’ Nonconformity they point to the fact that in 1581 he was reading Thomas Cartwright’s published argument against Whitgift, and to the report that Francis at some time

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11 Ibid., 32.


13 DNB, vol. 20, p. 695. Walsingham was also interested in the role which England could play in furthering the cause of Protestantism, meaning the Reformed, on the Continent. DNB, vol. 20, pp. 688-89.


15 Jardine and Stewart, 32.
accompanied his mother to hear the Nonconformist preacher, Walter Travers. After this, little mention is made in the rest of the book of Bacon’s religious convictions, which may or may not have cooled with maturity, but the early influence of Nonconformity is allowed by Jardine and Stewart to function as an interpretive device for other considerations of Bacon and English religion. Thus, when Bacon appears to be counseling Queen Elizabeth to take a “middle path” in his *Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England*, this is presented by Jardine and Stewart as “a marked departure from Francis’ previous public allegiance to his mother’s Nonconformity.” This “marked departure” is qualified by the interpretation of Jardine and Stewart that, as a political writing, the content of this piece, as with any number of others which he wrote in the court context, was “not in his control,” and may not be taken as one of “his ‘works’ in any useful sense.” In this way the prior assumption of Nonconformist sympathies is allowed to persist, and any harsh statements against the Nonconformists in this writing may be subsumed to the overarching program of Bacon’s “self-fashioning.” Bacon does, however, make significant theological points in the course of this work, and it is reasonable to conclude, especially given his later writing and his developing circle of associates, that there was much more involved in this work than a concern for political gain.

Jardine and Stewart’s last treatment of Bacon’s personal religious disposition is the consideration of a letter sent by Anne in 1592 to her older son Anthony, in which she expresses serious disappointment in Francis’ faith life, and cautions Anthony against

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16 Ibid., 79. The latter “evidence” is particularly problematic, as Jardine and Stewart cite no source of the report. For the sake of this discussion I allow that it is most likely true, though I have not, personally, found primary material corroborating it.

17 Ibid., 123.

18 Ibid., 125.
following his example. Jardine and Stewart make little of this letter other than to observe the obvious: that Anne Bacon is very much concerned that Francis, caught up in his own political advancement, was wavering in the faith.\textsuperscript{19} In the course of the biography, the significance of this letter is unclear: it may be interpreted as merely a mother’s concern, or as a sign that Francis was genuinely departing from the fervency, if not the tenets, of his mother’s faith. The lack of mention of Bacon’s religion in the rest of the book certainly allows for the interpretation that Bacon did, in fact, “waver.” However, what Anne Bacon, as a zealous Nonconformist, may have regarded as “wavering” from her beliefs and values should not be assumed to imply a general departure from sincere Christian conviction.

On the whole, Jardine and Stewart’s treatment of Bacon appears consciously ambiguous in regard to his personal faith and theological positions. Their work rather reflects than informs the field of Bacon scholarship on this issue. In their presentation of primary material, they have left room for both the recent observation of Bacon’s general “Calvinism” and the modernist opinions of those who follow Josef deMaistre’s opinion that Bacon’s philosophy tends, inherently and necessarily, toward atheism. The biography provides a neat narrative of a Puritan grown lax: Raised in an environment of Nonconformist belief and political interests, Bacon modified his views, to whatever degree, in deference to his political fortunes. Nevertheless, there are several points which Jardine and Stewart have made which are particularly useful for developing a picture of Bacon’s convictions overall. Certainly, among the varieties of “puritan” in Tudor England, Lady Anne Bacon tended toward the more adamantly reformist position, and this was the most direct religious influence on Francis’ youth. Francis received a solid religious education from his own well-educated mother that was duly noted by his other

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 135-36.
Francis Bacon’s earliest connections at court, which he inherited from his parents, could to some degree be considered puritan as opposed to anything else, and in any case tended strongly toward Reformed theology. Finally, Jardine and Stewart have brought due attention to the fact Bacon’s mother had become seriously distressed over her second son’s faith and piety by 1592. Other conclusions in this biography do not follow so readily upon the available evidence, however.

**Breaking Away from the Godly**

There is good reason to question whether Francis ever sympathized with his mother’s Nonconformity once he was on his own. Although he was reading Cartwright at Gray’s Inn and may have been attending Nonconformist sermons with his mother, this is a far cry from being able to say that, even at this time, Francis agreed with what he was reading and hearing. For by the time that he was engaged in these activities, he had already spent considerable time in the house of the same John Whitgift who had already objected to the Nonconformity of Cartwright, and who was later, as Archbishop, to turn his greatest energy toward trying to stamp-out Nonconformity wherever it was to be found. Both Francis and his brother Anthony had been entrusted by their father to Whitgift when they attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and both were tutored by him personally. It would be going too far to predicate Whitgift’s own perspectives and concerns of Francis Bacon, for Bacon’s theological statements, especially in the *Instauratio Magna* writings, were far from Whitgift’s positions. However, at some

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20 Jardine and Stewart cite especially the example of John Walsall, who, in a personal letter to Anne, praised the “true fear of God,” and zealous affection to His Word” of Anthony and Francis. p. 32.

21 Ibid., 34-37 We should note that at the time when Whitgift was at Cambridge it was not necessarily evident that he would act so harshly against puritanism, though he had already made a name for himself by opposing puritanism in debate. In her letter to Anthony, below, Anne describes Whitgift’s actions as stemming from the time when he was at court, and her disappointment in him is something which apparently developed over time. Theologically, Whitgift was, and remained, a committed Calvinist.

22 As a committed Calvinist, Bacon’s profoundly non-Calvinist statements, which we shall note later, would not have sat well with Whitgift.
point after he left home he also departed from his mother’s faith and piety, and there is good reason to believe that Anne, at least, associated her son’s “wavering” with the anti-Puritan opinions and policies of Whitgift.

The letter which Lady Bacon sent to Anthony in 1592 is an important primary source for understanding what James Spedding called “a mother’s anxiety” over the spiritual well-being of both her sons. While Anne expressed serious misgivings about Francis’ faith, as Jardine and Stewart have noted, she did so by way of cautioning Anthony against following either his brother’s example or that of their former teacher, Whitgift. It is clear from the letter that Anne finds it easy to draw a connection between the errors of her second son and the errors of Whitgift. Jardine and Stewart focus on significant phrases excerpted from the letter, but it is worth quoting the section pertaining to Francis’ faith in entirety:

This one chiefest counsel your Christian and natural mother doth give you even before the Lord, that above all worldly respects your carry yourself ever at your first coming as one that doth unfeignedly profess the true religion of Christ, and hath the love of the truth now by long continuance fast settled in your heart, and that with judgment, wisdom, and discretion, and are not afraid or ashamed to testify the same by hearing and delighting in those religious exercises of the sincerer sort, be they French or English. In hoc noli adhibere fratrum tuum ad consilium aut exemplum. Sed plus dehinc. [In this do not be willing to consult your brother in counsel or example, but more hereafter.] If you will be wavering (which God forbid, God forbid), you shall have examples and ill encouragers too many in these days, and that [arch Bish(op), since he was a councillor, is the destruction of our church, for he loves his own glory more than the glory of Christ.]\(^{23}\)

\(^{23}\)WFB VIII, p. 112. The translation from Latin is my adjustment of Jardine and Stewart’s, while the Greek is that of Spedding, which is perfectly solid. *noli adhibere* is only very loosely to be taken as “do not follow” (your brother), which is how Jardine and Stewart rendered it. The phrase is, most literally, “do not wish to consult,” and is packed with classical legal connotations pertaining to the seeking of counsel. Anne, Anthony, and Francis would all have been well aware of the classical legal sense. The sense of this phrase, as I read it, is that Francis had some fairly well-developed opinions and practices which ran counter to Anne’s, and hence, were not to be “consulted.”
Both Francis and Whitgift, now the Archbishop, are examples which Anthony is not to follow. Anne was convinced that Francis was allowing “worldly respects,” or a political concern for appearances, to draw him away from the faith, and this was clearly what had happened, in her opinion, to the Archbishop since he had become a councillor to the Queen. Anne’s words, “but more hereafter,” point toward a postscript in the letter in which she tells Anthony she assumes that his entire household is gathering for prayer twice a day, “having been where reformation is” (meaning Geneva and the Calvinist lands on the Continent.) She follows this with the remark, “your brother is too negligent herein.” Apparently, the example which Anthony was not to follow was that of his brother who was not observing proper Calvinist patterns of personal devotion. At the very least Francis was too permissive or tolerant of those in his household who did not follow these patterns. By 1592 Lady Bacon’s concerns were far from groundless. Francis had taken sides in the controversy over Nonconformity, and he had taken the side of those who were, in the words of John F.H. New, “generally satisfied with the Church’s doctrine, organization, and ceremonial.” Bacon had taken the side of an emerging consensus among the political elite which we will follow New’s example in calling “Anglican.”

Anglican Advice for the Court

In 1589 Francis Bacon circulated a tract in manuscript form entitled, An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England. Bacon was weighing in on the Marprelate Controversy, a tract war begun by the vitriolic Nonconformist who went by the pseudonym “Martin Marprelate.” James Spedding has aptly characterized this exchange as “that disgraceful pamphlet war which raged so furiously in 1588 and 1589 between the revilers of the bishops on the one side, and the

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24 New, 2.
revilers of the Puritans on the other, and in which the appeal was made by both parties to the basest passions and prejudices of the vulgar.\textsuperscript{25} The controversy between the two sides was heating up when Bacon was a student at Cambridge, and his intimate personal acquaintances on both sides gave him a unique perspective. Bacon was careful to “revile” neither side. The tone of this piece is irenic, but his position is far from a true \textit{via media} between Anglican and Puritan.\textsuperscript{26}

Bacon’s tract begins with a lament that such a controversy should have begun among Protestants over things which were not part of the essential “mysteries of faith” which precipitated the Christological controversies which were resolved by the Church Fathers in the early Councils. Rather, the two sides are divided over matters which, for the most part, are matters of “indifference” pertaining to ceremonies and the “extern[al] policy and government of the church.”\textsuperscript{27} He called upon both sides to adopt the more conciliatory approach of the Apostles and early Church Fathers, “which was, in the like and greater cases, not to enter into assertions and positions, but to deliver counsels and advices” and if this was done, the English Church “should need no other remedy at all.”\textsuperscript{28} The most lamentable error of each side lay, according to Bacon, in their insistence that the other side was ungodly. The tract clearly reflects Peter Lake’s “conformist cast of mind” which David L. Smith predicated of Edward Sackville, and which promoted “a plurality

\textsuperscript{25} WFB VIII, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{26} On this point I disagree with a number of scholars who have dismissed this tract too freely as a “compromise” having little actual theological substance. Cf. Jardine and Stewart, p. 125, Julian Matin, pp. 38ff., Perez Zagorin, pp. 6-7. Even when discussing “matters of indifference” one had to take a theological stand in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for the question of \textit{which} issues were actually indifferent was theologically volatile wherever it arose. To advise moderation on theological matters required, itself, a very strong, and well-informed theological stance in an era when theology was so charged.

\textsuperscript{27} WFB VIII, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 75.
of belief within a broad national church.”29 As with Sackville, Bacon expressed a “wider concern to preserve order” in the realm.30 But Smith also cautioned that “people of quite contrasting opinions could claim to be ‘conformists’ in early Stuart England,”31 and this is equally true of late Tudor England. Although the rhetorical flavor of Bacon’s Advertisement is mediating, placing the blame for the controversy squarely upon both sides, it also gives evidence of Bacon’s personal opinions and biases in the matter, particularly when we consider what Bacon finds blameworthy in either side.

The party of the Bishops and those who side with them is reprimanded for their intractability, their heavy-handedness, and their failure to listen fairly to the other side. In short, this party is to blame for the harshly dismissive way in which they handled criticisms and objections. Bishop Thomas Cooper, the first to respond to “Martin Marprelate,” did so admirably, according to Bacon, not sinking to “Marprelate’s” level, but reverently responding to the issues raised rather than to the anonymous person and his language. But others did not follow the example of Bishop Cooper, and are truly guilty of making the matter into a major controversy, for, as Bacon quotes, “he that replieth multiplieth.”32 Among the Anglican party, Bacon noted, “there is not an indifferent hand carried toward these pamphlets as they deserve.”33 While this party began well, they had since become increasingly firm on all matters, denying that there was anything in the Church of England which could benefit from change or reform. The


30 Ibid., 118.

31 Ibid., 128.

32 WFB VIII, p. 77.

33 Ibid., 78.
bishops themselves cannot avoid blame “in standing so precisely upon altering nothing,” and they are certainly guilty of “unbrotherly proceeding” in charging the opposition “as though they denied tribute to Ceasar, and withdrew from the civil magistrate the obedience which they have ever performed and taught.” The Puritans, regardless of what the Bishops may think of their doctrine, were not to be confused with radicals such as the Family of Love, and the Bishops had all too eagerly believed every accusation against the Puritans by which they could be unfairly condemned.34

The Nonconformists, who were increasingly called “Puritans” during this time, were subject to a much weightier censure in Bacon’s Advertisement.35 They were also guilty of “unbrotherly proceeding” in their harsh attacks on the Bishops, who were often godly and “men of great virtues.”36 The Nonconformists had also gone to an extreme in insisting that matters which should be indifferent were not, and then hiding behind the “honorable names of sincerity, reformation and discipline. . . so as contentions and evil zeals are not to be touched, except these holy things be thought first to be violated.” While claiming to be for “reform” the Puritans were actually perpetuating controversies merely for the sake of change. Quoting an unnamed ‘father’ Bacon concluded: “They seek to go forward still, not to perfection, but to change.”37 Some of the Puritans are genuinely responsible for the schism in the church as Whitgift claimed, for, “they refuse to communicate with us, reputing us to have no church.”38 Bacon’s conformity is evident in the use of the first person plural.

34 Ibid., 87-89.
35 On this I concur with Gary Deason who references a significant amount of other evidence of divergence from puritanism throughout chapter two of his dissertation. Cf. Deason, “The philosophy of a Lord Chancellor.”
36WFB, VIII. p. 81.
37 Ibid., 83.
38 Ibid., 86.
There was, according to Bacon, also evidence that the Nonconformists had gone to a dangerous extreme in many of their doctrines, and Bacon associated them with certain heretics. Bacon noted how those most firmly opposed to Arianism in the early Church came to the equally heretical position of Sabellius.\textsuperscript{39} Even so, the Puritans, by the vehemence of their opposition to all things which smacked of Roman Catholicism, had gone to the opposite extreme and begun to discard the good with the bad.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, like those of old who became heretics by virtue of their zeal against heresy, the Nonconformists had chosen a questionable path in their objections to the Church when they claimed that reformation had not gone far enough:

As in affection they challenge the said virtues of zeal and the rest, so in knowledge they attribute to themselves light and perfection. They say, the Church of England in King Edward’s time and in the beginning of her Majesty’s reign, was but in the cradle; and the bishops in those times did somewhat for daybreak, but that maturity and fullness of light proceeded from themselves. So Sabinus, bishop of Heraclea, a Macedonian, said that the fathers in the Council of Nice [the first ecumenical council of Nicea] were but infants and ignorant men; and that the church was not so to persist in their decrees as to refuse that further ripeness of knowledge which the time had revealed. . . . so do they censure men truly and godly wise (who see into the vanity of their assertions) by the name of politiques; saying that their wisdom is but carnal and savouring of man’s brain.\textsuperscript{41}

As a function of the Puritan love for simplicity, which comprehended simple reliance upon Scriptural precedent for all things, and the simple preaching of the Word in sermons as the central mark of the true Church, the Nonconformists had developed a dangerously narrow view of Christianity.

But most of all is to be suspected, as a seed of further inconvenience, their manner of handling the Scriptures; for whilst they seek express Scripture

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 83.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 84.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 91.
for everything’ and that they have (in manner) deprived themselves and
the church of a special help and support by embasing the authority of the
fathers; they resort to naked examples, conceited inferences, and forced
allusions such as do mine into all certainty of religion. Another extremity
is the excessive magnifying of that which, though it be a principal and most
holy institution, yet hath it limits as all things else have. We see
wheresoever (in manner) they find in the Scriptures the word spoken of,
they expound it of preaching. They have made it almost the essence of the
sacrament of the supper, to have a sermon precedent. They have (in sort)
annihilated the use of liturgies, and forms of divine service, although the
house of God be denominated of the principal, domus orationis, a house of
prayer, and not a house of preaching. As for the life of the good monks
and the hermits of the primitive church, I know they will condemn a man
as half a Papist, if he should maintain them as other than profane, because
they heard no sermons. In the meantime, what preaching is, and who may
be said to preach, they make no question. But as far as I see, every man
that presumeth to speak in chair is accounted a preacher. but I am assured
that not a few that call hotly for a preaching ministry deserve to be of the
first themselves to be expelled.42

Bacon’s particular equation of the errors of Nonconformity with ancient heresy suggests
that he was aware of, and utilizing, the historic definition of “heresy”: from the Greek,
airoumai, “to choose” heretics were those who “chose” to separate themselves from the
Church, thus dividing the Church, or who “chose” certain aspects of the faith to
emphasize at the expense of others. Bacon’s discussion concludes as it began, with a plea
that both sides of the controversy rein in their invective before the situation becomes
worse.

It must be borne in mind that Bacon’s argument in the context of the Marprelate
controversy was directed principally against the more extreme manifestations of
Nonconformity as it was to be found in the late 1580’s. Many who were themselves of a
more Reformed frame of mind and would even be regarded as Puritans in other contexts
would have agreed with Bacon’s basic argument against the extreme positions to which he
referred. However, in the course of his discussion, Bacon went far beyond a mere call for

42 Ibid., 93.
peace, and expressed sympathies for a great many ideas which would not sit well with even more moderate Nonconformists. Anne Bacon would have been regarded by many as justified in denouncing her son for subordinating the faith to his own political fortunes. Bacon wrote a number of things which would come to be regarded as “high church” when the term came into general use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the exact form of ceremonies might be open for debate, the importance of ceremonies, or the ordered prayer of the Liturgy, was not, and the efficacy of the Lord’s Supper was neither to be eclipsed by, nor made conditional upon, sound preaching. The authority of the Scriptures, though ultimate, was not to be exclusive, for the church Fathers would thus be denied to the Church. Monks and hermits, at least those of the primitive Church, were mentioned with some reverence, without the suggestion that the monastic calling was in itself dangerous or flawed (this is a point which will resurface in Bacon’s later writing.) On the whole, this suggests that Bacon held a very high view of many things which are not explicitly sanctioned by the Scriptures, at least as the Nonconformists read the Scriptures. And, of course, Nonconformity itself, by insisting on its own rectitude and necessity, was always close to the line of genuine heresy. Bacon’s censure of the bishops may have been moderated by his political situation, but there can be no question that Bacon clearly distanced himself from the Nonconformists in this tract, while at the same time, he argued vigorously that they should be tolerated and embraced as brothers. Significantly, his objections to the Nonconformists were theological, while his objections to the positions of the bishops were issues of casuistry and behavior.

Jardine and Stewart have largely dismissed the significance of the Advertisement because it was clearly written in a political context, and hence it only reflects what Bacon had to say for his political fortunes, and not what he may actually have believed on the subject. Yet Bacon has said a great deal which he would not have had to say to be
politically correct. Neither does Bacon side unreservedly with the bishops, but he rather admits that the politically disenfranchised Nonconformists may have legitimate concerns.

Self-fashioning is an important concept in understanding all figures at court, but we must remember that it does not necessarily preclude sincerity. Neither can it be allowed to be the only motivation for action and writing, even at court. There is no reason to suspect that in 1589 Bacon was offering anything other than his honest, if carefully worded, opinion. In support of this, when Bacon’s later theological statements are considered, the opinions expressed here appear to reflect Bacon’s early movement as an adult away from the “severer sort of Protestantism” and (eventually) toward a minority position of “anti-Calvinism” which would serve his natural philosophy well. As we will see in the next chapter, Bacon’s literary circle reflects this anti-Calvinist turn of the adult Bacon as well.

**At Issue with the Calvinist Norm in *Meditationes Sacrae***

Throughout his life Bacon would use Calvinist language and terminology to wrestle with Calvinist questions. This may be understood as evidence of the degree to which English theology was dominated by the constructs and formulae of the *Institutes*, but it certainly also supports the notion that Bacon’s own Calvinist heritage had a lasting influence upon his thinking. However, the use of Calvinist language did not preclude serious disagreement with the distinguishing features of Calvinism. As with many others situated at the close of the sixteenth and dawn of the seventeenth centuries, Bacon became dissatisfied with Calvin’s distinctive answers to many questions of the Faith. It is important to note that the phase of Bacon’s life in which he wrestled with, and finally diverged from, Reformed theology were the years in which the plan of the Instauration was rapidly developing. Later in life Bacon wrote to Father Fulgentino that his first attempt at writing down his thoughts on the reform of natural philosophy occurred when
he was in London at the age of twenty four, in other words, in 1585. By his own confession to Lord Burghley, in a letter of 1592, he was at that time obsessed with his plans for the reform of learning, and was eagerly seeking a position which would allow him to direct his attention completely to natural philosophy.

One marker along the path of Bacon’s departure from Calvin’s influence is the *Meditationes Sacrae*, which he published in 1597 in one volume along with his first edition of the *Essays* and his *Colors of Good and Evil*. Benjamin Milner has noted that while the *Meditationes* generally deal with themes which are fairly common in the Protestant Reformation, in dealing with the particular topics of “Atheism” and “Heresy” Bacon adopted a distinctly Calvinist approach. However, Bacon does not merely reproduce Calvin’s arguments, even if he borrows from them, and in the case of his meditation on heresy Bacon goes out of his way to distance himself from one of Calvin’s more controversial conclusions. This particular divergence from Calvin, which went

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43 WFB XIV, pp. 375-77.

44 Cf. Bacon’s Letter to Burghley, WFB VIII, pp. 108-09. Bacon clearly claims to have had this intent for some time, but this letter is the earliest description of what the Instauration would involve. His description of his intent is detailed, and suggests that the basic idea of the need for a reform of learning had been well thought out during preceding years. Following on Bacon’s letter to Father Fulgentino, Benjamin Farrington has placed the writing of Bacon’s earliest philosophical manuscript, his *Temporis Partus Maximus*, to the period of his first term in parliament, some years before the letter to Burghley, when Bacon was about twenty-four. *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, (University of Chicago, 1964), 12} This essay has not survived, but knowledge of its existence allows us to plot a trajectory for the development of the Instauration plan. The letter to Burghley makes it clear that Bacon wanted to move the reform of learning into high gear at that time. Thus, Markku Peltonnen has aptly described the period of the 1590’s as one of Bacon’s “intellectual gestation.” *(The Cambridge Companion to Bacon,*, pp. 4-5)

45 The *Essays* of 1597 are not extensive, representing a very early draft on the part of Bacon. These three sections of his 1597 book are divisible topically: the *Meditationes* are theological and religious in nature, the *Colors* is a treatise of practical moral philosophy in the classical tradition, and the *Essays* cover his musings upon other topics in the spirit of Montaigne. In particular, it should be noted that the *Colors of Good and Evil* *(WFB VII, pp. 65-92)* as a treatise of moral philosophy in the classical tradition is compatible with Bacon’s general theological statements at this time, it does not itself venture into distinctly religious or theological topics by which we could gain insight into his place within the religious/theological scenario of the time.

unobserved by Milner, is significant for understanding the continuing development of
Bacon’s thought.

It is clear from all of Bacon’s Meditations that while pursuing questions of the
faith and theology the significance of these questions for the reform of natural philosophy
was very much on his mind. This is certainly evident in his meditation on heresy. The
essay on heresy expounds the words of Christ to the Sadducees, the arch-heretics of the
Gospels, in Matthew 22:29: “Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”
Bacon wrote:

Canon iste materomnium canonum adversus haereses. Duplex errores
causa, ignorantio voluntas Dei, et ignorantio vel levior contemplatio
potestatis Dei. Voluntas Dei revelatur magis per scripturas, Scrutamini;
potestas magis per creaturas, Contemplamini; Ita asserenda plenitudo
potestatis Dei, ne maculemus voluntatem. Ita asserenda bonitas voluntatis,
ne minusamus potestatem. [This canon is the mother of all canons against
heresies. The cause of error is twofold: ignorance of the will of God, and
ignorance or superficial consideration of the power of God. The will of
God is more revealed through the Scriptures: Search the Scriptures; his
power more through his creatures: Behold and consider the creatures. So
is the plenitude of God’s power to be asserted, as not to involve any
imputation upon his will. So is the goodness of his will to be asserted, as
not to imply any derogation of his power.]17

Throughout Bacon’s philosophical writings he relies heavily upon the distinction which
he draws from Matthew 22:29 between the revelation of the will of God in the Scriptures
and the revelation of God’s power in the creatures. We will examine the implications of
this distinction in chapter five. For now, we should note that heresy, according to the
scheme which Bacon has set up, can potentially come from the misunderstanding of
nature, God’s creatures, as well as the more traditional explanation, that it is the result of
misunderstanding or misreading the Scriptures. The balance in wording in the Latin of the

17 WFB VII, pp. 240-241. The translation is from the 1598 republishing of this volume in which the
Meditationes Sacrae appeared in English. (WFB VII, p. 252) The translator is unknown, and although it is
quite accurate, it is uncertain whether the translation had Bacon’s approval. (Cf. WFB VII, p. 229).
last two sentences is significant, for it sets the course for the rest of Bacon’s essay. Again reflecting his knowledge of the original meaning of heresy, Bacon is seeking a balance which avoids emphasizing God’s power over the goodness of His will, or emphasizing God’s good will at the expense of His absolute power. True religion, Bacon says, is situated in the middle: “Itaque religio vera sita est in mediocritate.”

After establishing the double source of heresy, Bacon left aside those heresies which resulted from confusion over God’s will, and focused his attention on those which arise from denying, to some degree, God’s absolute power. The most grievous denial of God’s power is atheism, according to Bacon, after which come three lesser degrees of denial: the problem of dualism, in which an equal and opposite principle is opposed to God’s goodness, followed by the neoplatonic error of setting a privative principle, or a tendency toward dissolution in opposition to God’s sustaining power, and finally the error of those who deny God’s power by asserting that sin, at least, is solely the result of humanity’s choice. While this idea would later be associated with Arminianism, in 1597

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48 Masculine references to God are in keeping with the practice of Bacon’s era, and Bacon’s own conceptions (as well as those of the other writers considered in this study). While I acknowledge the gendered implications of this practice, there is an overriding concern in this study for historical accuracy in the portrayal of Bacon’s thought. In regard to Bacon it is particularly important to maintain his gendered language and conceptions throughout the discussion for, as Carolyn Merchant made clear in her book, The Death of Nature (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1980), the question of the early modern gendering of all things is essential for understanding the course of (particularly Baconian) science. Iddo Landau has raised significant objections to some of the tenets of the feminist criticism of Bacon (“Feminist criticisms of metaphors in Bacon’s philosophy of science” Philosophy, v. 73, n 283 (Jan. 1998), 47-62.) Notably, Landau does not deny the gendering of Bacon’s language, but rather contests the more extreme feminist interpretation. This debate demonstrates that Bacon’s gendered language is a significant point in historical discussions, and, though I have attempted to use inclusive references whenever it can be justified, Bacon’s gendered concepts must remain intact if we are attempting to understand him in historical context.

49 WFB VII, p. 241. This, I believe, should also inform our interpretation of Bacon’s family motto, mediocria firma, as representing not necessarily compromise but also, potentially, the avoidance of error. There is more than one way to interpret the value of the “middle way.” This should certainly inform our reading of Bacon’s advice to King James in Considerations touching the better Pacification and Edification of the Church of England where he advises James that as the “Christian moderator” he is “disposed to find out the golden mediocrity in the establishment of that which is sound, and in the reparation of that which is corrupt and decayed.” He is not advising compromise, but rectitude. (WFB X, p. 104.)
the works of Arminius were not yet available, particularly in England. However, Calvin’s doctrine had no shortage of objectors prior to Arminius to whom Calvin himself responded. It is clear from the text that Bacon’s discussion is dependent upon Calvin’s discussion in the *Institutes* and that, for the sake of discussion at least, he is objecting to those whom Calvin set up for himself as targets in the *Institutes*. Bacon is not only borrowing from Calvin, he is responding to him, and his response makes it clear that he is distancing himself from the Reformer:

*Tertius gradus eorum, qui arctant et restringunt opinionem priorem tantum ad actiones humanas, quae participante ex peccato, quas volunt substantive, absque nexus aliquo causarum, ex interna voluntate et arbitrio humano pendere; statuuntque latiores terminos scientiae Dei quam potestatis, vel potius ejus partis potestatis Dei (nam est ipsa scientia potestas est) qua scit, quam ejus qua movet et agit; ut praesciat quaedam otiose, quae non praedestinet et praerodinet. Et non absimile est figmento quod Epicurus introduxit in Democritismum, ut fatum tolleret et fortunae locum daret; declinationem videlicet atomi; quod semper a prudentioribus inanissimum commentum habitum est. Sed quidquid a Deo non pendet, ut authore et principio, per nexus et gradus subordinatos, id loco Dei erit, et novum principium, et deaster quidam. Quare merito illa opinio respuitur, ut laesio et diminutio majestatis et postestatis Dei. Et tamen admodum recte dicitur quod Deus non sit author mali, non quia non author, sed quia non mali. [The third degree is of those who limit and restrain the former opinion to human actions only, which partake of sin: which actions they suppose to depend substantively and without any chain of causes upon the inward will and choice of man; and who give a wider range to the knowledge of God than to his power; or rather to that part of God’s power (for knowledge itself is power) whereby he knows, than to that whereby he works and acts; suffering him to foreknow some things as an unconcerned looker on, which he does not predestine and preordain: a notion not unlike the figment which Epicurus introduced into the philosophy of Democritus, to get rid of fate and make room for fortune; namely the sidelong motion of the Atom; which has ever by the wiser sort been accounted a very empty device. But the fact is that whatever does

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51 In England Tyacke notes that these have been called “Arminians avant la lettre,” but Tyacke has coined the preferable, non-anachronistic term “anti-Calvinists” which has gained currency in English Reformation scholarship as noted before. (cf. Tyacke, p. 4.)
not depend upon God as author and principle, by links and subordinate degrees, the same will be instead of God, and a new principle and kind of usurping God. And therefore that opinion is rightly rejected as treason against the majesty and power of God. And yet for all that it is very truly said that God is not the author of evil; not because he is not author, -- but because not of evil.\textsuperscript{52}

Bacon, very much like Calvin, is concerned, first of all, with safeguarding God’s omnipotence. In a similar argument Calvin also makes the point that God is not to be regarded as idle (otiose), but active in creation:

\begin{quote}
Et sane omnipotentiam sibi vendicat ac deferri a nobis vult Deus, non qualem sophistae fingunt inanem, otiosam & fere sopitam, sed vigilem, efficacem, operosam, & quae in continuo actu versetur. [And truly God claims omnipotence to himself, and would have us acknowledge it, -- not the vain, indolent, slumbering omnipotence which sophists feign, but vigilant, efficacious, energetic, and ever active.]
\end{quote}

Calvin, also, is interested in eliminating the philosophical concept of fortune or chance.\textsuperscript{53}

For both Calvin and Bacon God is active in all parts of creation. For both Calvin and Bacon there is nothing which happens which God has not ordained beforehand. As Calvin put it:

\begin{quote}
non erraticam vel potentiam, vel actionem, vel motionem esse in creaturis: sed arcano Dei consilio sic regi ut nihil contingat nisi ab ipso sciente & volente decretum. [there is no random power, or agency, or motion in the creatures, who are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing happens but what he has knowingly and willingly decreed.]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} WFB VII, p. 240. [Translation, WFB VII, pp. 253-54.]

\textsuperscript{53} Institutes, I, 16, 3. [Tr. Henry Beveridge edition] The Latin is taken from an edition of Calvin’s Institutes which was published in England in 1576, as this edition would have been current in Bacon’s context. All eccentricities in spelling, here and in the quotations that follow, are original. (Cf. Joanne Caluino, Institutio Christianae Religionis, London, 1576.)

\textsuperscript{54} “Quo melius pateat hoc discrimen, sciemendum est, prouidentiam Dei, qualis traditur in Scriptura, fortunae & casibus fortunitis opponi. (Institutes, I, 16, 2. Cf. Institutes, I, 16, 8.)

\textsuperscript{55} Institutes, I, 16, 3. [Tr. Henry Beveridge edition] Although this is spoken with reference to the heavenly bodies, Calvin employs it as a general principle which should ward off the superstition of Astrology. We should note that Calvin does not apply “predestination” to creation generally, but specifically to the doctrine of election and reprobation. Cf. Institutes, III, 23. The principle of God’s prior ordination is, nonetheless, applicable equally to the doctrines of election and the governance of creation by God’s special providence.
Similarly, Bacon’s concern that God’s power should not be diminished even for the seemingly pious cause of exempting God from implication in sin reflects the argument of Calvin, who for his part maintained that there must be a distinction between God’s secret will, and his manifest precept. Therefore sinners are not exempt from guilt because, in Calvin’s reasoning, they will be judged according to the precept even though they were obeying God’s secret will. Bacon does not here make such a distinction in order to free God from the guilt of sin while preserving His power. There is a significant disagreement between Calvin and Bacon on what was implied by God’s “foreordination” of events.

Bacon wrote of God as author “by links and subordinate degrees” [per nexus et gradus subordinatos] and similarly cautioned against regarding sin as being “substantively and without any chain of causes” dependent upon “the inward will and choice of man” [quas volunt substantive, absque nexu aliquo causarum, ex interna voluntate et arbitrio humano pendere]. What Bacon is arguing against here is a fairly extreme position, which would make sin fall outside of those things which are controlled and circumscribed by God’s power, and rendering God “idle” [otiose], rather than an active participant in creation, at least for the purposes of sin. However, for Bacon it is enough to recognize God as omnipotent if He governs the “chain of causes.” God’s actions do not have to be immediate in all things for God to remain omnipotent. This runs counter to Calvin, who allowed for no action to occur in the world which was not directly and immediately God’s action, whether in inanimate objects or in humanity. In regard to inanimate objects Calvin argued specifically against any chain of causes:

\[ Ac de rebus quidem inanimatus sic habendum est, quamuis naturaliter singulis indita sit sua proprietas, vim tamen suam non exerere, nisi quatenus praesenti Dei manu diriguntur. Sunt igitur nihil aliud quam instrumenta quibus Deus assidué instillat quantum vult efficaciae, & pro suo arbitrio ad hanc vel illam actioné flectit ac convertit. \]

[With regard to inanimate objects again we must hold that though each is possessed of its

\[ \text{Institutes, I, 18, 4.} \]
peculiar properties, yet all of them exert their force only in so far as directed by the immediate hand of God. Hence they are merely instruments, into which God constantly infuses what energy he sees meet, and turns and converts to any purpose at his pleasure.] 57

Calvin allowed no room for a distinction between God’s “general providence,” as the natural order of activity in the world, and his “special providence,” by which He would circumvent the normal chain of causes and act more immediately. All of God’s action was, for Calvin, a “special providence.” 58

When Calvin’s immediate action of God is applied to human actions, the result is that there is no room for any genuine free will, for nothing occurs that God has not expressly and directly willed to occur. God does not merely permit sin, Calvin argued at length, 59 but God Himself actively arranged all situations so that when sin occurs there is no alternative. While human beings themselves are held guilty for willing to do evil, it is clear from Calvin that human will is so bounded by divine will that they were not able to will otherwise. Thus Calvin argued that God does not merely desert the reprobate, turning them over to the temptation of Satan, but God is actively arranging their evil:

Sed nihil clarius potest desiterari quam ubi toties pronuntiat se excaecare hominum metes, ac vertigine percutere, spiritu soporis inebriare, incutere amentiam, obdurare corda. Haec etiam ad permissionem multi reiiciunt, acsi deseroendo reprobos, a Satana excaecari niseret. Sed quam disere expeimt Spiritus, iusto Dei iudicio infligis caecitatem & amentiam, nimis frivola est illa solutio. Dicitur induraste cor Pharaonis, item aggravasse,

57 _Institutes_, I, 16, 2. [Translation, H. Beveridge.] The Latin is notably stronger, I believe, than Beveridge’s translation here, allowing for nothing but the voluntary and immediate action of God in all things. Hence, _vim tamen suam non exerere, nisi quatenus praeenti Dei manu diriguntur_, would be more accurately stated, “yet all of them do not exert their force except in so far as the present hand of God directs them,” and _nihil aliud quam instrumenta_ is “nothing other than instruments.”

58 Cf. _Institutes_, I, 16, 4. While seeming, in the latter part of this _locus_ to concede a universal providence, he accepts it only in so far as his objectors will concede to him that it only _appears_ that God is merely maintaining the order of nature appointed by Him eternally. Consider, _Neque tamen quod de universalis providentia dicitur in totum repudi: modo vicissim hoc mihi concedat, mundum a Deo regi, non tantum quia positum a se naturae ordinem tuetur, se quia peculiarem uniusuisque ex suis operibus curam gerit._

59 _Institutes_, I, 18,1-3.
& roborasse. Eludunt insulso cavillo quidam has loquendi formas: quia
dum alibi dicitur Pharaoh ipse aggravasse cor suum, indurationis causa
ponitur eius voluntas. Quasi vero non optime conueniant haec duo inter
se, licet diversis modis, hominem, ubi agitur a Deo, simul tamen agere.

[But nothing can be clearer than the many passages which declare, that he
blinds the minds of men, and smites them with giddiness, intoxicates them
with a spirit of stupor, renders them infatuated, and hardenstheir hearts.
Even these expressions many would confine to permissions as if, by
deserting the reprobate, he allowed them to be blinded by Satan. But since
the Holy Spirit distinctly says, that the blindness and infatuation are
inflicted by the just Judgment of God, the solution is altogether
inadmissible. He is said to have hardened the heart of Pharaoh, to have
hardened it yet more, and confirmed it. Some evade these forms of
expression by a silly cavil, because Pharaoh is elsewhere said to have
hardened his own heart, thus making his will the cause of hardening it; as if
the two things did not perfectly agree with each other, though in different
senses--viz. that man, though acted upon by God, at the same time also
acts.]  

This argument which presents human will as completely circumscribed and bound by the
immediate actions of God pertains, in Calvin, to humanity after the Fall. Before the Fall
Calvin does claim that humanity had “free will,” but he does not discuss how this can be.
For example, in the original sin, humanity could choose to eat of the forbidden tree
according to “free will” but at the same time, Adam and Eve could not have chosen not to,
because God, in His Will, did not give them the gift of “perseverance” by which they
could have avoided sin. Calvin concluded that it is better not to inquire further into the
matter.

Ultimately, God is, for Calvin, what God cannot be allowed to be for Bacon:
necessarily the author of evil. According to Book I, chapter 18 of the Institutes:

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60 Institutes, I, 18, 2. [Beveridge translation.] Again, the Latin is seemingly stronger than the translation:
“ubi agitur a Deo, simul tamen agere.” Man’s action is under, or completely circumscribed by the action
of God, not merely influenced by it as Beveridge’s translation might suggest.

61 Cf. Institutes, II, 2.

62 Cf. Institutes, I, 15, 8.
It is difficult to regard Bacon’s final word on the subject as anything less than a response to, and distancing himself from, Calvin’s opinion. Bacon cannot conceive of God as the author of evil without “imputation upon his will,” and a denial of the necessity of balancing God’s power and His goodness, which he demanded at the beginning of his essay on heresies. As it became clear during the Arminian Controversy, there were any number of Calvinists who were far from comfortable with the radical determinism of the more literal adherents of Calvin’s system, although they still referred to Calvin’s writings to sort out the dilemma. Bacon, however, introduced the idea of a chain or order of causes, for which Calvin’s system did not have room, and this chain of causes is important for understanding how Bacon argued for God’s omnipotence, while at the same time concluding that God, according to His goodness, is not the author of evil. On this point Bacon drew upon a much earlier writer, who was also concerned with preserving both the goodness and the omnipotence of God, St. Augustine.

63 Institutes, I, 18, 3. [Beveridge translation.] This is the point in Calvin which Benjamin Milner has avoided, claiming that Calvin’s freeing of God from the guilt of sin, is equivalent to Bacon’s demand that God not be regarded as the author of evil. Cf. Milner, pp. 248-249.

64 Thus “sublapsarianism” and “infralapsarianism” developed in opposition to the strict “supralapsarianism” of early Genevan Calvinism. Each group had a different understanding of the chronological order of God’s decrees. For a concise discussion of the differences separating these groups see Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910.) book 3, chapter 14. Thomas Cartwright, however, who was one of the champions of English Nonconformity and whom Bacon had read at Gray’s Inn, in addition to probably having met him at Cambridge, took the more radical view. Cf. Cartwright, A Treatise of Christian Religion, (London, 1616.) pp. 38-41.
In the fifth book of the *City of God*, Augustine argued against Cicero’s understanding that a divine foreknowledge of the order of causes was antithetical to human free will. Augustine responded:

> Non est autem consequens, ut, si Deo certus est omnium ordo causarum, ideo nihil, sin in nostrae voluntatis arbitrio. Et ipsae quippe nostrae voluntates in causearum ordine sunt, qui certus est Deo eiusque praescientia continetur, quoniam et humanae voluntates humanorum operum causae sunt; atque ita, qui omnes rerum causas praesciit, profecto in eis causis etiam nostras voluntates ignorare non potuit, quas nostrum operum causas esse praesciuit. [But it does not follow that, though there is for God a certain order of all causes, there must therefore be nothing depending on the free exercise of our own wills, for our wills themselves are included in that order of causes which is certain to God, and is embraced by His foreknowledge, for human wills are also causes of human actions; and He who foreknew all the causes of things would certainly among those causes not have been ignorant of our wills.]

Neither is “foreknowledge” to be regarded as something apart from God’s “supreme power” in this section or anywhere in the *City of God*, even as Bacon insisted that God’s foreknowledge was not to be given a “wider range” than his power. After discussing the various types of causes in the order of causes Agustine clarified this point:

> sed omnia maxime Dei voluntati subdita sunt, cui etiam voluntates omnes subiciuntur, quia non habent potestatem nisi quam ille concedit. Causa itaque rerum, quae facit nec fit, Deus est; aliae vero causae et faciunt et fiunt. [But all of them are most of all subject to the will of God, to whom all wills also are subject, since they have no power except what He has bestowed upon them. The cause of things, therefore, which makes but is not made, is God; but all other causes both make and are made.]

Thus, for Augustine, while humans could act, and sin, according to genuine free will, it was not possible that humans could do anything contrary to, or even apart from, the

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power of God (not, notably, that humans could do nothing which was not the very will of God, as per Calvin.) Sin did not develop in some vacuum of divine activity.

Therefore, throughout the *City of God*, the foreknowledge of God is connected to His power in such a way that nothing occurs which God has not foreknown, handled “in advance,” and made part of His prearranged plan, according to His power:

\[\text{Sed quia Deus cuncta praesciuit et ideo quoque hominem peccatorum ignorare non potuit: secundum id, quod praesciuit atque disposuit, ciuitatem sanctam debemus adserere, non secundum illud, quod in nostram cognitionem peruenire non potuit, quia in Dei dispositione non fuit. Neque enim homo peccato suo datunum potuit perturbare consilium, quasi Deum quod statuera mutare compulerit; com Deus praesciendo utrumque praeuenerit, id est, et homo, quem bonum ipse creauit, quam malus esset futurus, et quid boni etiam sic de illu esset ipse facturus.} \]

[But because God foresaw all things, and was therefore not ignorant that man also would fall, we ought to consider this holy city in connection with what God foresaw and ordained, and not according to our own ideas, which do not embrace God's ordination. For man, by his sin, could not disturb the divine counsel, nor compel God to change what He had decreed; for God's foreknowledge had anticipated both,-that is to say, both how evil the man whom He had created good should become, and what good He Himself should even thus derive from him.]

Thus Augustine had no difficulty in making “sin” part of the greater plan of salvation, all of which God “predestined,” determining in advance that humanity should be allowed

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67 De Civitate Dei, XIV, 11. (Corpus Christianorum, v. 48, p. 431.) [Tr. Marcus Dods, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 1, v.2, p. 271.] Cf. De Civitate Dei, XII, 23. Emphasis my own. Dods’ translation of disposuit as “ordained” is good, as it preserves the sense of “setting in order” which is also found in the Latin synonym ordinare.

68 It is in light of the coming of Christ in time, which, according to Augustine, would not have occurred were it not for the fall, that Augustine asks the rhetorical question: “... nisi quia in eius aeternitate atque in ipso Verbo eius eidem coaeternato iam predestinatione fixum erat, quod suo tempore futurum erat?” (De Civitate Dei, XII, 17. Corpus Christianorum, v. 48, p. 373. Note, this occurs as section 16 of Book XII in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series.) Augustine specifically describes that which occurs in time as “predestined” and “fixed” in the context of the entire process by which the Word, and eternal life, would be made real in time. Thus Bacon’s usage of praeolestinet (lit. to prearrange, or fix beforehand) and preordinet is in keeping with Augustine’s language, while, as we have noted (Cf. fn. 54), Calvin only applied “predestination” to the action of election.
to abuse free will in light of the greater good which would come of it in the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{69}

In the course of Augustine’s discussion, the order of causes which includes humanity’s genuine free will serves a very specific purpose: it retains God’s position as the omnipotent cause of all things, while moving the cause of evil down on the scale into the realm of human free will. Thus Augustine claimed:

\begin{quote}
Sicut enim omnium naturarum creator est, ita omnium potestatum dator, non voluntatum. Male quippe voluntates ab illo non sunt, quoniam contra naturam sunt, quae ab illo est. [For, as He is the creator of all natures, so also is He the bestower of all powers, not of all wills; for wicked wills are not from Him, being contrary to nature, which is from Him.]
\end{quote}

According to Augustine’s order of causes, God can only be held accountable for sin in that He created man capable of sin, and knowing that it would inevitably happen. Thus God can be said to be the ultimate cause of sin, because He willingly created the situation in which He knew it would happen. Although that makes God part of the chain, He is removed from being the \textit{voluntary} cause of sin.\textsuperscript{70} Evil (in the human sphere, not among angels) had as its source the free will of humans:

\begin{quote}
Deus enim creavit hominem rectum, naturarum auctor, non utique uitiorum: sed sponte deprauatus iusteque damnatus deprauatos damnatosque generavit. . . .Ac per hoc a liberi arbitrii malo usu series calamitatis huius exorta est, . . . [For God, the author of natures, not of vices, created man upright; but man, being of his own will corrupted, and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned children. . . .And thus,
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{69} This concept is stated even more explicitly than in the above passage in \textit{De Civitate Dei}, XXII, 1. where Augustine says that in spite of His knowledge that man would use his free will to sin, “nec illi ademit liberi arbitrii potestatem, simul praecidens, quid boni de malo eius esse ipsi facturus.” God, therefore, had already determined that man’s sin would be a part of His plan and He would make good from evil. (\textit{Corpus Christianorum}, v. 48, p. 807.)


\textsuperscript{71} On the concept of voluntary causation cf. \textit{De Civitate Dei}, V, 9, passim.
\end{flushright}
from the bad use of free will, there originated the whole train of calamities. . . ]

Thus Augustine’s use of the order of causes preserved the entire balance demanded by Bacon’s discussion of heresies: God’s absolute power was preserved, for He is never an idle observer. God’s goodness was preserved, for He is not the voluntary cause of evil. It is also important to note that according to Augustine, humanity did not suffer a sudden and complete loss of his free will in the fall. In speaking of human free will Augustine always described something in continual existence. This is a significant point of separation between Augustine and any form of Calvinism, for Calvin stated unequivocally that whatever free will humans may be said to have had before the fall was taken from them afterward.

We can have no doubt that Augustine himself did not see the ambiguities in his system which would plague subsequent Western theologians. Augustine’s true position on the question of free will versus predestination has been the subject of fierce debate for

72 De Civitate Dei, XIII, 14. (Corpus Christianorum, v. 48, p. 395-96.) [Tr. Marcus Dods, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 1, v.2, p. 251.] I have adjusted Dods’ translation of calamitatis as “evils” to avoid the suggestion that Augustine used exactly the same word as Bacon.

73 Calvin’s reading of Augustine, in Institutes, II, 2, is an attempt to make Augustine the sole supporter of Calvin’s own extreme position, but it is not reflective of the consistency with which Augustine defends the concept of free will. It is rather an example of how Augustine could be turned toward many ends, as Gottschalk and Erigena had done some six centuries earlier. Calvin chose to avoid mention of the very sections which Bacon followed in adopting the idea of a chain of causes.

74 Institutes I, 15, 8. We should note that the separations in Calvinism which admitted for varying interpretations of the significance of pre-lapsarian free will (the “supralapsarians,” “infralapsarians,” “sublapsarians,” etc.), were concerned only with man’s original free will, and all were agreed, against the Arminians, that this free will was subsequently lost. Cf. Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910.) book 3, chapter 14.

There is a popular conception that Augustine’s quarrel with Pelagius was over “free will,” which Pelagius championed and Augustine denied. But the real issue in the Pelagian controversy was over the role of the human will in the process of Conversion and Salvation. Augustine, even in his Anti-Pelagian writings, always maintained that mankind had free will after the Fall, but he argued, against Pelagius, that man did not have the power to use that will to turn to God, and hence conversion was always a divine work, not a matter of human choice. See Augustine’s discussion in Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 1, vol. 5, pp. 378-79.
many centuries. Both sides of the predestinarian controversy of the ninth century could appeal to Augustine for support, and quotations from Augustine saturate the writings of Calvin as well. However, it is always significant in later thinkers to take note of which passages they choose in Augustine to support their particular points. In the case of Bacon, it is significant that he has, amidst the ambiguities of Augustine, attached himself to an argument used by Augustine for the specific purpose of carving-out a space for a genuinely free will in humans, both before and after the Fall.

Bacon’s Instauration, which was very much on his mind during the time when he was writing the Meditations Sacrae, was to be a human project, requiring human power or industry, and genuine human agency. As Karl Wallace has observed, the distinctive feature of Bacon’s understanding of the human will was the “power of choice.” From the beginning of the Instauratio Magna Bacon’s new method is presented as an alternative to the old way of error, which would require a free choice, on the part of his readers, even as the old way had been the result of humanity actively placing trust in erroneous methods. The key to the advancement of the sciences was making this choice. For, as Bacon claimed in Valerius Terminus, man could obtain comprehension of the entire created order, if he would act on his own divinely given power: “if man will open and dilate the powers of his understanding as he may.” Augustine, who made human free will an essential part of the order of causes, was compatible with other currents of Bacon’s thought at this time, while Calvin, who denied any genuine human agency after the Fall, was not.


76 Karl Wallace, Francis Bacon on the Nature of Man, (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 140.

77 WFB, III, p. 221.
God’s omnipotence, for Augustine, functioned in such a way that God was never separate from the motions of His creation: never idle, but always actively involved, even when humans were making free choices. In a similar way, Bacon conceived his Instauration as both a work of God, and a work of human agency and achievement, based on the differing places of God and man in the order of causation. Hence, in the *Novum Organum*, when Bacon is presenting the reasons why his readers should adopt a hopeful outlook for the success of his project he gives both a divine and a human reason for this hope: In the first place, God, in His providence, has already set the Instauration in motion, and God will always bring his own works to completion. In the second place, and immediately following this point, the Instauration had not occurred in the past because humanity had not tried it before, but there was nothing in nature itself which prevented it, and now it will succeed if the past errors are corrected, as it is within the scope of human power to do.78

Most of the *Meditationes Sacrae* reflects ideas common to all forms of Christianity, though there is a clear preoccupation with the relationship between God and nature.79 However, there is further evidence in the *Meditationes* of a movement in Bacon’s thought away from Calvinism and toward the perspectives of Christian antiquity which will become more pronounced in later writings. In an essay on hypocrites, Bacon wrote the following concerning monasticism, which, by Protestant consensus, had come to embody the spiritual pomp and arrogance which were the hallmarks of hypocrisy:

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78 Aphorisms XCIII and XCIV respectively. WFB I, p. 200. Translation: WFB IV, pp. 91-92.

79 For example, Bacon begins the *Meditationes* with a brief consideration of the works of God and the works of man, then discusses the significance of the miracles of Christ to the laws of Nature which God had established in creation. This is followed by a meditation on the innocency of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent (from Matt. 10:16), in which Bacon defends the idea of experimental knowledge from its pious detractors. (WFB, VII, pp. 233-35. English translation, pp. 243ff.) These themes will enter into the discussion in chapter five.
Qui error monasticae vitae non pricipium quidem dedit (nam initia bona fuerunt), sed excessum addidit. Recte enim dictum est, Orandi munus magnum esse munus in ecclesia; et ex usu ecclesiae est, ut sint coetus hominum a mundanis curis soluti, qui assiduis et devotis precibus Deum pro ecclasiae statu sollicitent. Sed huic ordinationi illa hypocrisia finitima est; nec universa institutio reprobatur, sed spiritus illi se efferentes cohibentur: [By which error the life monastic was, not indeed originated (for the beginning was good), but carried into excess. For it is rightly said that the office of prayer is a great office in the Church; and it is for the service of the Church that there should be companies of men relieved from cares of the world, who may pray to God without ceasing for the state of the Church. But this institution is a near neighbor to that form of hypocrisy which I speak of: nor is the institution itself meant to be condemned; but only those self-exalting spirits to be restrained.]

Calvin also had claimed that monasticism was good in its original form, but for a much different reason. In book four of the Institutes, Calvin denounced the recent forms of monasticism because they had wandered from their original purpose, which was to provide the Church with trained and pious clergy. Calvin acknowledged that the majority of monastics did not move on to “greater offices” [ad maiora munera], and never intended to, but he contended, nevertheless, that early monastic communities were defensible for precisely this purpose. In this way Calvin could exonerate some of his favorite sources, Augustine and the Cappadocian fathers, for whom monasticism was an important and necessary institution. For Bacon, however, monasticism was a valuable institution in and of itself, for the same reason which the early monastics themselves gave, namely that there should be a class or order within the church allowed to go into seclusion for a life of perpetual prayer. The value of monasticism in the Church for Calvin was time-bound. Its role had been supplanted by seminaries. The value of monasticism in the Church for Bacon was intrinsic. Later, when Bacon addressed the office of monasticism

80 WFB, VII, p. 238. translation, p. 249.

81 Institutes, book 4, chapter 13, 8.
in *The Advancement of Learning*, he noted that it “hath been truly esteemed an office in the Church” to be about a life of incessant prayer and contemplation.82 Bacon’s perspective on monasticism was not entirely foreign to Protestantism,83 but it is significantly different from that of Calvin.84 While monasteries were a thing of the past in Tudor England, there were still those like Bacon’s close friend Lancelot Andrewes who lived, and valued, a life of pious and chaste seclusion.

**Bacon’s Confession of Faith: Further Evidence of a Patristic Turn**

The clearest evidence from Bacon’s own texts of a profound movement away from Calvinism during the late 1580’s and early 1590’s is his *Confession of Faith*. The dating of the *Confession* is uncertain, but the earliest extant manuscript copy, written in the hand of a secretary, ascribes it to “Mr.” Bacon, which, as Spedding noted, would place it prior to his knighthood in 1603.85 The language is polished and the thoughts are carefully organized in the manuscript edition, suggesting that Bacon had been working these ideas out for some time. However, the doctrinal content itself suggests that he had moved beyond the fairly standard formulations of the *Meditationes Sacrae*, and had

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82 WFB III, p. 422.

83 Martin Luther’s early tract *de Votis Monasticis* also allowed that the monastic life could be intrinsically good, if it were a matter of free choice, not regarded as an inherently superior state, and not made compulsory through vows. Cf. Luther’s *Works, “American Edition,”* ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, (St. Louis, 1955) vol. 44, pp. 221-400, esp. section III, pp. 295ff. Among Luther’s main charges against monastic vows are the concerns which Bacon also expresses, that they lead to hypocrisy and spiritual arrogance, (cf. p. 280). However, Bacon put a much greater stress on the value of monasticism for the Church as a whole than did Luther, who saw it as unnecessary.

84 The difference between Bacon and Calvin appears to parallel the distinction between the function of monasticism as an institution of learning represented by Cassiodorus, and that of the other Church Fathers, including Benedict of Nursia, for whom Monasticism was about the prayer of the individual monks rather than training. Cf. Dom. Jean Leclerq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham, 1961). 19-20. It is unclear that Calvin was necessarily following Cassiodorus in this, however.

85 WFB, VII, p. 216. The remark in the *Remains* (1648 edition) claiming that this work stemmed from some time when Bacon was Solicitor General (meaning 1607-1612), may be mere speculation, but it may also signify that some form of this text was found among Bacon’s other works from this time period. As we will note later, the theology expressed in the *Confession of Faith* is particularly congruent with his theological statements in his philosophical writings from this time period.
settled on a direction which no longer attempted to reconcile his thought with the concerns of Calvinism. It is possible that the Meditationes represents one, more politically correct, way that Bacon was handling key theological issues of his day, and the Confession represents another, more private, line of thought, but, given the manner in which the key issues of predestination and free will are treated, it seems more appropriate to regard this as the culmination of a progression away from Calvin, via the middle stage of the Meditationes Sacrae. In any case, the Confession presents a theological system which is entirely irreconcilable with Calvinism on a number of its distinctive doctrines, but none of its elements are without precedent in Christian history. Bacon was apparently willing to look to a wide variety of Christian authorities to come up with answers which were more suitable than those of Calvin.

Bacon’s Confession of Faith has received very little scholarly attention. When it has been treated it has been presented as if it were nothing remarkable except for the passages which are concerned directly with creation and natural law. This may be due in part to the scholarly commonplace that Bacon drew a distinction between faith and science, and therefore such a piece has been regarded as being of little value for understanding his “more important” contributions to law and natural philosophy. However, it also seems that the typical structure of the Confession may have eclipsed its content in the minds of scholars.

A Confession of Faith is set forth as Francis Bacon’s statement of his personal faith, or his personal creed. It begins, significantly, with the words of the creedal formula

86 Perez Zagorin, for example, presents the ideas of the Confession as those which he “could just as well have held throughout his life.” Then Zagorin notes the discussion of natural law. (Zagorin, pp. 51-52.) Milner, similarly, asserts that the theology is “orthodox” and that Bacon is operating within the Reformed tradition, though it is a critical theological statement which moves beyond the basics of reformed theology, particularly to make room for natural philosophy, which was evidently in mind as he wrote this tract. (Milner, p. 50.)

87 Benjamin Milner is the only scholar who has considered the significance of the Confessions to Bacon’s natural philosophy at any length.
“I believe,” and it discusses the matters of the faith, as numerous authors have noted, according to the standard pattern of the “three articles” of the Apostles’ Creed which address God’s work in creation, the Incarnation, and sanctification respectively. In the basic order of the discussion Bacon is entirely standard. In fact, too much has probably been made of the similarity in format to the Apostles’ Creed, for the basic pattern of the three articles is a near-universal outline for all treatments of Christian doctrine. This pattern developed very early in Christian history, and by the time Bacon wrote his Confession it would be accurate to say that it would have been a-typical to arrange a discussion of the faith in any other way. This pattern was part of the way in which the Christian faith itself had come to be conceived. The Christian Scriptures were consciously ordered according to this threefold pattern, as was the Nicene creed, and the sixth-century hymn which has come to be known as the Athanasian Creed. The Apostles’ Creed itself was essentially the culmination and amalgamation of earlier statements of the faith in which the threefold pattern can be seen to evolve. Very few catechisms of the later church, or catechetical lectures of the early church, were without the basic creedal pattern, though in earlier treatments there appears to have been less of a rigid division between the subject matter of the various articles than we find in

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88 A. Wigfall Green, Sir Francis Bacon (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 50. cf. Benjamin Milner, p. 254, and Spedding, in WFB, VII, pp. 215-216. Spedding describes the standard Catechism as “digested” by Bacon, “and reproduced in a form of its own” which aptly describes how Bacon was working with the standard form, but consciously turning it his own way.

89 The inherited order of the Old Testament was interpreted by Christians as discussing Creation, and those things leading up to the coming of Christ. The Gospels stand at the systematic “middle” of the Christian Scriptural schema, being the specific histories of the Incarnate Christ. These are followed by the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistolary literature, as well as the Apocalypse, all of which represents the work of the Holy Spirit in gathering and sanctifying the Christian Community.

Reformation writings. The threefold order of the Articles of the faith could easily be regarded as part of the standard mental furniture of all those raised in the Christian faith up through Bacon’s time period, solidified in Protestant circles by Luther’s Catechisms and the Heidelberg Catechism. It is entirely possible that the basic creedal structure of the Confession has led those scholars who have given it any attention at all to portray it as a fairly typical statement of faith for his era. This tendency was most certainly reinforced by the good intentions of James Spedding in the longtime standard edition of Bacon’s works. While not claiming to analyze the theology of the Confession, Spedding used his introduction to it as a platform to argue the sincerity of Bacon’s Christianity, clearly taking a stand against the association of Bacon with Enlightenment atheism. In the process he suggested that Bacon’s personal “creed” may be understood in terms typical of Reformed theology: “but the entire scheme of Christian theology, -- creation, temptation, fall, mediation, election, reprobation, -- is constantly in his thoughts;” Spedding is entirely right about the dominance of these doctrines for Bacon, but much

91 Cyril of Jerusalem’s Catechetical Lectures begin with four lectures on the need for repentance and salvation, but these all function as prolegomena to the fourth lecture which reproduces the Creedal order exactly, thus making this an exception which truly proves the rule (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 7). We may also note from the Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzus that the pattern functioned relentlessly not only in the ordering of the orations themselves, but within each oration the pattern of creation incarnation and sanctification is the basis of its internal structure (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 7). In the fifth theological oration, Gregory explains why this order is natural, and to some degree necessary, namely, that it is simply the historical pattern of the work of God: “The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself.” (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 7.) Augustine was also very open to introducing topics from “other articles” though the creedal pattern always dominated his catechetical writings. This pattern dominated the colloquial “prayer books” for the instruction of the laity in the middle ages, sometimes with the creedal exposition coming after a discussion of the Christian life according to the ten commandments. This is the pattern which Luther took over in his prayerbook of 1520, and eventually formed into his Catechisms. Luther’s small and large Catechisms and the Heidelberg Catechism which was modelled after it, established a standard creedal order to the instruction in the faith which reduced variation from the pattern of the medieval prayer books, rather than opening the door to innovation. As is evident in Calvin’s response to Osiander in the Institutes (which we will consider in part later) confusion of the matter of the various articles was beginning to be a concern among the Reformers.

more can and should be said. For as these doctrines are addressed in the *Confession* they would have raised real concerns among the Reformed theologians of Bacon’s day had he gone so far as to publish them in his lifetime.

**Logos Theology: the problem of Bacon’s “Mediator”**

Immediately after asserting the eternality and goodness of the Trinity in the first article Bacon presents a doctrine of Christ as “Mediator” which would have drawn heavy fire from most contemporary Protestants:

I believe that God is so holy, pure, and jealous, as it is impossible for him to be pleased in any creature, though the work of his own hands; So that neither Angel, Man, nor World, could stand, or can stand, one moment in his eyes, without beholding the same in the face of a Mediator; And therefore that before him with whom all things were present, the Lamb of God was slain before all worlds; without which eternal counsel of his, it was impossible for him to have descended to any work of creation; but he should have enjoyed the blessed and individual society of three persons in Godhead only for ever.

But, that out of his eternal and infinite goodness and love purposing to become a Creator, and to communicate with his creatures, he ordained in his eternal counsel that one person of the Godhead should in time be united to one nature and to one particular of his creatures: that so in the person of the Mediator the true ladder might be fixed, whereby God might descend to his creatures, and his creatures might ascend to God.\(^{93}\)

According to Bacon, God “chose (according to his good pleasure) Man to be that creature, to whose nature the person of the eternal Son of God should be united.”\(^{94}\)

Notably, the idea of Christ being the intermediary between God and Creation is not tied, as a matter of necessity, to the Fall. The purpose of the hypostatic union, that is the uniting in time of the human and divine natures in the person of Christ, is not, first and foremost, to rescue humanity from sin, but to unite God and His creation, so that there

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\(^{93}\) Ibid., 219.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., 220.
may be communication between them. The Fall was known to God, and as such God made it a part of His plan to unite human and divine natures, but the Fall itself was not an essential part of the plan. The Fall was a twist contributed by humans, yet foreknown:

That he made all things in their first estate good, and removed from himself the beginning of all evil and vanity into the liberty of the creature; but reserved in himself the beginning of all restitution to the liberty of his grace; using nevertheless and turning the falling and defection of the creature, (which to his prescience was eternally known) to make way to his eternal counsel touching a Mediator, and the work he purposed to accomplish in him.95

The Mediator himself is the means, and the intermediary (truly the *media*), by which God interacts with creation, and the office was necessary for the very act of creation itself to occur:

That by virtue of this his eternal counsel touching a Mediator, he descended at his own good pleasure, and according to the times and seasons to himself known, to become a Creator; and by his eternal Word created all things, and by his eternal Spirit doth comfort and preserve them.96

The union of God and creature in the person of the Mediator, now that sin had entered the world, was also the means whereby salvation would come to the Church:

he chose (according to his good pleasure) Man to be that creature, to whose nature the person of the eternal Son of God should be united; and amongst the generations of men, elected a small flock, in whom (by participation of himself) he purposed to express the riches of his glory; all the ministration of angels, damnation of devils and the reprobate, and universal administration of all creatures, and dispensation of all times, having no other end, but as the ways and ambages of God to be further glorified in his Saints, who are one with the Mediator, who is one with God.97

95 Ibid., 220.
96 Ibid., 220.
97 Ibid., 220.
Although some of God’s creatures, having fallen from perfection, would not be restored, those who were in the Church, the Saints, were to be glorified by participation with God Himself through their unity with the Mediator. The work of Christ on the cross was important, in that sin required a sacrifice as payment, but this was only one aspect of the Incarnation. In the end, the Incarnation served as the means by which God would accomplish unity with His creation through His appointed Mediator. The theology which is expounded throughout these passages is certainly not without precedent in Christian history. Similar discussions of the Logos as an intermediary between God and Creation can be found throughout the first four centuries of Christianity, and wherever Christianity interacted with the language and ideas of Neoplatonism. Such a discussion cannot be found in Calvin’s Institutes, however. Rather, the central idea of what Bacon has expressed in these passages was explicitly condemned by Calvin in his attack on the theology of the Lutheran, Andreas Osiander.

For Calvin, the reason that God united with man in the person of Christ, and the only reason, was to rescue man from sin. In the section of the Institutes on Christ as Mediator Calvin wrote:

non alium finem ubique assignat Scriptura, cur carnem nostram suscipere voluerit Dei Filius, & hoc etiam mandatu a Patre acceperit, nisi ut victima fieret at Patrem nobis placandum. [Scripture universally assigns no other end, for the Son of God voluntarily assuming our flesh, and also accepting it as a mandate of the Father, except to become a victim to placate the Father to us.]

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98 Ibid., 223.

99 Institutes, II, 12, 4. [translation my own. Beveridge’s English translation had reduced the force of the passage which, in context, was designed to exclude all other explanations of the incarnation. Hence Beveridge: “In fine, the only end which the Scripture uniformly assigns for the Son of God voluntarily assuming our nature, and even receiving it as a command from the Father, is, that he might propitiate the Father to us by becoming a victim.”] Note the summary of Christ’s words from the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane a few lines later: Ubi clare finem assumptae carnis assignat, ut victima & piaculum fiat abolens peccatis. Interestingly, Christ has not said any such thing in the passages which he quotes, all of which refer to why Christ must die, not why he became flesh.
It was this act of propitiation itself for which Christ was properly called “mediator.” Calvin devoted a great deal of space to rejecting the “vague speculations” (vagas speculationes) of others who might suggest that there was more to the doctrine of the Incarnation than the work of redemption from sin. Calvin’s main target was Andreas Osiander. Osiander had proposed a mystical view of the Incarnation in which sin was incidental to the union of God and humanity in Christ. Justo Gonzalez has aptly summarized Osiander’s understanding of Christ’s mediatorial role:

Adam is said to have been made after the image of God, because before the foundation of the world God had decided that the Son was to become incarnate. Thus the incarnation was not God’s response to sin, but his eternal purpose. Even if Adam had not fallen, Christ would have become incarnate. But, even before the incarnation, humankind was created so that the image of God—that is, the Son—could dwell in it.\(^\text{100}\)

For Calvin, Christ was Mediator because He was Redeemer. Osiander had an added dimension to the role of Christ as mediator, which office applied primarily to the unification of God and humanity, and secondarily to the redemption of humanity from its sinful state. As Gonzalez put it, “Because of the fall, the incarnation took on an additional purpose: the redemption and justification of humankind.”\(^\text{101}\) According to Osiander, Christians were justified before God, and hence saved from destruction, because Christ was mystically united to them and dwelling in them.\(^\text{102}\) When God beheld the individual Christian he beheld the person of the Son, united to an individual who was in the process of being perfected, or deified. Calvin repeatedly attacked Osiander for raising


\(^{101}\) Gonzalez, vol. 3, p. 104.

an old speculation: “that Christ, even though there had been no need of his interposition to redeem the human race, would still have become man.” [*Christum, etiam si ad redimendum humanum genus non fuisset opus remedio, futurum tamen fuisset hominem.*](103) But this hypothetical question is not what Calvin found most objectionable in Osiander, it was the theology behind it which interpreted Christ’s mediation as entailing a cosmic significance apart from propitiation for sin. On this point, Bacon’s *Confession of Faith* stands equally condemned by the *Institutes*.

Osiander’s mystic/neoplatonic interpretation of the Incarnation reflected one trend in the theology of the early Reformation on the Continent.[104] This trend, however, was entirely incompatible with Reformed theology as expressed by Calvin, and it also gradually fell out of favor among the Lutherans as well. By 1577, Osiander had been

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103 The way in which Calvin begins section four of *Institutes* II, 12, is instructive for recognizing his target as Osiander, whom he only mentions later: *Hic ut par est considerandis qui sedulo attentus erit, vagas speculationes facile negliget, quae leues spiritus & nouitatis cupidos ad se rapiunt: cuius generis est Christum, etiam si ad redimendum humanum genus non fuisset opus remedio, futurum tamen fuisse hominem. Fateor equidem, in primo creationis, ordine & integro naturae statu praefectum Angelis & hominibus fuisse caput. qua ratione dicitur a Paulo primogenitus omnis creaturae. sed quam tota Scriptura clamet vestitum fuisse carne, ut fieret redemptor, aliam causam vel alium finem imaginari nimie. *Calvin was aware that the idea that Christ would have been incarnate with or without sin did not originate with Osiander, and thus he presented the idea first as a generic speculation. Later, in section five, Calvin castigates Osiander for being the one who has recently raised this question [*Huic modestiae inique obstrepit Osiander, qui hanc quaestionem a paucis ante leuiter motam, rursus hoc tempore infeliciter agitavit.*]

104 The distinction between two separate trends, one more mystic, the other more forensic, in the Lutheran approach to the doctrine of Justification was examined already in the nineteenth century by Reinhold Seeberg, *Textbook of the History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), vol. 2 pp. 369ff. (orig. German publication, 1895-8) Recent Reformation scholarship, particularly Luther scholarship in Finnland following the work of Tuomo Mannermaa, has examined these early mystic tendencies in Reformation theology at much greater length. (See the recent summary of the Finnish direction in Karl Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Dennis Bielfeldt’s cautious caveats in his contribution to this volume reflect the shift in Lutheran scholarship even among those who regard Mannermaa and others as having gone too far. See also the earlier work of Bengt Hoffman, which helped establish this direction in the United States: *Luther and the Mystics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976.) Osiander’s views may have been more extreme than those found in Luther, but they were certainly not without corroboration in early mainstream Lutheran theology. Regardless of where the debate raised by the Finns will conclude, Seeberg’s early conclusion that Osiander had a “relative (historical) justification for his position” (p. 373) has been borne out by subsequent scholarship.
condemned by name in the Lutheran confessional document, the *Formula of Concord*.\textsuperscript{105} Osiander’s understanding of salvation as deification, the process of being saved through union with Christ, was regarded as fundamentally at odds with the key Reformation doctrine of “forensic justification.” Forensic Justification was the idea that humanity, while still sinful, is “declared righteous” by a decree of God in light of the propitiatory work of Christ’s death.\textsuperscript{106} To Lutherans as well as Calvinists in the later sixteenth century, Osiander and those who thought like him came to be regarded as far too close the the Roman Catholic understanding of Grace being *imparted* to humanity, (through the indwelling of the Son), rather than *imputed*, as the doctrine of forensic justification maintained. However, in England the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* was not a normative confession, and Calvin’s *Institutes* were not universally accepted as representing the most proper form of Christianity.

**Possible sources for Bacon’s logos theology:**

Bacon did not specifically raise the hypothetical question of what would have occurred had man not sinned, but in other respects the similarities between Bacon’s system and Osiander’s are manifest. However, given the limited influence of Lutheranism in England, as well as the negative response to his theology by the time Bacon came on the scene, we cannot be at all sure that Osiander’s work was ever actually read by


\textsuperscript{106} In regard to Continental theology Karl Barth’s discussion of the incompatibility between forensic Justification and “an essential deification of man” is an accurate summary of the late sixteenth century opinion on the matter. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G.T. Thomson, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 274-75. If Luther himself might be exempted from the general characterization, it is clear that later Protestants universally objected to the doctrine of Salvation as deification. Among other sticking points, the idea of “progress” toward salvation (inherent in deification) was regarded as being at odds with a one time “declaration.”
Bacon. The Bodleian Catalogue of 1605 lists none of Osiander’s controversial works as being in the library at Oxford. But as Calvin noted, Osiander was not unique. Osiander himself had sources which were available to Bacon, and Ficino had ensured that Christian Neoplatonism had a strong voice in early modern Europe.

Among the potential sources for Bacon’s Logos theology there are some which are more likely than others. Although there are similarities between Bacon’s theology in the Confession and Ficino’s Christology, it is doubtful that Ficino was a major contributor to Bacon’s thought at this point. There are unique aspects to Ficino’s Christology which are not reflected in Bacon’s discussion. For example, Ficino posited three natures in Christ while Bacon’s treatment is entirely in line with the rigorous two natures doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon. Similarly, Ficino was very much concerned with the internal economy of the Trinity. For Ficino, Neoplatonism offered a unique idea of the generation of the Son which allowed him to dispense with the sticky issue of the Logos as mediator leading into the heresy of subordinationism and its specific form of Arianism.

107 It is noteworthy, however, that Bacon has used the word “mediator” in the same fashion in which it was employed by Osiander. While other Christian writers expressed the same thoughts, the term “mediator” per se is difficult to find in connection with the intermediary role of the Word in creation, rather than applying specifically to Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice. The principle, however, of the Logos functioning as an intermediary between the transcendent God and His creation is very common. If Bacon was not personally familiar with Osiander, it is possible that he picked-up on the rare usages of the fathers, such as Augustine, who refers to those who interpret the “through whom” of Romans 11:36 (“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:”) as if Christ was “mediator” in in regard to Creation. (Augustine: De Fide et Symbolo, 4.6) It is also possible that this word choice is a direct response to Calvin’s discussion.

108 The only work in the Bodleian in 1605 was Osiander’s Greek and Latin harmony of the Gospels. Cf. Thomas James, Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Publicae quam vir Ornatissimus Thomas Bodleius. . . , (London, 1605), 106.


Bacon’s discussion is simply not so involved. It is presented as a simple narrative of divine mediation, in which the deity of the Word, and His equality with the Father and the Spirit, is stated in plain creedal form in the first paragraph. The possibility that Bacon got something from Ficino here should not be discounted, and is certainly worthy of greater consideration in a separate study, but there is a more plausible direction to look for influences on the *Confession of Faith*.

The Christian Fathers of the first several centuries underwent their own renaissance during the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, as was discussed in chapter one. The recovery of the Fathers brought with it a recovery of the language and the philosophy of classical antiquity in which the Christian doctrines of the first seven centuries were formulated. In the case of the eastern Fathers especially, this meant a return of Neoplatonic language and categories. Thus, when Ficino sought to blend Neoplatonism with the theology of historic Christianity, he was greatly aided by the Fathers themselves, and most of the work was accomplished in his selection of Greek Christian sources. Bacon does not cite any particular Fathers in his *Confession of Faith*, but the Fathers were seldom cited in the early modern period unless they were quoted.

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111 Jorg Lauster’s recognition of the use of Greek Fathers by Ficino in formulating his Christology is important, particularly as this observation has not always been made. Lauster himself does not make note of the *specific* early Christian antecedents to Ficino’s doctrines, however, which can give the impression that Ficino was being more original than he was. There are two very good reasons for not recognizing the specific Patristic sources which Ficino employed: first, that Ficino himself almost never specifically cited them even when he had them in mind, and second, that he was drawing upon an extremely broad field of Patristic literature. Consider, for example, Ficino’s *Platonic Theology*, Book IX, chapter 3, paragraph 6, where an anecdote concerning Plato and his academy, according to Ficino’s correspondence, was drawn from Saints Basil and Jerome. (See the note on the translation of the *Platonic Theology*, edited by James Hankins and translated by Michael J.B. Allen and John Warden. (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 2003. p. 344.)

By ignoring the perspective of patristic theology, some treatments have suggested that Ficino’s theology was a great deal less compatible with Christianity than it was. Charles Trinkaus has cited the work of Anders Nygren and Walter Drees, for example, who seem to have used the Lutheran exegesis of Paul as a benchmark for the true Christian doctrine, and called Ficino’s Christianity into question. (*In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1970), vol. 2, p. 752.) Trinkaus himself modelled a much more balanced, and patristically informed, view of the breadth of Christian thought in his discussion of the “Dignity of Man in the Patristic and Medieval Traditions and in Petrarch.” (vol. 1, pp. 173ff.)
verbatim in a speech or text. Nevertheless, the *Confession* is strongly patristic in doctrine.

It is also necessary in considering patristic sources to recognize that there are certain texts which were more likely than others to have been available, and that not all ancient sources had the same level of authority. Bacon’s use of Revelation 13:8, “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world,” to establish the centrality of the Incarnation in God’s eternal plan is strikingly similar to the use made of the same verse by Maximus the Confessor (d. 662), but it is doubtful that Bacon had direct access to Maximus. The ideas of Maximus were readily available through the writings of John Scotus Erigena, who was Maximus’ medieval translator, and who used Maximus as the “starting point” for much of his own doctrine. But the reputation of Erigena would likely have colored Maximus very negatively, for if Erigena started with Maximus’ theology, he took it in some famously heterodox directions. On the other hand, Irenaeus of Lyons was a far more ancient, and hence, “purer,” source, whose essential orthodoxy was acknowledged by all. The similarities between Bacon’s *Confession* and the fourth and fifth books of Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* are striking, and Irenaeus was readily available in Bacon’s England.

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113 Lancelot Andrewes, who was well read in the available Greek sources, and tended to mention them when using their ideas, never mentions or cites Maximus. The Bodleian Catalogue lists the works of a St. Maximus, but it is likely that this was Maximus of Turin, who was known at this time, and cited by Andrewes, among others.


115 Erigena concluded, with Origen, that there was neither hell nor the punishment of the wicked, (ibid. p. 104.) He also argued, from the immanence of God in all things, that there was no special presence of Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. (ibid. p. 96.)
Irenaeus of Lyons

In 1526 the first printed edition of Irenaeus’ five books against the gnostic heresies (commonly titled, *Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses*, or *Contra Haereses*) came forth from the editorial hand of Desiderius Erasmus. This began a wave of scholarly editions of Irenaeus which would swell over the course of the sixteenth century.\(^{116}\) The popularity of Irenaeus during the Reformation is easily understood. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus was impressively close to the Apostolic age of Christianity, but he had left a much more detailed and systematic exposition of the faith than the Apostolic Fathers (the first generation after the apostles themselves) had done. Irenaeus claimed to have seen Polycarp, who had been instructed by the apostle John personally, though Polycarp was very old when this occurred.\(^{117}\) The depth of Irenaeus’ discussion of the faith is due to the subject matter of the five books -- a defense of orthodox Christianity against the various heresies of Christian gnosticism. Irenaeus’ topic and approach resonated strongly in the polemical context of the Reformation, when the question of what exactly constituted the essential doctrines of the Christian faith had become a matter of verbal, and also physical, warfare. The editions of Irenaeus swelled near the end of the sixteenth century, especially after the 1575 edition of the Franciscan, Feuardenti, emerged with the complete text of all five books. Most medieval manuscript editions lacked at least the last five chapters of the fifth book, quite possibly because these were suppressed due to their strongly chiliastic language and imagery. The Catalogue of the Bodleian Library lists the 1596 edition of Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*, which, at the turn

\(^{116}\) The textual history of Irenaeus in the early modern period is to be found in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca*, (Paris, 1844 ff.) v. col. 1208 ff.

of the seventeenth century, was the most recent of Feuardenti’s annotated editions.\(^{118}\) The publication of the new material offered Irenaeus as a unified whole, and it was significant for the sixteenth century understanding of the boundaries of Christian doctrine in the early Church. As a voice from a more ancient and more eastern form of Christianity,\(^{119}\) Irenaeus offered a challenge to all sides. Protestants found in the writings of Irenaeus much that was counter to Roman Catholicism in their own day, while Catholics could point to Irenaeus’ emphasis on Tradition and Apostolic Succession as evidence that the Protestants had rejected certain central ideas of early Christianity. In *Adversus Haereses* early modern Christians were confronted with a manner of expressing the faith and a worldview which had grown foreign with the passage of time, but now had to be respected, and, as many felt, assimilated, by virtue of the authority of the source.

The doctrine of the Word of God, the Logos, as mediator between God and creation is a central aspect of Irenaeus’ Christology, and, as in Bacon’s *Confession*, the central point of the Incarnation is not redemption from sin, but to perfect the communication between God and humankind.

\[Est\ autem\ hic\ Verbum\ ejus\ Dominus\ noster\ Jesus\ Christus,\ qui\ novissimus\ temporibus\ homo\ in\ hominibus\ factus\ est,\ ut\ finem\ conjungeret\ principio,\ id\ est\ hominem\ Deo.\ Et\ propterea\ prophetae\ ab\ eodem\ Verbo\ propheticum\ accipientes\ charisma,\ praedicaverunt\ ejus\ secundum\ carnet\ adventum,\ per\ quem\ conmixture\ et\ communio\ Dei\ et\ hominis\ secundum\ placitum\ Partris\ facta\ est,\ ab\ initio\ praeununciante\ Verbo\ Dei,\ quoniam\ videbitur\ Deus\ ab\ hominibus,\ et\ conversabitur\ com\ eis\ super\ terram,\ et\ colloquentur,\ et\ adfuturus\ esset\ suo\ plasmati,\ salvans\ illud,\ et\ perceptibilis\ ab\ eo,\ et\]

\(^{118}\) Thomas James, *Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Publicae quam vir Ornatissimus Thomas Bodleius*. . . , (London, 1605), 78. *Adversus Haereses* is not mentioned specifically here, but there were no other works of Irenaeus extant in the early seventeenth century.

\(^{119}\) It must be borne in mind that although Irenaeus served as bishop in Gaul, his worldview and theology were Hellenic. He came from Asia Minor, wrote, originally, in Greek, and gives evidence throughout his writing of the influence of Hellenic philosophy. Southern Gaul itself, and Lyons in particular, was culturally impacted by migrations of Greeks, and was a mission field of the Christians of Asia minor. Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 4-5. Cf. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, pp. 309ff.
liberans nos de manibus omnium odientium nos, hoc est, ab universo
transgressionis spiritu: et faciens nos servire sibi in sanctitate et justitia
omnes dies nostros, uti complexus homo Spiritum Dei, in gloriam cedat
Patris. [Now this (that by which God created all things) is His Word, our
Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last times was made a man among men, that
He might join the end to the beginning, that is, man to God. Wherefore the
prophets, receiving the prophetic gift from the same Word, announced His
advent according to the flesh, by which the blending and communion of
God and man took place according to the good pleasure of the Father, the
Word of God foretelling from the beginning that God should be seen by
men, and hold converse with them upon earth, should confer with them,
and should be present with His own creation, saving it, and becoming
capable of being perceived by it, and freeing us from the hands of all that
hate us, that is, from every spirit of wickedness; and causing us to serve
Him in holiness and righteousness all our days, in order that man, having
embraced the Spirit of God, might pass into the glory of the Father.]

The ultimate goal, in Irenaeus, is the mystical union of God and humankind. As a result
of the Fall, salvation from sin is also an important aspect of the Incarnation. But the Fall
itself was an act of human free will which God, by virtue of his foreknowledge, worked
into His equation:

* Magnanimus igitur fuit Deus deficiente homine, eam quae per Verbum
esse victoriam reddendam ei praevidens. * [Long-suffering therefore was
God when man became a defaulter, as foreseeing that victory which should
be granted to him through the Word.]

* Secundum enim benignitatem suam bene dedit bonum, et similes sibi suae
potestatis homines fecit: secundum autem providentiam scivit hominum
infirmitatem, et quae Ventura essent ex ea; secundum autem dilectionem et

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120 *Adversus Haereses*, Book 4, ch. XXXIV, 4. The University of Florida Library is missing books 3 and 4 in the *Sources Chretiennes* critical edition. Therefore quotations from these sections are taken from the edition of W. Wigan Harvey: *Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis Libros Quinque adversus Haereses*, (Cambridge, 1847.) Quotations from other books of *Adversus Haereses* will be taken from the *Sources Chretiennes*. The Greek of certain passages has been preserved only in second-hand quotations of certain later Fathers. While certain differences between the Greek and Latin are informative, I am not sure to what extent the editions of the sixteenth century incorporated the Greek fragments. Hence, all references are to the Latin which was available at the time. For the purpose of this discussion variant readings of the Latin appear to be insignificant. The English translation in all cases is taken from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. The numeration of chapters and paragraphs in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* does not match the Harvey edition, hence this section is found in Book 4, ch. XX, 4.

vertutem vincet factae naturae substantiam. [For after His great kindness He graciously conferred good (upon us), and made men like to Himself, (that is) in their own power; while at the same time by His prescience He knew the infirmity of human beings, and the consequences which would flow from it; but through (His) love and (His) power, He shall overcome the substance of created nature.]¹²²

Irenaeus, like Bacon, never raised Osiander’s contra facta hypothesis of the necessity of the Incarnation, had man not sinned. But the salvific aspect of the Incarnation is always subsumed under the larger divine plan to unite God and creation. For Irenaeus humanity was the specific creature to which the second person of the Trinity should be united in time, and hence had special status, but, like Bacon again, Irenaeus used humanity as the point of contact by which God would, through the mediating actions of the Incarnate Christ, be in communication with the entire cosmos. Becoming human was God’s route to seeing His creation from the inside, and this was entirely in keeping with the unique relation to creation which the Second Person of the Trinity had always possessed.

Irenaeus presents the Incarnation as an extension of the Pauline principle that “in Him we live and move and have our being.”¹²³

Mundi enim Factor vere Verbum Dei est: hic autem est Dominus noster, qui in novissimus temporibus homo factus est, in hoc mundo existens, et secundum invisibilitatem continet quae facta sunt omnia, et in universa conditione infixus, quoniam Verbum Dei gubernans et disponens omnia; et propter hoc in sua invisibilitate¹²⁴ venit, et caro factum est, et pependit super lignum, uti universa in semetipsum recapituletur. [For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His


¹²³ Cf. Acts 17: 28

¹²⁴ This is a textual error. It should read “visibilitur.” Hence the translation following in English, as well as the French rendering of the Sources Chretienne: “Voila pourquoi il est venu de faqion visible...” (p. 245.) Note the Greek original: ei s ta idia oratw s hlqhn. ..
own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself.] 125

For Irenaeus the Incarnation was the ultimate fulfillment of the role played by the Logos from the very beginning as the mediator, or “go-between,” bridging God and creation. The Incarnation had to occur for the connection between God and creation to be complete. For creatures, without the benefit of Christ coming in the flesh to unite God and creation, could neither comprehend nor communicate with God.

Non enim aliter nos discere poteramus quae sunt Dei, nisi magister noster, Verbum existens, homo factus fuisset: neque alius pterat enarrare nobis quae sunt Patris, nisi proprium ipsius Verbum. [For in no other way could we have learned the things of God, unless our Master, existing as the Word, had become man. For no other being had the power of revealing to us the things of the Father, except His own proper Word.] 126

The Logos is always the intermediary between God and Creation -- it was by the Word that all things were created, and it was the second person of the Trinity who communicated with Moses and Abraham. 127 At the very center of this mediating activity, and as the purpose for creation itself, is the event of the Incarnation, by which the true communication between God and human beings is established. Apart from the Incarnation God is incomprehensible, and His Power and Glory are holy and unapproachable, for “no man shall see God and live.” But in the Incarnation God

125 Adversus Haereses, Book 5, ch. XVIII, 3. Reference is the same for the translation in Ante-Nicene Fathers. The English translation here is wanting. Recapituletur is best left as “recapitulated,” for the term has tremendous freight throughout the writings of Irenaeus. The restoration of creation in perfection is implied, but also more than a mere “restoration,” a “summing up” in the sense that the destiny of things is accomplished through the Incarnational activity of the Logos. This will include not only the restoration but the increase, in the qualitative sense, of created matter. (Cf. Grant, 52-53.) The passage in the Greek includes a reference to all of Creation being established in the “form of a cross,” or the linguistic “chiasm” (καὶ ἐν πασὶ τῇ κτίσει ἐκαίνημένῳ). This would make the connection between this passage and Bacon’s discussion of all creation being centered upon the Incarnation still more profound, but I have no evidence that he had access to the Greek here.

126 Adversus Haereses, Book 5, ch. I, 1. Translation has the same numeration.

presents Himself in a form accessible to humankind, and through this Incarnate form man gains immortal life and the ability to “pass into the glory of the Father.” Similarly, the love of the Father for humankind is the result of the Incarnate Logos as a mediator:

Tunc autem hoc verum ostensum est, quando homo Verbum Dei factum est, semetipsum homini et hominem sibimetipsi assimilans, ut per eam quae est ad Filium similitudinem pretiosus homo fiat Patri. [And then, again, this Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, assimilating Himself to man, and man to Himself, so that by means of his resemblance to the Son, man might become precious to the Father.]

This passage provides an authoritative precedent for Bacon’s otherwise problematic statement that “God is so holy, pure and jealous” that nothing “could stand, or can stand one moment in his eyes, without beholding the same in the face of a Mediator.” Bacon was not merely restating a recent “error” of Osiander, but following a patristic authority who may have been Osiander’s source as well.

Other evidence of “Anti-Calvinism” in the Confession of Faith

The doctrine of the Mediator is only one of many elements of Bacon’s Confession of Faith which run contrary to Calvinist theology. In the Confession Bacon went much further than in the Meditationes Sacrae in his rejection of Calvin’s determinism. We have noted in passing Bacon’s explicit statement that the Fall was entirely the result of human free will: God “removed from himself the beginning of all evil and vanity into the liberty of the creature.” We should also note that Bacon was very careful to avoid the time-bound language which forced Calvin to his conclusions in the first place. There is no more

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128 Cf. Adversus Haereses, Book 4, ch. XXXIV, passim.

129 Adversus Haereses, Book 5, ch. XVI, 2. Translation has the same numeration.

130 Benjamin Milner regarded this as a unique and radical concern for God’s sovereignty that went far beyond Calvin, but was essentially a product of Bacon’s Calvinist thinking. However, against Osiander, Calvin had specifically rejected the idea that God approved of man because he beheld the future form of His Incarnate Son. Rejection of exactly this claim of Bacon’s is the central point of Institutes 2, 12, 6.

131 WFB VII, p. 220.
discussion of “predestination” and “foreordination,” as in the *Meditationes Sacrae*. Instead Bacon referred to God’s “eternal” will. Humans are bound to linear time, and to perceiving things according to linear time. God is eternal, and transcends time. It is still necessary, from a human, time-bound perspective, to use words like “prescience,” as Bacon did to explain that the Fall was not a surprise to God, but he qualifies it immediately as what is “eternally known:”

. . . using nevertheless and turning the falling and defection of the creature, (which to his prescience was eternally known) to make way to his eternal counsel touching a Mediator,\(^\text{132}\)

In refusing to bind the knowledge or will of God to the temporal categories of “before” and “after,” Bacon again followed the practice of the Fathers of the early Church where Calvin did not. As a result, Bacon could preserve the idea of a truly free will in both God and humankind without calling God’s power into question. For Irenaeus, as well as Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers, humanity’s free actions were not only eternally known, but eternally accounted for, by God.\(^\text{133}\) The relationship between God and humanity is conceived much as if it were a cosmic dance between two freely-willing partners. One of the partners, however, transcends time while the other is bound to it.

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\(^\text{132}\) WFB VII, p. 220.

\(^\text{133}\) While Augustine was prone to the use of time-bound language, he also struggled with it, as in his qualification of his own usage in *De Civitate Dei*, XII, 25: *Sed ante dico aeternitate, non tempore. Quis enim alius creator est temporum, nisi qui fecit ea, quorum motibus currerent tempora?* (But by “before” I speak of eternity, not time. What other creator could there be of time, except He who created those things the movements of which cause time to run?) See also *De Civitate Dei*, XI, 21 for a clear discussion of the difference in the way God and man perceive time. Among the Cappadocians Gregory of Nyssa presents a memorable example of the explanatory use which can be made of God’s transcendence in discussing how man, created in God’s image, was created “male and female” when God is neither. Nyssa argued that God had prepared humanity for the eventuality of the Fall, after which humans would descend to reproduce like the beasts. Yet in providing for man’s evil, God was good. His grace was shown in that He provided a resolution to a problem which did not “yet” exist. (On the Making of Man, XVI, 14. in: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 5, p. 406.) The question of why humans are male and female was not widely asked, by the Fathers, but the pattern of thought in Nyssa’s solution is typical, as we have seen in Augustine and Irenaeus.
God not only already knows the missteps of humanity, but carries on the dance in such a way that these are woven in, and turned toward a good end.

Quite naturally, this approach has significant ramifications for the doctrine of “election,” according to which God has chosen, in Bacon’s words, “a small flock” for salvation. Bacon avoids the Calvinist move from the idea of “election” to the “predestination” of certain individuals to heaven or hell, which would remove any element of human choice in the matter. Yet later in the Confession Bacon also acknowledged that the names of those who are to be saved are “already written in the book of life.” In the complex interaction between the time-bound and the transcendent, such paradoxes abound. The resolutions can be dizzying, and, apart from the internecine fighting of the Reformed in the Arminian controversy, logical resolutions were widely regarded as pointless in the early modern period. Among other problems, resolution would require the time-bound creature to be capable of perceiving Salvation History from the perspective of timelessness. It would be an oversimplification of early modern theology to assume a clean dialectic between divine determinism, as it is found in Calvin, and its opposite extreme, as it would be exemplified by the Arminians, who, at least as Arminianism was characterized among many English divines, would leave conversion up to the choice of the individual, with God as an observer. In regard to Bacon, it is significant that he avoided any attempt at resolution of the matter which would mark him as a “Calvinist” or an “Arminian.” This in itself is indicative of a position which was neither Calvinist nor Arminian. Furthermore, it is important to remember that there is

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134 WFB VII, p. 225.

135 Written after Calvin had raised the question of predestination, the Lutheran discussion of the matter in the Formula of Concord of 1577 (Solid Declaration, Article XI) opens with very thinly veiled disdain that others should have stirred-up controversies on the matter. (Cf. The Book of Concord, [Theodore G. Tappert, ed.] Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1959, p. 616) The Lutheran discussion continues by simply clarifying the terminology, and staking out the boundaries of the discussion so that among Lutherans, at least, disunity and schism could be avoided.
considerably more to being a Calvinist or an Arminian than a simple position on predestination. Thus, when Bacon, in the final edition of his *Essays*, condemned the recent “speculative heresy” of the Arminians along with the ancient heresy of the Arians it is by no means evidence of Calvinism. It is also possible that, like his friend Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, Bacon found it important to distance himself from accusations of Arminianism because it was already clear enough that he was anything but a good Calvinist.

There are still other elements of the *Confession of Faith* which are incompatible with the distinctive doctrines of Calvin. Bacon again denied Calvin’s doctrine that God’s governance of creation was immediate rather than through a chain of causes: “yet nevertheless he doth accomplish and fulfill his divine will in all things great and small... though his working be not immediate and direct, but by compass; not violating Nature, which is his own law upon the creature.”

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136 Peter Lake’s criticism of the field in this regard (See Sean F. Hughes, “The Problem of ‘Calvinism’: English theologies of predestination c. 1580-1630,” in: *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*. p. 230) should qualify the Calvinist/Arminian dialectic which tends to arise even in more careful studies such as that of Nicholas Tyacke. (Anti-Calvinists: *The Rise of English Arminianism*) The Lutheran David Hollaz, for example, could object to Arminianism on the ground that Arminians denied the mystical indwelling of Christ in the believer. See Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. by Charles Hay, and Henry Jacobs, (Philadelphia, United Lutheran Publication House, 1899), 486.

137 “On the Vicissitude of Things” WFB VI, p. 514. There are any number of aspects of Arminianism to which Bacon could have objected, along with large portions of the rest of Europe, Calvinist and otherwise, and there is no way to be certain what made it, for him, a heresy on a level with Arianism. In the context of this particular essay, the problem with both “heresies” is that they divided the Church as a result of speculations. The novelty of Arminianism itself would also be problematic for Bacon, for the question at hand is what causes “new sects” to arise. It is also significant that Bacon was aware, as we have seen, of the original meaning of heresy which was the choice to depart from the Church by a false (or over) emphasis of one doctrine at the expense of others.

138 On Andrewes see Tyacke, 91. There is plenty of evidence that Andrewes had significant doctrinal problems with Arminianism, and was not, as Tyacke has suggested, merely acting in political expedience. Cf. Paul Welsby, *Lancelot Andrewes* (London, S.P.C.K., 1964), 167ff. This will be considered in the next chapter.

139 WFB VII, p. 221. The implications of the chain of causes for Bacon’s understanding of nature and natural philosophy will be considered in chapter four.
Another example of divergence from Calvin is Bacon’s claim that in the Incarnation Christ “accomplished the whole work of the redemption and restitution of man to a state superior to the Angels, whereas the state of his creation was inferior; and reconciled or established all things according to the eternal will of the Father.” Calvin explicitly denied that humanity’s redeemed state would be in any way superior to the angels and, notably, he made this statement as a conclusion to a section directed against Osiander:

\[\text{Neq. vero negandum est, Angelos ad Dei similitudinem creatos esse, quando summa nostra perfectio, reste Christo, erit similes illis fieri.} \]

[But it cannot be denied that the angels also were created in the likeness of God, since, as Christ declares (Mt. 22: 30), our highest perfection will consist in being like them.]  

Again, the concept that the redeemed state of humankind, is superior to the angels is common ground for Bacon, Osiander, and Irenaeus. In the very last line of the last book in Adversus Haereses Irenaeus left his readers with the following thought:

\[\text{Etenim unus Filius, qui voluntatem Patris perfecit; et unum genus humanum, in quo perficiuntur mysteria Dei, quem concupiscunt angeli videre, et non praevalent investigare sapientiam Dei, per quam plasma ejus conformatum et concorporatum Filio perficitur: ut progenies ejus primogenitus Verbum descendat in facturam, hoc est in plasma, et capiatur ab eo; et factura iterum capiat Verbum, et ascendat ad eum, supergrediens angelos, et fiet secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei.} \]

[For there is the one Son, who accomplished His Father’s will; and one human race also in which the mysteries of God are wrought, “which the angels desire to look into;” (1 Pet. 1: 12) and they are not able to search out the wisdom of God, by means of which His handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection; that His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature, that is, to what had been moulded, and that it should be contained by Him; and, on the other hand, the creature should]

\[\text{WFB VII, p. 223.}\]

\[\text{Institutes, I, 15, 3. [tr. Beveridge edition.]}\]
contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God.]\textsuperscript{142}

This is not a particularly uncommon idea in Christian tradition. However, it does reflect a particular understanding of the very doctrine of salvation itself which was incompatible with Calvin’s theology -- the concept of salvation as essentially the process of the “deification” of humankind, or the eastern doctrine of theosis (αὐτοθεσία).\textsuperscript{143} Theosis is commonly summarized in the maxim distilled from Clement of Alexandria, “God became man that man might become God.”\textsuperscript{144} This was the understanding of salvation which Irenaeus expressed throughout his writings when he maintained that the Incarnation served the ultimate divine end of unifying God and humanity. It was clearly Bacon’s understanding of salvation as well.

There can be no doubt that Bacon began his life firmly within the fold of the Reformed. But it is also clear that he took a turn toward a more patristic theology by the turn of the seventeenth century. In addition to elements of his theology which contradict Calvin, there are other elements with which Calvin may have agreed, but which clearly were the concerns of the Christianity of late antiquity, and not the Reformation. Bacon puts a special emphasis on the “holy succession” of clergy which united the church through time “from the time of the apostles and disciples which saw our Saviour in the

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Adversus Haereses}, Book 5, ch. XXXVI, 1. [translation: Book 5, ch. XXXVI, 3.]

\textsuperscript{143} Benjamin Milner, in attempting to keep Bacon within the Reformed theological sphere, stated in regard to Bacon’s statement that man would become superior to the angels, “That the redeemed human condition is in principle better after the coming of Christ than it was before the fall, is a teaching which may be found throughout the Christian tradition but nowhere in Calvin, who consistently argues that the redemption in Christ is nothing more or less than a restoration of the imago dei which was seriously damaged in the fall of Adam.” (Milner, 258.) Milner is correct in recognizing a vestige of this idea in Aquinas, but he has not considered the theological implications of this doctrine, particularly in light of the Logos as Mediator concept with which Bacon began his \textit{Confession}. Milner also fails to recognize that not only is this concept not embraced by Calvin, it was known to him and rejected.

\textsuperscript{144} Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, \textit{The Christian Tradition}, vol.1, pp. 155 (for Clement’s original formula) & 203.
flesh unto the consummation of the work of the ministry.” While Calvin never objected, in the Institutes, to the concept of the Apostolic Succession as it was understood by the early Church, he also did nothing with it himself, other than to caution against it because of the use which was made of it by the Papacy. Likewise, Bacon carefully defended the doctrine that “the blessed Virgin may be truly and catholicly called Deipara, the Mother of God,” overagainst the suggestion that she was merely the mother of the human nature in Christ. By the time of the Reformation, no mainline group, Protestant or Catholic, denied this, and it was not one of the hot issues of the day. In the early fifth century, however, it was the occasion for tremendous debate, which ended with the condemnation of Nestorius (who denied that Mary was the Mother of God) at the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431). No Protestant would have been bothered by Bacon’s discussion at this point, other than, perhaps, to wonder why Bacon thought that this was still an issue requiring special mention. In this light, Bacon’s discussion suggests that he was concerned with setting forth the faith as it was formulated in the first centuries of Christianity.

Conclusion

There is a recognizable trajectory in Bacon’s adult life away from his Calvinist upbringing. This should not be taken to imply animosity toward the Calvinists around

145 WFB VII, p. 225.

146 cf. Institutes, Book IV, 2. Compare this with Irenaeus who regards the succession from the Apostles a mark of the true Church. (e.g. Adversus Haereses, Book 3, ch. 3.)

147 WFB VII, p. 223.

148 For a thorough discussion of the doctrinal debate and its implications for the understanding of the two natures in Christ see Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition, vol. 1, pp. 240ff. Benjamin Milner noted that the word Deipara is the same as that used in the Council of Trent for the Mother of God (Milner, 258.), but he made too much of this in asserting that “To affirm it ‘catholicly,’ if only in the heart of a private confession, at least suggests a certain theological freedom from protestant orthodoxy.” There is nothing about the use of the word Deipara which necessarily associates it with the Roman Church, and the word “catholic” was used by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike to describe the universal Church. “Deipara” is merely the Latin rendering of the patristic term Ἐναπάραστασ.
him, and it should also not be taken to mean that he objected to Reformed theology in all points. Of all the theological statements made by Christian theologians such as Calvin, the vast majority will be points common to all Christians, and about which there is little real disagreement. It is precisely in those minority of statements which represent the distinctive emphases or understandings of a particular theologian or group in which the separations between Christian groups (Catholics vs. Protestants, Calvinists vs. Lutherans) can be understood. Even some of the distinctive doctrines of Reformed theology may have endured in Bacon’s thought throughout his life. However, by the early years of the seventeenth century Bacon had turned toward a different, and more ancient, authority in Christian doctrine, as is evident from his writings at this time. On many points pertaining to the central question of salvation, Bacon’s theology cannot be reconciled with Calvinism, as Bacon embraced precisely that which Calvin condemned.

It is significant that this shift in Bacon’s theology took place prior to the years in which Bacon produced almost all of his writings pertaining to the reform of learning. Bacon’s philosophy was theologically charged, but the theological statements which are found throughout his Instauration writings, and support the idea of an Instauration itself, are not typical of the dominant Calvinism of his age. The shift toward the Church Fathers provided the necessary systematic undergirding for the theology of the Instauration. The theological resolution of the tension between divine sovereignty and human free will was especially important for his later discussions. We may also note that there is a certain correspondence between the interests of Bacon and the Church Fathers which makes the patristic turn in Bacon all the more comprehensible. Fathers such as Irenaeus, Augustine, and the Cappadocians expended a great deal of ink discussing the relationship between God and Creation, as well as the role of humanity in relation to both.
In considering Bacon’s reliance upon patristic theology in later chapters, however, it will be important to remember that the writings of the Fathers and the use which Bacon made of their doctrines are not the same thing. Doctrines which were finely honed to combat heresy or instruct the faithful were transformed, in Bacon’s early modern context, into justifications for experiment and technology. Many aspects of Bacon’s theology are apparently unique unto him, as well. Bacon’s theology was his own, not that of the Fathers. It is as important to recognize the new directions which he took in his own theological system as it is to acknowledge the sources in which it was grounded.

With the reemergence of the writings of the Fathers of Christian Antiquity came a great deal of the worldview of late antiquity which permeated their writings. This blended with other trends in the early modern period, and not merely in the writings of Bacon. Bacon’s shift toward patristic theology is all the more comprehensible in light of the interests of his literary circle, and particularly his close friendship with Lancelot Andrewes.
CHAPTER 3:  
FRANCIS BACON’S LITERARY CIRCLE

It is evident from Bacon’s correspondence that he did not write his philosophical works pertaining to the reform of learning in isolation. He had a literary circle: a small number of friends, editors, and assistants with whom he was in constant discussion. Among those of Bacon’s assistants and advisors who have left writings of their own it is clear that there was a common interest in natural philosophy. However, the group did not contain any notable natural philosophers. It did contain a significant number of theologians. Bacon’s literary circle offers an important perspective on the question of his beliefs and theology at the time when he was writing his philosophical works. When those who worked most closely with him in his writing are considered, it is clear that Bacon was not alone in his departure from the Calvinist norm, or in his concern for the authority of Christian antiquity. The Bacon circle is another level of necessary context for the Instauration writings. In order to understand how the individuals within the circle fit into the theological landscape of Tudor and Stuart Britain, it is necessary to decenter Bacon for the time being, and examine those around him according to their religious dispositions or theological statements. When this is done, several commonplaces emerge which tie the members of the group together according to their similar theological perspectives. Bacon was not only a product of his society in his theology, he was a member of a group which had a remarkable congruence of theological assumptions and emphases.
If a man may, in any way, be measured by the company he keeps, we should note first of all that Bacon was surrounded by a field of intellectuals who were very much concerned with questions of the faith. In the cases of Andrewes, Matthew, Rawley, Selden, and Herbert, they were involved with these questions at an academic level as well as the practical level of personal piety. This was not a group for whom religion was anything less than a central concern. However, this was also not a group that could be regarded as typical for the era, or merely interested in a conformist status quo. In light of the overwhelming dominance of Calvinist doctrine in the Church of England during Bacon’s lifetime, it is significant that Bacon gravitated toward those who (with the exception of George Herbert) were notable for their rejection of Calvinism. Similarly, in an era in which the establishment watchword was “conformity” Bacon’s circle advocated tolerance, and they themselves espoused ideas and doctrines which often ran, at least technically, counter to the party line of the Church of England, whether that line was Calvinist or Arminian. Bacon was part of a constellation of like-minded individuals who, though they did not agree with each other in all points, were marked by an openness to the diversity of religious thought before them, a much higher view of human free will than Calvinism allowed, a concern for the authority of Christian antiquity, and a conviction that they were facing the pressing task of getting the Christian faith right. In light of the concerns and interests of his friends and associates, the distinctive theology of Bacon’s Instauration writings is at once given an interpretive context and thrown into relief. Therefore, this chapter examines the religious dispositions of those whom Bacon trusted for assistance and helpful criticism in the project which he regarded as his life’s calling.

Bacon’s literary circle was a group which must be considered separately from his legal and political networks. Some of the major players in Bacon’s political life and legal career, such as the Earl of Essex and Lord Burghley, will not figure in the present
treatment. Although Essex and Burghley were most certainly aware of Bacon’s interest in natural philosophy, there is no evidence that they were consulted by Bacon for anything other than their political influence.¹ It is certain that when Essex was no longer politically necessary for him, and the relationship had become dangerous, Bacon had no reservations about turning on his former patron.² In politics, patronage is not friendship, and alliances are not trust. If Bacon could be politically bold, and even ruthless, it must also be remembered that he regarded the political arena as a means to what he considered a higher end.

Bacon’s list of correspondents is long, but there were very few with whom he discussed his program for the reform of natural philosophy. Bacon always had an eye on his political fortunes, and it is evident from the manner in which he discusses his Instauration program when it does come up that he was careful not to allow his ambitions regarding philosophical reform to negatively affect his political standing. This is not to say that Bacon’s political ambitions were more important to him than his philosophical reform. If anything the reverse was true, for, as he made clear in his 1592 letter to his uncle, Lord Burghley, his ambition for political position served his real interest of the reform of natural philosophy.³ Political office was necessary for Bacon to have the means to publish his new method and put his reforms into practice. Bacon took his legal work and his service to the Crown seriously, but it was in the reform of learning that he

¹ The only suggestion that Bacon and Essex shared an interest in natural philosophy comes from the recollections of Thomas Bushell, who never knew Essex, and whose memory of Bacon, particularly 34 years after the latter’s death is faulty at best. Cf. An Extract by Mr. Bushell of his late Abridgement of the Lord Chancellor Bacons Philosophical Theory in Mineral Prosecutions (London, 1660), Post-Script, p. G3. On Bushell’s reliability as a source, cf. WFB XIV, pp. 199-201. On the contrary, it seems that Bacon’s earliest work on natural philosophy, “Temporis Partum Maximum” was the subject of ridicule by another of Essex’ circle, the Oxford scholar Henry Cuffe, who quipped, “a fool could not have written it and a wise man would not.” (WFB, XIV p. 532. fn. 1)


³ Cf. WFB, VIII, p. 108-09.
anticipated his lasting legacy. As he wrote of his own thinking regarding his reform in the Proemium of the Instauratio Magna, “Certain it is that all other ambition seemed poor (lit. ‘inferior’) in his eyes compared with the work which he had in hand.” If his program was to go forward, then he could not afford to lose the political position which made it possible. Yet he was proposing something in his Instauration writings that challenged established authorities, and it was necessary for him to introduce it with all caution, and only after those he trusted most had given their input. In the early years of his philosophical writing this meant two people in particular: Tobie Matthew and Lancelot Andrewes. Later in his life the list could be expanded, particularly as younger scholars who admired Bacon’s thought joined in the work, but the list never became long. Bacon was a man of political caution who had few genuine friends or confidants, which makes those whom he trusted with his greatest ambition all the more significant.

**Identifying the Literary Circle**

Bacon’s literary circle itself has not been considered as a group since George Walter Steeves’ 1910 publication of *Francis Bacon: a sketch of his life, works and literary friends.* Steeves identified thirteen names which could be classified as “literary friends,” rather than family or purely professional associates of Bacon. Steeves based his list on the evidence of the correspondence and remains in Spedding’s edition of the *Works of Francis Bacon* and those outside contemporary sources which were available at his time. Steeves’ list, in his order, is as follows:

- William Rawley (Bacon’s personal chaplain)
- Sir Tobie Matthew
- Ben Jonson
- George Herbert

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5 G. Walter Steeves, *Francis Bacon: a sketch of his life, works and literary friends.* (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1910.)
(Bishop) Lancelot Andrewes
Sir Thomas Meautys (Bacon’s main secretary)
Sir Thomas Bodley
Father Fulgentino
Father Redemptus Baranzano
John Selden
Thomas Hobbes
Sir Henry Wotton
Sir John Constable.

Steeves did not discuss the method by which he identified these thirteen names, but it is not difficult to determine when his sources are consulted. He included the name of every person (other than the ultimate patron, King James) with whom Bacon corresponded about his writings, as well as every name which was ever specifically reputed to be an “assistant” of Bacon in his literary production. By these standards, there are only three clear omissions: Sir Arthur George, who, in 1619, translated Bacon’s *De Sapientia Veterum* into English and also translated the *Essays* into French; John Borough, who assisted him especially after his impeachment; and Thomas Bushell, a servant and amanuensis of Bacon who assisted particularly with Bacon’s experiments. Bacon’s other main secretary beside Thomas Meautys, John Young, might be added as well, although there is little available on him beyond his evident service to Bacon. Quite possibly these

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6 Arthur George does not appear in WFB. The 1619 translation of *De Sapientia Veterum* includes his own dedicatory epistle to Elizabeth Stuart, celebrating Bacon’s accomplishments. Otherwise see DNB, vol. 8, p. 241. On John Borough, he is noted only in passing in WFB, in a letter from Bacon’s secretary, Thomas Meautys to Bacon, (p. 324), though it is clear from a piece of correspondence published by Daniel Woolf in 1984, that Borough, along with Selden, assisted Bacon extensively in obtaining texts after his impeachment. Bacon’s exile from the verge made it necessary for him to rely upon assistants who could obtain sources for him within the city of London. Borough was keeper of the Tower records after 1621. (“John Selden, John Borough, and Francis Bacon’s History of Henry VII, 1621” in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, v. 47, n. 1, Winter, 1984, pp. 47-54.) Thomas Bushell joined Bacon’s staff at the young age of 15, in 1609, (DNB, vol. 3, pp. 487-89) and while he carried on in service through Bacon’s death, he also does not figure prominently in WFB, for reasons which will be considered further below.

7 Young was one of Bacon’s executors in his 1621 will. (WFB XIV, p. 229.) There is no other mention of him in Spedding’s treatment. It is possible that John Young was the son of the Bishop by the same name (1534-1605), who was survived by one son, “John” (Cf. DNB, v. 21, pp. 1294-95.), but I have not been able to determine this. In any case, the name is not uncommon.
names did not make Steeves’ list because they did not figure prominently in any of the sources which he used, including Spedding. As we will see, in all of these four additional cases an argument could be made for their omission. These four names serve primarily as a reminder that such a list can never be exhaustive.

Establishing a literary circle can never be an exact science, especially when there is a gap of almost four-hundred years between the life of the author and the research. There are necessarily fuzzy edges, for we can never know exactly what passed personally between individuals, and information on some of the lesser known figures will always be lost to time and unavailable. However, it is clear that the group was never large. Far from being too brief, it can fairly be said that Steeves’ list includes names which were not necessarily that close to Bacon in his literary work.

**Narrowing the Field--Eliminating the Non-contributors.**

There are several names on the list who were admirers rather than colleagues or assistants, from all the available evidence. Ben Jonson is a prominent example. Ben Jonson was an admirer of Bacon’s wit and speaking, but there is no evidence that he ever worked with him, and although it is reasonable that the two knew each other, there is no evidence of their acquaintance beyond Jonson’s own laudatory lines to Bacon. Jonson was a mutual friend of Bacon’s and Selden’s, as Steeves has suggested, but there is

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8 In cross-examining Steeves’ sources I carefully read Spedding’s seven volumes of the “Life and Letters” of Bacon (WFB VIII - XIV), which, until the publication of the correspondence editions of the new Oxford collection of Francis Bacon’s works remains authoritative. Spedding’s first volume (WFB I) also contains William Rawley’s hagiographic *Life of the Right Honourable Francis Bacon*, which contains little information that is not found elsewhere, but it reveals much about its author, and will be used when considering Rawley as a member of the Bacon Circle. John Aubrey’s treatment of Bacon in *Brief Lives* is also an important early source used by Steeves, though Aubrey’s material came to him second-hand, and many years after Bacon’s death, through the personal recollections of Thomas Hobbes. Again, its greatest usefulness is for understanding Hobbes’ recollection of Bacon. Books and manuscripts consulted in the Huntington Library and the British Library reemphasized the significance of the names here, but yielded no additions to the list.

9 Cf. WFB XIV, pp. 166, 574, 576.

10 Steeves, 204.
simply nothing more to go on. Given the clear evidence for Bacon’s other assistants, it is far from certain that he assisted Bacon with his works, as Steeves alleged.  

Similarly, Fathers Fulgentino and Baranzano were drawn to Bacon’s work, but could not be considered influential. They corresponded with Bacon only after his impeachment, and, due to circumstances, nothing much came of the communication in either case. Nevertheless, Bacon’s letters to them are informative, particularly because they reveal Bacon’s willingness, after the impeachment, to make the most of the Roman Catholic contacts which Tobie Matthew had secured for him on the Continent. One letter to each survives, but it is fairly clear from these letters that the correspondence was not extensive. In his response to an inquiry from Father Redemptus Baranzano, a young professor of natural philosophy and mathematics at Anneci, Bacon solicited him to work on a natural history of the heavens.  

The further correspondence between the two might have been interesting, but Baranzano died shortly after this letter was written. Apparently Father Fulgentino had corresponded with Bacon before, but it is only in the letter of 1625 which survives, that Bacon laid-out his program for the reform of learning for Fulgentino’s consideration.  

Nothing more came of this correspondence either, due to Bacon’s death shortly thereafter. 

Sir Thomas Bodley also cannot be said to have contributed substantially to Bacon’s thought, unless it was a negative contribution. Only one exchange between the two men on Bacon’s philosophy is preserved in the correspondence, but it is particularly telling. In 1605 Bacon had contributed a copy of his Advancement of Learning to Bodley’s library, among other choice recipients. It is evident from the letter which

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11 Ibid., 205.  
12 WFB XIV, pp. 374-77.  
13 Ibid., pp. 530-33.
accompanied the book that Bacon and Bodley were not particularly intimate, and that prior to this gift Bodley was evidently unaware of the nature of Bacon’s philosophical interests. Some time before 1608, Bacon included Bodley among his reviewers of a draft of a new work, entitled Cogitata et Visa, which contained a plain explanation of what Bacon regarded as wrong with the current system of learning and natural philosophy, as well as his plan for supplanting it with his own, proper, method. Bodley was slow to respond, and Bacon sent him a chastising letter, asking for his papers back, and declaring that Bodley was “slothful,” and of no help. Bacon suspected that Bodley disliked his argument, and it turned out that he was right. When Bodley finally did respond his letter was long and relentlessly critical of Bacon’s entire project.

Since Bacon had included him among his “chiefest friends” by sending him the draft and asking for his comments on it, Bodley took the liberty of being brutally honest. First of all, Bodley objected to Bacon’s dismissal of the received authorities in natural philosophy and the present state of learning. Then he went on to let Bacon know what

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14. The King received the first copy, via the Earl of Northampton, Bodley’s library the second, and other copies went to the Earl of Salisbury, Lord Treasurer Brockhurst, and the Lord Chancellor. All of these copies were accompanied by very formal letters. Tobie Matthew, and most likely Lancelot Andrewes as well, received copies for helping Bacon with the project in the first place. It is evident from comparison between the letters to Matthew and Bodley that Bodley at this time had not been consulted for his opinion on the matter of Bacon’s program. (Cf. WFB X, pp. 252-256.) Bodley had received a copy strictly because he was the assembler of the library.

15. What remains to us of the letter is as follows: “In respect of my going down to my house in the country, I shall have miss of my papers; which I pray you therefore to return unto me. You are, I bear you witness, slothfull, and you help me nothing; so as I am half in conceit that you affect not the argument; for myself I know well you love and affect. I can say no more to you, but non canimus surdis, respondent omnia sylvae. If you be not of the lodgings chalked up (whereof I speak in my preface) I am but to pass by your door. But if I had you but a fortnight at Gorhambury, I would make you tell me another tale; or else I would add a Cogitation against Libraries, and be revenged on you that way. I pray send me some good news of Sir Thomas Smith, and commend me very kindly to him. So I rest.” (WFB X, 366.) There was apparently something prefaced to this, which is now lost.

16. Bodley’s entire letter is to be found in the 1648 collection of Bacon’s “Remaines.” (The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam. . . ., London, 1648. pp. 80-85.)
he thought would be the inevitable result of abandoning their contemporary methods and starting afresh:

now in case we should concur, to doe as you advise, which is to renounce our common Notions, and cancell all our Actions, Rules, and Tenents, and so to come, Babes, ad regnum naturae, as we are willed by Scriptures to come, ad regnum coelorum, there is nothing more certain in my understanding then that it would instantly bring us to Barbarism, and after many thousand years, leave us more unprovided of theoreticall furniture, then we are at present.¹⁷

Bodley continued in this vein at length, letting Bacon know that he was entirely unconvinced that Aristotle and the sciences as they were at the dawn of the seventeenth century were in need of any reform. Ultimately, Bodley contended, there might be some new inventions and methods from time to time, but the knowledge of one learned age was little different than that of another. The sciences could not be “perfected” as Bacon thought, or even much improved over their state in classical antiquity, “For still the same defects that Antiquity found will reside in Mankind.”¹⁸ It was best not to abandon the insights of Aristotle once they had been recovered. Then, in the candor which Bodley presumed that Bacon would afford his “speciall friend” Bodley confided that Bacon would not find any positive reception for his material in the universities: “I stand well assured for the tenour and Subject, of your maine discourse, you are not able to impannell a substantiall Jury in any university that will give upp a verdict to acquite you of your errour.”¹⁹ It is reasonable to conclude that Bodley had presumed too much on the “friendship” of a man who had lost patience with him long ago. We have no evidence of

¹⁷ The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam. . ., (London, 1648), 82.

¹⁸ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹ Ibid., 85.
further correspondence between Bacon and Bodley. The next we know of the *Cogitata et Visa* comes from the following year, when Bacon requested input on it from one of his true “chiefest friends” Lancelot Andrewes, whose advice had been highly valued by Bacon in the production of the *Advancement of Learning*. It is significant that out of the entire list of seventeen names Thomas Bodley was the only one which could be genuinely associated with puritanism.

**Thomas Hobbes--Notably Atypical**

Bacon’s connection with Thomas Hobbes is occasionally noted in secondary literature on Bacon. An appeal to a connection with Hobbes would play well into the portrayal of Bacon as an atheist, or at least a skeptic. There can be no doubt that Hobbes assisted Bacon for some period of time, but beyond this any connection between the two men becomes problematic. A.P. Martinich, the recent biographer of Hobbes, issued a strong caution on making too much of the relationship between Hobbes and Bacon, because the differences between the two in their thinking, particularly in regard to natural philosophy, far outweigh the similarities. Much the same could be said on the matter of religion, but first we must be aware of a difficulty in the source material for the relationship between the two men.

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20 Thus also Spedding’s conclusion of the correspondence between Bacon and Bodley: “Bodley might help Bacon with supply of books; but for ideas, it must have been manifest from the moment his answer came that no light could be looked for from that quarter; not even the light which is given by intelligent opposition. Nothing can be weaker or more confused than his reasons for dissent, unless it be his apprehension of the questions at issue.” (WFB X, p. 366.)

21 As a youth Bodley went to Geneva with the Marian Exiles, where he learned divinity under Calvin and Beza directly. When he returned he took his degree in divinity, studying under Lawrence Humphrey, whose own theology reflected what Bodley had gotten in Geneva. Cf. DNB, v. 2, pp. 756-759.

22 This strengthens Howard White’s case for his reading of Bacon as a skeptic or atheist. (White, pp. 110, 153, 187, etc.)

Thomas Hobbes may have known Bacon as early as 1614, and was working for him as a secretary and assistant by 1620. Some connection appears to have lasted until Bacon’s death in 1626. John Aubrey recorded that Hobbes was beloved by his Lordship, who was wont to have him walke with him in his delicate groves where he did meditate: and when a notion darted into his mind, Mr. Hobbs was presently to write it downe, and his Lordship was wont to say that he did it better then any one els about him; for that many times, when he read their notes he scarce understood what they writt, because they understood it not clearly themselves.

However, the content of Aubrey’s account must be taken carefully. Although it is a matter of record that Hobbes worked for Bacon, and was paid by him, the only relatively early source of a nature of their relationship is Aubrey, and Aubrey’s main source for material on Bacon was the recollection of Hobbes. It is not surprising that Hobbes appears “beloved” by Bacon in Hobbes’ memory, but there is little evidence that the two had anything more than a strict working relationship, as Martinich has argued. Bacon may well have respected Hobbes’ abilities, but it is notable that even Aubrey’s account gives no other ground for a connection between the two men than what is here stated. Hobbes is not mentioned anywhere in Bacon’s writings. Apart from Aubrey’s discussion in Brief Lives, Hobbes only mentioned Bacon once that we know of, and only briefly, late in his own life. This is hardly the homage of a disciple, particularly since the elements

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24 Martinich, 65-69, & 29.


26 Note Aubrey, 9-16. Any information not generally known is referred to Hobbes. Aubrey is also not a very early source, either, having written this particular biographical sketch in 1681.

27 Martinich, 66.

28 Ibid., 66.
contribute by Hobbes to Aubrey’s description of Bacon are not flattering, except to Hobbes.\textsuperscript{29}

Thomas Hobbes did not run short on theologically charged statements in his own writings. However, Hobbes’ position on religion and Christian theology only became articulated when he was a member of the Great Tew Circle after 1636, ten years after the death of Bacon.\textsuperscript{30} According to Martinich the “broad Socinianism” which even in the mature Hobbes “was married to an even more dominant fideism” was an evolutionary development, and in his earlier years, particularly around 1614, Hobbes was “a more conventional Protestant” than he would be later.\textsuperscript{31}

It must be remembered that if Hobbes and Bacon were close at some point, it was before Hobbes had fully formulated his own views on religion and Christian theology, and only near the end of Bacon’s life. Hobbes was neither a disciple of Bacon, in his later years, at any rate,\textsuperscript{32} nor could Hobbes’ as yet unformed positions have been influential on Bacon. If at one time Hobbes learned from Bacon, he took what he learned in a radically different direction. As Martinich observed, “Bacon’s radical empiricism in science is at the opposite pole from Hobbes’ rationalism.”\textsuperscript{33} Bacon’s maxim “Knowledge is power,” was consciously modified by Hobbes, who concluded “Knowledge is for the sake of

\textsuperscript{29} Martinich makes the point that Hobbes’ account of Bacon’s death, as recorded by Aubrey, appears to be as much an indictment of the failure of Bacon’s method as anything else, p. 66. Cf. Aubrey, p. 16. Martinich’s characterization of Bacon as a man who was not even liked by his friends (pp. 65-66), is unsubstantiated, though his observation that Hobbes did not necessarily like Bacon is entirely reasonable, given the differences between the two men and their lack of mention of each other.

\textsuperscript{30} See Martinich, 104ff.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. pp. 106, & 34.

\textsuperscript{32} A recent dissertation in Cambridge England, of which I have been told, apparently has established that Hobbes, in his early years, did follow Bacon’s method in natural philosophy, but that he later rejected Bacon’s method along with any number of other ideas from his youth. As yet, I have been unable to acquire a copy of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{33} Martinich, 66.
power.” As we will see in the next chapter, Hobbes’ interpretation is at odds with Bacon’s theologically informed, moral understanding of the purpose of both knowledge and power. For Bacon, power could not be an end in itself if true knowledge was to be obtained. Hobbes, at least the later Hobbes, was atypical, as a member of Bacon’s literary circle. Those who were demonstrably closer to Bacon in Bacon’s circle were marked by certain common theological propensities and trends. If Hobbes was marked by these trends during his time with Bacon we have no evidence for it, and, in any case, Hobbes’ later writings are not helpful in understanding Bacon.

**Five Unknowns**

Of the remaining twelve names on the list expanded from Steeves’ prototype, there are five about whom we simply do not have enough information readily available to discuss their beliefs or religious dispositions. They include: John Young, Sir Thomas Meautys, Sir John Borough, Sir John Constable, and Sir Arthur George. The difficulties outlined by David L. Smith in establishing the religion of Edward Sackville apply to all of these individuals, and in the case of Bacon’s secretaries, Thomas Meautys and John Young, there is the added difficulty that not much is known about them apart from their service to Bacon. Steeves’ judgment that Meautys was an exceptionally devoted servant of Bacon is borne-out throughout the correspondence, as well as by the facts that he saw to the placing of Bacon’s monument in St. Michael’s Church, and that he was later buried nearby. The clearest lead which we might have to Meautys’ beliefs, however, may be his relationship to Bacon. Given Anne Bacon’s concern for the piety of Francis’ household, there is some reason to suspect that Meautys and Young were not model Puritans.

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34 Ibid. p. 276.

35 Steeves, 209-211.
John Borough was Keeper of the Records at the Tower after 1621, and, according to a letter from Meautys to Bacon, he was also eager to assist Bacon after the impeachment.\textsuperscript{36} According to a recently discovered letter from Selden to Bacon, Borough used his position at the Tower to assist Bacon particularly with historical material needed for the \textit{History of King Henry VII}, since Bacon could not see these materials himself as a result of his exile from the verge.\textsuperscript{37} There is no clear evidence for Borough’s religious convictions. Politically he remained a faithful royalist at the outbreak of the Civil War, and his loyalty to the Crown may or may not be significant for understanding his religious convictions.\textsuperscript{38}

Sir John Constable was Bacon’s brother-in-law. Bacon dedicated his 1612 edition of the \textit{Essays} to him and left his library to him in his will. He was also Bacon’s literary executor, along with Sir William Boswell.\textsuperscript{39} However, there is no clear evidence of a working relationship here, merely an interest on the part of Constable in his brother-in-law’s work. In fact, neither Boswell nor Constable took it upon themselves to see to the binding and publication of Bacon’s works as he had asked. This was done by his chaplain, and \textit{de facto} literary executor, William Rawley, who \textit{had} worked closely with him for many years.

Sir Arthur George has his own entry in the \textit{Dictionary of National Biography}, but, as with Borough, there is no explicit evidence for his religious convictions there.\textsuperscript{40} It is

\textsuperscript{36} WFB XIV, p. 324.


\textsuperscript{38} Cf. DNB, vol. 2, p. 863. It is interesting to note that his eldest son, John, apparently had some difficulty with the Test Act which ended his service to Charles II.

\textsuperscript{39} Steeves, 212, On Constable in Bacon’s will, see WFB XIV, p. 539.

\textsuperscript{40} Cf. DNB, vol. 8, p. 241.
reasonable to conclude from this that at least he made no reputation for himself as a “Puritan” or a crypto-papist. However, it is also uncertain that he ever worked extensively, or even directly, with Bacon in literary matters. There is no evidence for a literary connection between George and Bacon beyond George’s translation of the de Sapientia Veterum into English and the Essays into French, both in 1619.

Through extensive research on each of these five individuals both in the British Library and private collections it may be possible some day to develop a better picture of their place in the turbulence of the English Reformation, even as David L. Smith has done with Edward Sackville. At best, however, this would merely augment what we know about Bacon’s household and circle. The remaining seven names include Lancelot Andrewes and Tobie Matthew, who worked as Bacon’s main editors early-on, as he was producing his first major presentation of his project the Advancement of Learning of 1605. These seven names also include the genuine theologians of the Bacon circle: Andrewes, Matthew, Rawley, Herbert, and by virtue of his scholarship in Christian antiquity, John Selden. When considering the religious convictions of those who surrounded Bacon, or, alternately, of those with whom Bacon worked in producing his philosophical writings, all seven of the remaining individuals have something to offer. All seven have left texts of their own which can help us establish the nature of the theological discourse which surrounded Bacon as he was working, and they span the time from the formative phase of his philosophy to his last works before his death.

**Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)**

In 1592 Francis Bacon invited Lancelot Andrewes to join him at his house in the country, in order to avoid the plague which was rumored to be in London that year.\(^{41}\) At this time Andrewes was the preacher at St. Giles’ Cripplegate, and too dedicated to that

\(^{41}\) WFB VIII, p. 117.
position to leave his post. Bacon’s other companions were friends from Gray’s Inn, and Andrewes’ special inclusion in the group suggests that Spedding is justified in his conclusion that the two men had become friends some time during Bacon’s student years at Gray’s Inn. However it is also reasonable to conclude that their friendship did not predate the coming of Andrewes to London in 1589, as Rector of St. Giles’ Cripplegate, and prebend at both Southwell and St. Paul’s. This dating is borne-out by the coincidence with the shift in theology which was discussed in the last chapter. Some time within a very few years of his composition of the Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England, Francis Bacon had developed a friendship with a notable “anti-Calvinist” and celebrated scholar of patristic theology. In Bacon’s turn toward the Church Fathers Andrewes was, arguably, the theologian behind the theology. Moreover, as an editor, Andrewes was thorough, and respected by Bacon, who took his editorial suggestions seriously.

**Andrewes’ theology**

Andrewes’ predilection for what would later be called, “high-church” ritual and prayer is well-known, and he is often listed as one of the fathers of Anglo-Catholicism. Andrewes was identified by Nicholas Tyacke as one of the foremost “anti-Calvinists.” Although he is sometimes called an “Arminian” by virtue of his theological rejection of Calvinism, he never aligned himself with Arminianism. When the early Arminians in England sought to claim him for their number, he vigorously dissociated himself from them. While there were political reasons for this, as Tyacke noted, including assuring King James that he was not part of what appeared to be a movement undermining the Church of England, there are equally powerful theological reasons. Andrewes’ theology

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42 WFB X, p. 256.

43 Tyacke, 91.

44 See also Paul Welsby, 165-73.
may appear more Arminian than Calvinist to the later observer, but from a contemporary perspective, and according to his own writings, he was no more an Arminian than he was a Calvinist.

In his biography of Andrewes, Paul Welsby summarized the difficulty of making Andrewes look too much like an Arminian:

It is sometimes suggested that Andrewes was an Arminian in his theology. That is true only in so far as he rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. But he in no sense represented the true position of the Dutch Arminians, who were much more concerned than was Andrewes with liberalizing a dogma of salvation. Andrewes and his followers were concerned with vindicating other things.45

If anything, Welsby has understated the case. Nowhere in Andrewes’ writings is membership in the Church reduced to a matter of human free choice when confronted with the Gospel, as the Arminians presented it. As with Bacon, God was not to be reduced to an onlooker in Andrewes’ theology. In a sermon on the clause in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Will be done,” published in 1611, Andrewes set all views on the doctrine of election firmly aside, much as the Lutherans had done in the Formula of Concord.46

Humankind has both an active and a passive will. According to the latter, humans must accept those things that God has willed that they cannot control. According to the former, humans cooperate with God, in free will, but in ways of which God is always already aware. Any prying into the secret understanding of God regarding election or reprobation is out of the scope of human ability because of the inherent difference in divine and human perspective.47 As did the Lutherans, Andrewes regarded raising the

45 Welsby, 44.


question as vain, whether Calvinist or Arminian answers were produced.\textsuperscript{48} We must be careful not to read dogmatic Arminianism into Andrewes’ rejection of Calvinism.

Even as the caution must be heeded that there is more to Calvinism than predestination, we must remember that there is more to Arminianism, as a theological system, than the rejection of predestination. In the vindication of “other things,” mentioned by Welsby, above, must be included the concern of Andrewes and his followers for the Apostolic Succession, the promotion of the idea of the authority of Tradition as being not only necessary but a fact of human nature (people trust what time has proven, and believe what they have received from others), and the emphasis on ritual prayer (liturgy) with a concomitant de-emphasis on the value of preaching in the Sunday service.\textsuperscript{49} In all of these points, and in many similar, the genuine Arminians remained true to their Reformed roots, while Andrewes and his followers rejected the Reformed position. To be fair, representatives of Dutch Arminianism, such as Grotius, were tolerant of differences on such issues, admitting them as \textit{adiaphora} or “matters of indifference.” For this reason Grotius could claim that Andrewes was an ally and sympathizer. Andrewes, however, never admitted that differences on these points were insignificant. Therefore, although Andrewes advocated tremendous breadth and toleration in the Church of England as a practical matter, he did not compromise in his own theology.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{48} As Nicholas Lossky qualified Welsby’s statement, according to Andrewes, both Calvinism and Arminianism made the error of dogmatizing a mystery. (Lossky, 330, fn. 12.)


\textsuperscript{50} Welsby, like Tyacke, tended to minimize Andrewes’ disagreements with Arminianism on these points, as Grotius did. However, it is clear from his account that church polity was not a minor issue for Andrewes, and that he had, at least in his own mind, weighty theological objections to Arminianism. (Welsby, pp. 165ff.)
It must be recognized that in the years after the accession of Charles I in 1625
English Arminianism would come to be something quite different from its continental
counterpart which Andrewes encountered, and it would eventually fuse the interests of
Andrewes and the Arminians. However, “after 1625” also means after Andrewes, for
from 1625 until his death in May of 1626, Andrewes was a man of failing health who
made very few public appearances.\textsuperscript{51} Arminianism, because of its gradual victory in the
early years of Charles I, has become a term of convenience among historians, to
retroactively label the varieties of non-Calvinists and anti-Calvinists who contributed to
the shift. However, to those who lived before the shift, Arminianism was more narrowly
defined as a discreet doctrinal system springing from the Reformed camp, and laden with
the language and appearance of Reformed theology, even if the answers to certain key
questions were different. Andrewes’ answers, and for that matter his questions, did not
spring from the common fabric of Reformed theological discourse, but reflected a separate
but related trend in the Reformation, the desire to return \textit{ad fontes} -- to the purer theology
of an earlier age.

In the most nuanced study of Andrewes’ theology to date, Nicholas Lossky
established, through a careful reading of Andrewes’ \textit{LXVI Sermons}, that Andrewes’
reverence for the Church Fathers, and Christian antiquity generally, led him to develop his
own theological system which, though far from unique, was fundamentally patristic, with
a decidedly eastern turn.\textsuperscript{52} It is his affinity for tradition and the fathers which should
dominate our image of Andrewes, Lossky argued, rather than an association with any of

\textsuperscript{51} Welsby, 253 ff. Welsby’s observation that Laud was different from Andrewes even as Charles was
different from James is valuable in distinguishing the direction of theology after Andrewes from those trends
of which he was a part. (p. 254.)

\textsuperscript{52} Nicholas Lossky, \textit{Lancelot Andrewes The Preacher (1555-1626)}, [tr. Andrew Louth] Oxford, Clarendon
the contemporary flavors of Protestantism. As Lossky summarized Andrewes’ turn toward the Fathers:

What is striking in Lancelot Andrewes’s preaching is the use, pure and simple, of Patristic exegesis without any attempt to justify it: for him it speaks for itself. In Richard Hooker, for example, we hear echoes of the controversies of his time, but Andrewes, for his part, seems to pay no attention to them.53

Andrewes’ theology was not standard for his day, but it was founded in authorities which, by virtue of their antiquity and their accepted orthodoxy, could not be rejected.

Among other patristic aspects, Lossky noted that Andrewes adhered to the eastern patristic understanding of salvation as ἐνθυμομενον, or deification. Lossky summarized the central theme of Andrewes’ sermons on the Incarnation as follows:

Each sermon, in one way or another, has recourse to the incomprehensible mystery of the ‘emptying’ (kenosis, ἐνθυμομενον) of the Second Person of the Trinity, of the taking hold of time by the eternal, of space by the incommensurable. . . . The implication is always the old patristic addage, which Andrewes forcefully reformulates for his own time: ‘God has become man, that man might become God.’54

Typical of what Lossky describes is Andrewes’ sermon on the Feast of the Nativity, from 1609:

Yea the very manner of this making hath his increase too, addeth to it still. In the word ἐνθυμομενον, which is not every making but ‘making it His nature.’ To have made Him a body and taken it upon him for a time till He had performed His embassage, and then laid it off again, that had been much; but so to be made as once made and ever made; so to take it as never to lay it off more, but continue so still, ἐνθυμομενον ‘it to become His very nature;’ so to be made is to make the union full. And to make the union with us full, He was content not to be sent alone but to be made; and that ἐνθυμομενον ‘to be made so as never unmade more.’ Our manhood becoming His nature, no less than the Godhead itself. This is Filium Factum indeed.55

53 Lossky, 194.
54 Lossky, pp. 32-33, see also pp. 34, 49, 86, etc. & esp. pp. 249-271.
Andrewes also preached the correlative doctrine that as a result of God taking on human nature, humans would be glorified above the angels, and through union with Christ, human nature would “enter upon a state that no man had ever known before, neither the righteous ones of the Old Testament, nor even Adam before the Fall.”

In addition to the examples which Lossky uses to support his point we may add a section from Andrewes’ sermon on the Incarnation of 1615 where he expounded the state of humankind, as a result of the Incarnation, excelling that of the Angels:

Now what is to be commended to us out of this text for us to lay hold of? Verily first, to take us to our meditation, the meditation which the Psalmist hath, and which the Apostle in this chapter voucheth out of him at the sixth verse. “When I consider,” saith he, “the Heavens” -- say we, the Angels of Heaven -- and see those glorious Spirits passed by, and man taken, even to sigh with him and say, “Lord, what is man,” either Adam or Abraham, “that Thou shouldest be thus mindful of him, or the seed, or sons of either, that Thou shouldest make this do about him!” The case is here far otherwise -- far more worth our consideration. There, “Thou hast made him a little lower” [than the angels]; here, “Thou hast made him a great deal higher than the Angels.” For they, this day first, and ever since, daily have and do adore our nature in the personal union with the Deity.

Deification figures strongly in Andrewes’ presentation of Salvation, but it is not the only doctrine in which he turned to the Eastern Fathers rather than embracing the theology of the Reformation.

Andrewes was also decidedly nonwestern in his understanding of original sin. While this has led to discussions of whether he should be classified as a “Pelagian” or “Semi-Pelagian,” Lossky’s connection of Andrewes to eastern theology makes such western classifications inappropriate. Andrewes, in turning to the example of the eastern church, avoided (or disregarded) both sides of the rift between Augustine and Pelagius.

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56 Lossky, 49.

with the consequence that the sense of the *completeness* of the corruption of the human will which dominates western discussion is simply absent.\(^5^8\) As we have noted with regard to Bacon, Andrewes also rejected the doctrine of total depravity. We will explore this connection further in the next chapter when examining the understanding of the Fall of man as it appears in both Bacon and Andrewes.

It is also noteworthy that the idea of *recapitulation*, as it is found in St. Irenaeus, permeated Andrewes’ preaching. While recapitulation is associated with the understanding of salvation as deification, it has implications which extend beyond the salvation of humankind to include the restoration of creation *through* the Incarnation and human salvation. According to recapitulation, salvation involved nothing less than the complete restoration of Adam’s relationship to God and creation in paradise, but in a more perfect way, transforming both humanity and the rest of creation, for now God Himself had united with Creation through the Incarnation, and “sums up all things in Himself.”\(^5^9\)

Much more could be said on the connection of Andrewes to patristic doctrine, and Lossky has much more to offer on this point. Indeed, there is very little which Andrewes said or believed which could not be traced to its roots in the writings of the first seven centuries. These doctrines, however, have special significance to the theological statements of Francis Bacon, as we have already examined them in the previous chapter. Lossky’s presentation of Andrewes’ theology is based on an analysis of Andrewes’ *LXVI Sermons*, but the patristic themes which he has identified are found throughout

\(^{5^8}\) Cf. Lossky, 170 ff.

\(^{5^9}\) Cf. especially Andrewes’ extended discussion in his Christmas sermons of 1622 & 23. Most of the content of these sermons reflects Irenaeus’ writing specifically, though he does not cite him until the end. *Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, v. 1, pp. 249-264 & 264-283. Also, Lossky, 74, and 96-97. See especially Lossky’s footnote on p. 97, which examines the direct use of Irenaeus’ theology by Andrewes.
Andrewes’ writings, from his widely-known manual for personal devotions, the *Preces Privatae*, to his early lectures at St. Paul’s and St Giles, preserved in the *Apospasmatia Sacra* which he preached during the early years of his friendship with Bacon, in 1591 and following.  

**Andrewes: friend and editor**

A letter from Bacon to Andrewes of 1609 (which accompanied the *Cogitata et Visa* that had so disappointed Bodley) is helpful for understanding their friendship.  

Bacon greeted Andrewes as a friend of many years, and in conclusion stated explicitly that if he had been able he would have come to him personally, rather than send a letter, but both men were busy, and he was hastening to his house in the country. The letter contained a special request which was not an uncommon one from Bacon. He wrote:

> I send not your Lordship too much, lest it may glut you. Now let me tell you what my desire is. If your Lordship be so good now, as when you were the good Dean of Westminster, my request to you is, that not by pricks, but by notes, you would mark unto me whatsoever shall seem unto you either not current in style, or harsh to credit and opinion, or inconvenient to the person of the writer; . . . And though for the matter itself my judgment be in some things fixed, and not accessible by any man’s judgment that goeth not my way: yet even in those things, the admonition of a friend may make me express myself diversely.

James Spedding pointed-out that the service which Dr. Andrewes was to perform for his friend was not an uncommon one. Andrewes had read and edited Bacons drafts of the *Of*

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60 *The Preces Privatae* was written down by Andrewes in Greek and Latin, and contains the formal litanies of both Western and Eastern churches. (Cf. *Preces Privatae: Graece & Latinae*, Oxford, 1675.) The *Apospasmatia Sacra* will be considered at length below, and in the next chapter.

61 WFB, XI, p. 141. Andrewes had just finished writing his *Responsio ad Bellarmine*, which had been commissioned by the King. Not being a controversialist, this had proven something of a distasteful task for him. (p. 140) Bacon mentioned in the beginning of the letter, that a diversion into natural philosophy might now be welcomed by him, suggesting that he had been waiting until the prior task was off of Andrewes’ table. It is possible that the absence of Matthew on the Continent and the sheer busyness of Andrewes led Bacon to solicit Bodley’s assistance in the first place, but now he has returned to a more agreeable, and reliable, editor.

62 WFB XI, p. 141.
the Proficiencie and Advancement of Learning of 1605, and had evidently done a thorough job, for in sending the finished product to Tobie Matthew, his other main editor, Bacon wrote: “I thought it a small adventure to send you a copy, who have more right to it than any man, except Bishop Andrewes, who was my inquisitor.” Andrews, then, was a common resource for Bacon as an editor and advisor on his projects, and he evidently took to the work with a certain thoroughness and zeal. While Bacon was not about to alter his main argument for anyone, he was entirely willing to change his presentation at the advice of Andrews. Furthermore, Andrews’ advice had apparently proven particularly valuable for Bacon, and Bacon trusted him to ensure that nothing which he had written would offend, or place himself in an “inconvenient” position. The friendship between the two was evidently a very candid one, where such business was usually conducted face to face. Bacon, ever cautious, was not one to expose his ideas to the public before they were safe for public eyes, and Andrews possessed not only the necessary level of erudition, but also the safety of being a longtime, close friend.

Andrewes, the qualified inquisitor

There is no reason to suspect that there was anything less than a strong and sincere personal friendship between Bacon and Andrews, but we must also recognize that for the service of proofreading and advising, Bacon could not have chosen a man with a more thorough pedigree, when what was at stake was the theological justification for the Instauration. As a scholar, Lancelot Andrews was held in high regard by all who knew him from his earliest days as a student at Cambridge. His mastery of numerous languages, and particularly Greek and Hebrew, as well as his broad reading in Church history and the Church Fathers, was frequently noted by his contemporaries. Their praise of his abilities is substantiated by the numerous academic positions to which he was appointed.

63 WFB X., p. 256
including, after his Masters Degree, Catechist of Pembroke Hall, where his lectures cemented his reputation as “the scholar to know” if one wished to be considered scholarly.\textsuperscript{64} This reputation would lead eventually to his prominence at the Hampton Court Conference, and his place as the head of the committee translating the first twelve books of the Old Testament from Hebrew into English for the Authorized Version.

Andrewes never married. His personal piety led him to live a life of near monastic asceticism and seclusion, with his days dominated by academic study and prayer, and he advocated in his sermons some level of ascetic discipline for all Christians.\textsuperscript{65} Although Andrewes’ reputation had not been lost on the Court of Elizabeth, and had landed him significant ecclesial positions, in the Court of King James he became, rather against his will, a significant political figure as well.\textsuperscript{66} He was a particular favorite as a court preacher, having preached court sermons for every major feast of the Church Year from 1605 to 1624.\textsuperscript{67} He was raised to the Episcopacy in 1605, and was a member of two of the King’s special courts, that of High Commission and that of Star Chamber. In 1616 he was appointed to the Privy Council. While Bacon’s political position, at least prior to his impeachment, certainly did not place him as Bishop Andrewes’ subordinate, Lancelot Andrewes still possessed what Bacon did not: the unassailable image of a pious and sincere theologian, and the reputation of a truly godly Bishop. In the Jacobean court

\textsuperscript{64} Cf. the summary biographical sketch of Nicholas Lossky, p. 13, and the biography of Paul Welsby. Welsby’s text remains the standard critical treatment of the life of Andrewes, although Lossky has raised important questions regarding many of Welsby’s interpretations and judgments based on a very careful reading of the texts. Lossky’s work represents a watershed in the interpretation of Andrewes’ theology, after which many assumptions about Andrewes’ “early Puritanism” or his later “Arminianism” can no longer be regarded as valid.

\textsuperscript{65} Reidy, v., vi., 4, &152 ff.

\textsuperscript{66} See Lossky’s discussion of Andrewes’ preference for a monastic-type seclusion and the high regard in which he was held by the King, pp. 14, 17ff. Note especially Andrewes’ reluctance to comment on any matters not having to do with the Church, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 19.
there was more than one type of power and influence. Andrewes’ image and respectability was of the type which could only be enhanced by his reluctance to engage in political, or ‘worldly,’ offices and affairs.

In spite of the fierce religious factionalism dominating the Church of England at the time, Andrewes was a man remarkably lacking in enemies. While a man of deeply-rooted convictions, Andrewes apparently advocated the same concept of pre-latitudinarian tolerance which comes out strongly in Bacon’s own writings on maintaining peace and harmony in the Church of England. Papism and genuine separatism were excluded, but sincere piety and loyalty to the English Church were the keys to an ecclesial stability and order which could embrace a significant diversity of opinion. Although he was not himself a Puritan in any form, Andrewes had many friends among the Puritans at Cambridge, defended their right to exist within the Church of England, and was held in high-enough regard that he was nominated by Sir Francis Walsingham to a special Readership in Controversies, which had the specific responsibility of promoting puritan arguments. He turned the position down because it would be “contrary both to his learning and his conscience,” but Walsingham retained his high-regard for Andrewes and later obtained other notable positions for him. At the other end of Andrewes’ career his advocacy of tolerance in theology is evidenced by his defense of his young friend John Selden, who had come under fire for his tract *On the History of Tithes*. In calling into question the divine origin of the English tithe, Selden had offended many who directly benefitted from that system. Although Selden’s conclusions were at odds with Andrewes’ own position and prior publication on the subject, Andrewes opposed a small

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68 In regard to the idea that Andrewes had a certain “early Puritan” phase, see Lossky, footnote 5, p. 11.

69 Lossky, 14-15.
host of his fellow bishops and praised Selden’s scholarship in the tract. Berkowitz noted that King James received Selden’s position on tithes with a “curious inaction,” given the threat that Selden’s position posed to James’ own ideas and those of so many of his leading clergy. Given the favored position of Lancelot Andrewes in James’ court, however, the inaction of the King looks a great deal less curious, and less of a failure to listen to the concerns of his bishops. One bishop, at least, who had the King’s respect, was “curiously” tolerant, and favorable in his attitude toward Selden.

**The Sacra**

During the early years of his friendship with Bacon, Andrewes was busy lecturing on the book of Genesis, and on the Creation and Fall narratives in particular. His lectures were well attended, and the copious notes of his students were edited and compiled some sixty-odd years later in a thick volume entitled *Sacra*. To those interested in Andrewes’ rhetorical style as a homiletician the book is useless, revealing more of the meticulous note-taking habits of his hearers, and the writer of the preface to this book quite frankly admitted this. Unfortunately, this proved to be reason enough.

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70 Florence Higham writes of Andrewes’ relationship with his fellow members of the recently dissolved Society of Antiquities, “Andrewes remained on friendly terms with many of its members, including Selden, and it is satisfactory to note that he approved the latter’s controversial book on tithes as historically sound and therefore meritorious, however unpopular it might be with those who upheld the theory of divine right.” Florence Higham, *Lancelot Andrewes* (London, SCM Press, 1952), 88. Selden was not, actually, a member of that society, being too young, but Selden made a name for himself among its former members, including Andrewes. Cf. David Sandler Berkowitz, *John Selden’s Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington, Folger Books, 1988), 80-81.

71 Berkowitz, 36. Berkowitz has also noted Andrewes’ courage in praising Selden’s work, (p. 20) but the particular respect which the King had for Andrewes is a missing link between the two points.

72 "'Tis true, it cannot be denied, and it ought in justice to be proclaim’d, that this Volume of Notes was only taken by the Eare from the voluble Tongue of the Dictator, as he deliver’d them out of the Pulpit; and so are infinitely short of their original perfection. We must not judge by these Lectures, what kind of Preacher their Author was; but we must guesse by the Author, how exactly accomplish’t these Lectures were. There have been many great Monarchs, who having began to erect their stately Fabricks, have left them imperfect upon Design, that late Posterity might wonder at the excessive greatnesse of their Intentions. And it is thus farre applicable to the case in hand, That every Reader may imagine by the beauty of these Ruines, what kinde of Buildings he should have seen in he had seen themstanding in their integrity.” *Sacra*, (London, 1657), preface. We may note that Luther’s Table Talk, and countless medieval sermons have come down to us the same way.
for the editor of Andrewes’ collected works to leave it out (perhaps combined with the looming tedium of editing more than six-hundred folio-sized pages.) However, the Apospasmatia Sacra remains a significant record of the content and emphases of these lectures, revealing much about Andrewes’ understanding of the relationship between God and Creation. Although it does not contain the exact words of Andrewes himself, the Apospasmatia Sacra reveals much about how Andrewes approached the Scriptures and what points he drew from them. Furthermore, there are manifest similarities to Bacon’s writings and theological points throughout these lectures, and Andrewes included specific discussions of natural philosophy in the heart of his theological discussions. These were the same years when Bacon himself was undergoing his patristic turn and gradually forming his new philosophy. There is good reason to believe that there was a significant exchange of ideas between the natural philosopher and the theologian. The connection between Bacon’s theological statements and the Apospasmatia Sacra is significant, and it will be considered in the next chapter.

Throughout his career Andrewes mingled natural philosophy with his theological points as he preached. In 1620, the same year as the publication of Bacon’s Instauratio Magna and Novum Organum, Andrewes made a special point of preaching upon the goodness of the philosophical learning of the Magi, and its significance in connection with

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73 In the Works of Lancelot Andrewes, v. 11, the editor justifies the omission of the Apospasmatia Sacra as follows: “This volume contains Sermons on the first four chapters of Genesis which occupy more than 500 pages. The rest of the volume comprises “Sermons on several choice texts.” There does not appear to be sufficient evidence to justify one in ascribing these sermons, at least in their present form, to Bishop Andrewes. Accordingly, they are not reprinted in this edition.” This is heavily qualified, and not nearly as final as Welsby has suggested in addressing the omission. (Cf. Paul Welsby, p. 61 fn. 1) The omission looks particularly odd in light of the inclusion of other collections of his works which were only compiled from the notes of students. (See Works of Lancelot Andrewes, v. 5, pp. v-vi.)

The omission of the Apospasmatia Sacra on such shaky grounds drew fire already in the nineteenth century from Arthur T. Russell, (Memoir of the Life and Works of Lancelot Andrewes, 1860, pp. 382-3.) who pointed out, as we have noted, that these were originally not printed because King Charles, in his commission to Andrewes’ original literary executors (Bishops Laud and Buckeridge), forbade them to print anything which had not been edited by Andrewes’ own hand.
their recognition of the true God. Their natural philosophy itself was what led them to the manger, for “This is their star, their guide; a guide apt and proper for them that knew the stars, for them that were learned. Christ applieth Himself to all; disposeth all things; what every one is given to, even by that Christ calleth them.” In his analysis of this sermon and other uses which Andrewes made of natural philosophy Lossky concluded:

However, there is not question at all of Andrewes’s condemning, or even minimalizing, however slightly, the value of natural phenomena, human learning, and the secular sciences. It is enough to remember the moving defense he makes of these last in Sermon 14 of the Christmas sermons, preached in 1620, in which he makes much of the learning of the kings, the Magi. Quite simply, this friend of Francis Bacon was very far from a certain type of academic mind that considers there to be an abyss between science and theology, between truth verified experimentally and truth tout court. God for him is truly ‘all in all.’

Given his long friendship with Bacon, Andrewes’ understanding of the interrelationship of natural philosophy and theology raises a serious question about the appropriateness of drawing too firm a line between “matters of faith” and “matters of science” in Bacon’s writings. Andrewes was not alone among Bacon’s friends in mixing that which, it is widely believed, Bacon kept separate.

**Tobie Matthew (1577-1655)**

Sir Tobie Matthew was Bacon’s trusted and close friend, arguably his closest friend, from the time when the two men met. This occurred around 1601 when Matthew came to London as a member of Parliament for Newport in Cornwall. Tobie Matthew was born in Salisbury in 1577, the son of a clergyman by the same name. His father

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74 *Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, v. 1, p. 245.
75 Lossky, 92.
76 Steeves, 200.
would later become Bishop of Durham and then Archbishop of York.\textsuperscript{77} By his own account, the younger Tobie never shared his father’s staunch Reformed convictions, but it was still a shock to Bacon and many others when Matthew returned in 1607 from three years on the Continent and revealed that he had converted to the Roman Catholic faith. For Sir Tobie himself, however, this was the only reasonable decision, for Church history and tradition formed a thoroughly compelling argument against the innovations of the Reformation, which was augmented by his fascination with the mystical spirituality of the Roman tradition.\textsuperscript{78} Francis Bacon was the first person in whom he confided upon his return.\textsuperscript{79} Matthew was imprisoned for several months in the Fleet for his recusancy, during which time many clergy remonstrated with him, including Lancelot Andrewes.\textsuperscript{80} Tobie remained firm in his Roman Catholicism. Eventually the efforts of Bacon and others secured his release, and in 1608 he went into exile on the Continent. In 1614 he was ordained to the priesthood, and he did not return to England until 1617.

When he was in England Matthew served as Bacon’s personal courier and representative, and when he was on the Continent he saw to the revision, translation, and publication of Bacon’s works there. The correspondence between Matthew and Bacon is extensive from the periods when he was away from England, but rather scant otherwise,

\textsuperscript{77} DNB vol. XIII, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{78} According to his own account, Tobie Matthew’s conversion began with the sense of antiquity in the presence of the ancient Christian sites of Rome, and was furthered by a comparison of Augustine’s argument against the Donatists (in \textit{De Unitate Ecclesiae}) with the contemporary divisions of Christendom. (Taken from his letter of 1611 to the nun, Dame Mary Gage, as found in Arnold Harris Matthew, \textit{The Life of Sir Tobie Matthew, Bacon’s Alter Ego} (London, Elkin Mathews, 1907), 79-80.) Matthew was drawn to the mysticism of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. In 1642 he made a translation of Teresa of Avila’s autobiography in the preface of which he clearly stated his admiration for Theresa’s life and writing: \textit{The Flaming Hart or the Life of the Gloriosa S. Teresa, Foundresse of the Reformation, of the Order of the All-Immaculate Virgin Mother, our B. Lady, of Mount-Carmel. This History fo her Life was vvritten by the Saint her selve, in Spanish’ and is nevly, novv, Translated into English, in the yeare of our Lord God, 1642.} (Antwerpe, 1642.)

\textsuperscript{79} WFB XI, p. 8.

which supports the observation above that Bacon preferred, when possible, to handle matters pertaining to the Instauration in person. Along with Andrewes, Matthew was one of Bacon’s two principal prepress editors for his philosophical works. Bacon wrote his essay “On Friendship” in response to a special request by Matthew.\footnote{WFB XIV, p. 429.} This was telling, for the essay deals with the value of honest advice, and having someone with whom to share all things in good times and adversity.\footnote{WFB VI, pp. 437-443.} Their friendship lasted through Matthew’s recusancy and Bacon’s impeachment, and Matthew was intimately involved with advising and assisting Bacon on the Instauration program throughout. Matthew’s own writings are almost entirely theological, and geared toward the defense of the Roman Catholic Church as the true, historical Christian Church.

It has been recently established that Toby Matthew was the author of a pro-Catholic tract entitled *Charity Mistaken*.\footnote{Charity Mistaken, with the want whereof, Catholickes are unjuystly charged for affirming, as they do with grief, that Protestantcy unrepented destroies Salvation. Printed with License, Anno 1630. For the revised ascription to Sir Tobie Matthew, not, as hitherto, to Matthew Wilson, see A.F. Allison in Recusant History, v. 5 pp. 128-30.} This work is an answer to the charge of certain Protestants in England that the Roman Catholics are uncharitable because they refuse to admit that Protestants might be saved. Matthew responded that it was precisely on this point that the Roman Catholic Church was entirely charitable, because it was true that there is no salvation outside of the jurisdiction of the Pope, and the Catholic Church earnestly desired that the Protestants should return.\footnote{Cf. Charity Mistaken, p. 18: “And consequently, that no one of vs is to be blamed, if conceauing his owne to be the only true Religion, he declare the dangerous estate, wherein he takes any other man to be, who communicates and agrees not with him; but rather that he is obliged to let him know it.”} In the fourth chapter he drew his argument principally from the Church Fathers of the first five centuries, and he was careful to include the Eastern Fathers, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, quite possibly
because the Protestants frequently appealed to Eastern Fathers in objection to Roman Catholic claims of hegemony. Matthew is particularly writing against, and to, certain Protestants who themselves held the “charitable” view that Roman Catholics could be saved, because Catholics and Protestants were but two factions of one religion, and who held that the real issue was whether the Roman Church was willing to reform or not. In 1630 Matthew could have had many English Protestants in mind, for it was clear at this time that William Laud and his partisans were in the ascendancy, but also sheds light on how Matthew related to the Protestant members of the Bacon literary circle. The particular opinion against which he was arguing was presented by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes in a discussion between the two men many years earlier. As Matthew remembered the conversation, Andrewes told him:

that he held the English Protestant Catholic Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, to be one and the same Church of Christ, forasmuch as he might conceive the fundamental points of faith, and the substantial worship and service of God; that we were both. . . the same house of God; and that the only question between us both was, in very deed, and might justly be, whether that part of the house wherein they dwelt, or else that other part which we inhabit, were the better swept, and more cleanly kept, and more substantially repaired.

Andrewes and Bacon could fault Matthew for moving backward into the “superstition” (as Bacon called it) of the Papacy, but he had not abandoned his Christianity.

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86 See Charity Mistaken, Chapter vi, pp. 43ff. Note also the position as expressed by John Selden in his Table Talk, “Catholics say, we out of our Charity, believe they of the Church of Rome may be saved: But they do not believe so of us. Therefore their Church is better according to our selves; first, osme of them no doubt believe as well of us, as we do of them, but they must not say so; besides is that an argument their Church is better than Ours, because it has less Charity?” (Table Talk, London, 1689. p. 12)

87 From Matthew’s own account of his conversion, as quoted in Maurice F. Reidy, see p. 82. John Selden, also identified this as a factor separating his Protestant Church from the Catholics, Protestants could admit Catholic salvation, but not vice versa. Table Talk, p. 12.

88 See Bacon’s letter to Matthew on the subject, WFB XI, p. 10.
Matthew, for his part, was genuinely concerned for the salvation of those outside the Roman communion who, nevertheless, respected Christian Tradition and the opinions of the Fathers as he did. From Matthew’s perspective, if such Protestants were to understand the Scriptures and the Fathers properly, they would make the same decision that he had made.

Like Andrewes, Matthew also included discussions of natural philosophy in his theological writings. Matthew’s book entitled Of the Love of our Only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, contains a discussion, in very Baconian fashion, of how God has expressed His power in the laws of nature which can be observed in the visible realm. The study of nature is inherently a devotional exercise, according to Matthew’s presentation, for God “by creation of the world, he led men up, by meanes of visible things, toward a knowledge, and beliefe of the inuisible.” We may note the similarity of this statement to the common passages in Bacon’s philosophical writings where knowledge is described as ascending until it breaks off in wonder at the contemplation of God. In the preface, Matthew used the regular laws of nature as a pattern for spiritual learning and growth, and throughout the first chapter of the work Matthew drew upon the analogies of observable nature for understanding the power of God. In another significant passage, Matthew discussed the importance of the study of nature by the Magi who were led to salvation as a result of their many years of contemplation of the stars:

And in conformyty of this knowledge, his loue is neuer fayling to condescend to our naturall inclinations. Sometymes he serues himselfe of our secular studies; sometymes of our vaine curiosities; yea and sometymes of our very sinnes, whereby he may eyther dispose vs to a

89 Of the Love of our Only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Both that which he beareth to Vs; and that also which we are obliged to beare to Him. Declared By the principall Mysteries of the Life, and Death of our Lord; as they are deliuered to us in Holy Scripture. 1622. p. 234.

90 See the Advancement of Learning, book 1, WFB III, p. 301. Such contemplation was the business of man’s intellect in the original state: see the Advancement of Learning, book 1. WFB III, p. 296. See also Valerius Terminus, WFB III, p. 218.
conversion from heresy, or any other impiety; or els to a vocation to his better service. So I think may any man obserue in himselfe, that our Lord hath proceeded towards him; & so it is evident that he proceeded with these Magi. For as they had much imployed themselues, vpon the contemplation of nature, by meanes of the Starrs; so by a starre, which was the likelyest lure to which they might be drawne to stoope, (for though their eyes looked vpward for a while, yet soone after, it brought them downe vpon their knees, at the sight of the diuine infant) he vouchsafed to summon them to his seruice.91

The similarity of this passage, written in 1622, to Andrewes’ discussion of the same topic in his 1620 Christmas sermon is unmistakable.

**Henry Wotton**92 (1568-1639)

Henry Wotton was Bacon’s kinsman, and the two had been together in the service of Essex. Both escaped Essex’ downfall, and they continued as friends and correspondents until Bacon’s death.93 Wotton was a poet, and wrote the inscription on the headstone which Thomas Meautys had placed in St. Michael’s church in memory of Bacon. Bacon had apparently shared some of his own verse with Wotton from time to time,94 but the two also shared an interest in Bacon’s *forté*, natural philosophy. On his various trips to the Continent, Wotton gathered what information he could on current experiments. While Bacon was composing the *Novum Organum*, Wotton provided him with a written account of experiments he had witnessed some years earlier in the house of Johannes Kepler in Linz. Wotton also dabbled in his own experiments in medical

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91 Tobie Matthew *Of the Love*. . . , 1622. p. 84-5.

92 The most complete account of Wotton’s life and activities is the two volume “life and letters” biography of Logan Pearsall Smith: *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, (Oxford, 1907.) The account presented here, unless noted otherwise, is summarized from these volumes as well as DNB vol. 21, pp. 966-72.

93 We may note that Bacon’s nephew, Edmund Bacon, was Wotton’s closest friend, and he married Wotton’s niece, Philippa Wotton, adding a dimension to the familial ties between Francis Bacon and Henry Wotton. (Logan Pearsall Smith, 460-61.)

94 “Specimens of Bacon’s poetry were also found among Wotton’s papers after his death, and these were subsequently published in the *Reliquiae Wottonianae* in the year 1651.” Steeves, 218.
distillations and the measurement of time. Bacon sent Wotton three copies of the *Novum Organum* with the understanding that Wotton would distribute them while he was in Germany to some of his contacts in natural philosophy. Wotton promised to send one to Kepler. In 1624 Wotton was made Provost of Eton College, where he was devoted to his pedagogical duties, but unable to finish the literary projects to which he had committed himself.

Sir Henry Wotton was a man of letters, but not an intellectual, and he pursued academic matters with the mediocrity of the true dilettante. Wotton was notably pious, and in his later years spent some hours every day, after chapel, “reading the Bible and authors in Divinity.” Among other devotional material, Wotton was in possession of a manuscript copy of Bacon’s *Confession of Faith*, which he held in high regard. However, in theology he was neither accomplished nor, apparently, very deep. He read and appreciated the work of others, but he did not produce his own, beyond two well-turned, but superficial, meditations, one on Genesis 22, and one on the Nativity. However, this does not mean that he cannot be located on the map of Tudor and Stuart religion. He was sympathetic to both anti-Calvinism, and the irenicism of Bacon and Andrewes.

While on the Continent Wotton was particularly concerned that the theological differences which separated Lutherans and Calvinists were preventing them from facing

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95 WFB XIV, p. 131.

96 Thus the conclusion in the DNB regarding his literary activity: “Wotton was an amiable dilettante or literary amateur, with a growing inclination toward idleness in his later years.” (vol. 21, p. 969.) In Smith’s account, Wotton appears as a man of diverse interests, but no expertise.

97 Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. 1, p. 211.

98 He passed it on, with praise, to Bacon’s nephew, Edmund. (Logan Pearsall Smith, vol. 2, p. 393.)

down their common enemy in the Church of Rome. Much as Bacon had done in regard to English theological differences in his *Advertisement*, Wotton called for these differences to be set aside in order to present a united front to the threat of the Counter-Reformation. However, he also never suggested that the differences themselves were not significant.¹⁰⁰

Although Wotton, as far as we know, never actively engaged in the Arminian Controversy in England, he was a friend and admirer of Laud, and he clearly sided against the Calvinists when it came to points of difference. He was ordained a Deacon in 1627, which he regarded as important both for his personal sense of vocation, and for the benefit of his students at Eton.¹⁰¹ He wanted to model the proper religion for them, which, as it was associated by him with the wearing of the surplice, was that of the “high-church” faction. In his own words, he hoped,

> that gentlemen and knights’ sons, who are trained up with us in a seminary of Churchmen (which was the will of the holy Founder) will by my example (without vanity be it spoken) not be ashamed, after the sight of courtly weeds, to put on a surplice.¹⁰²

Wotton’s anti-Calvinism is also evident in his last will and testament where he included an apparently Arminian (or at least a very carefully non-Calvinist) formula which distinguishes between the “sufficient” and the “efficient” in regard to the efficacy of forgiveness which comes through the death of Christ: “My Soul I bequeath to the Immortal God my Maker, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, my blessed Redeemer and Mediator, through His all and sole sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and efficient for his Elect.”¹⁰³ By allowing that all could be saved, though only the Elect


would have the advantage of Salvation, Wotton made a distinction that allowed for human free will. By the time of Wotton’s death it was well known that James Arminius had made a similar distinction in replying to the English Calvinist William Perkins.\textsuperscript{104}

**William Rawley\textsuperscript{105} (1588-1667)**

William Rawley was Bacon’s personal chaplain, but he also assisted in his experiments and observations. After Bacon’s death Rawley became his first biographer and his *de facto* literary executor. He was responsible for posthumously publishing the *Sylva Sylvarum* and the *New Atlantis*, translating Bacon’s English works into Latin, and also producing the earliest collections of Bacon’s correspondence and literary remains. Rawley made the acquaintance of Bacon sometime around 1612, and in 1616 Bacon was instrumental in obtaining for Rawley the rectorship of Landbeach. When Bacon became Lord Chancellor in 1618, he chose Rawley as his personal chaplain to replace William Lewis, for whom Bacon had recently obtained the position of provost at Oriel College.\textsuperscript{106} (William Lewis, for his part, was noted in the *Dictionary of National Biography* to be a “zealous member of the high-church party.”)\textsuperscript{107} From that time on, Rawley worked

\textsuperscript{104} The language is slightly different in Wotton, for Arminius distinguished, along with Augustine, between efficacious and efficient, where the latter term corresponded in Augustine’s usage, to what Arminius meant by “sufficient.” But Wotton’s usage still separates his theology from the Calvinism of Perkins, who, according to Arminius’ response, would accept no such distinction. Arminius is adamant that “efficient” should not be confused with “efficacious,” for that would give God sole agency in the effect of Salvation, when that depends on a free choice of man. It may be that Wotton, in a manner typical of Bacon and Andrews, as we have seen, does not want to go all the way with Arminius’ doctrine, but wished, as did Bacon (and for that matter Luther and Augustine) to emphasize the agency of God in conversion, while retaining human free will. (Cf. *Works of James Arminius*, trans. W.R. Bagnall, [Auburn and Buffalo, Derby Miller & Orton, 1853.], vol. 3, pp. 409-10, 438, & 458-9.)

\textsuperscript{105} For the basic outline of Rawley’s life, see DNB, vol. 16, pp. 767-68. Many of the extant manuscripts of Bacon’s works and observations from the years of Rawley’s service to Bacon are in the hand of Rawley, indicating the extent to which Bacon used him as an amanuensis, as well as Rawley’s suitability for seeing to the posthumous publication of the literary remains.

\textsuperscript{106} DNB, vol. 11, p. 1078.

\textsuperscript{107} DNB, vol. 11, p. 1078.
extensively with Bacon on all of his philosophical writings. Rawley received his
doctorate in Divinity in 1621. While a chaplain might have been chosen for many
reasons, and the choice might be the result of political expedience rather than the religious
disposition of his patron, it is clear in the case of Rawley that Bacon selected a man who
shared his interests and perspective to a significant degree.

Of Rawley’s theological work only one published sermon, preached on Easter of
1623, remains. It is based on Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit
the earth.” The printed sermon was dedicated to Bacon, and Bacon was apparently much
in mind in the composition of the sermon. A central theme of the sermon is that the meek
suffer nobly when they are brought low by their enemies, which, given the date of the
sermon after Bacon’s fall, is likely meant for his benefit as much as any. While it might
be a stretch for Bacon to be regarded as “meek” in the judgment of historians, his “long-
suffering” and reservation in speech and passions, speaking ill of no one (which were key
elements in the definition of meekness in this sermon), were regarded by Rawley in his
biography as Bacon’s defining virtues.\textsuperscript{108}

Rawley also included a discussion of the virtue of “golden mediocrity” which was
embedded in his patron’s family motto. From Rawley’s discussion we may gain a certain
insight into what the meaning of \textit{mediocria firma} would have been to one who was very
close to Bacon. “Mediocrity,” notably, did not mean compromise, but referred to the
classical virtue of a balanced life, with reason in control of the passions at all times.\textsuperscript{109} The
controlled and balanced life was the hallmark of the truly meek, but balance demanded
that the passions should not be banished, but harnessed and controlled. Thus aversion to

\textsuperscript{108} Cf. the definition of meekness in pp. 5ff. of the sermon: William Rawley, \textit{A Sermon of Meeknesse}
(London, 1623.) and the description of Bacon’s virtues in the \textit{Life of Bacon} (WFB I, pp. 14-15)

\textsuperscript{109} Rawley, 6-7.
anger was not a virtue, for it was always appropriate to be angry over injustice. As Aristotle recognized, anger was a “laudable quality, if it have due restraint, and limitation,” and St. Ambrose had taught along with Seneca that anger must be tempered, not lacking.110 The proper mediocrity required, however, that anger must be both warranted, and “bridled by reason.”111 The same was true for anger’s opposite (but less destructive) number, happiness.

After an extended historical and semantic discussion of the meaning of “meek,” and the meaning of “blessed,” Rawley concluded his sermon with a discussion of the promised reward in this verse: the inheritance of the earth. On this point Rawley presented Bacon’s own theological motivation for the Instauration. The promise of “inheriting the earth” was properly to be understood as twofold. Rawley explained that the acts of charity which the “meek” do in this life, will lead not only to “inheriting the earth” in the next life, when a “new heaven and a new earth” are established, but also to a genuine inheritance of the earth in this life, even as Job saw, in his earthly life, (and Rawley’s word choice is significant) the “Instauration of his happiness.”112 Bacon, in similar terms, always described his Instauration as an act of charity, serving to “relieve human suffering,” and, so long as it was carried-out in humility and reverence, (essential parts of Rawley’s definition of “meekness”) it would lead to a genuine, though temporal and temporary, recovery of man’s original mastery over nature. By incorporating Bacon’s concepts of charity and earthly recovery into his sermon, Rawley demonstrated that the deeply religious language which Bacon employed in discussing the purpose of his

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110 Ibid., 32-34.
111 Ibid., 34.
112 Ibid., 53-55.
work was not regarded by his chaplain as mere rhetoric, but a sincere statement of the religious motivation, and theological sanction, for the Instauration itself.

There is nothing in the sermon which can be regarded as an explicit rejection of Calvinism, and nothing which could be taken as evidence for Calvinism either. However, there are a number of points which strongly suggest that his sympathies did not lie with Calvinism, and certainly not with the reformist concerns of the Puritans. After Bacon’s death, Rawley was appointed chaplain to both Charles I and Charles II in their respective reigns, indicating that, at the very least, his views were compatible with the anti-Calvinism that had triumphed in the court after 1625.

The sermon itself appealed to many authorities in a manner of which the Puritans did not approve, as Bacon had noted in his *Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England*. In interpreting the text of the sermon Rawley made free use of a multitude of Church Fathers and Catholic opinions, from Saints Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory, Dionysios, and Chrysostom, to Bernard and the scholastic theologians. In Rawley’s sermon Scripture never stands alone, as if its meaning were inherently clear and accessible to the common hearer. Church Fathers and Scriptures mixed freely with the insights of the pagan “morall philosophers,” (principally Seneca) who shed light on the virtues of classical antiquity that reflected the ideal of “meekness” in the verse. Rawley’s homiletical approach is reminiscent of Andrewes’ sermons, both in the practice of interpreting the Scriptures through the Fathers, and also in the style of the sermon.

Andrewes also was in the habit of carefully examining every particle of the text using a mixture of semantics, historical theology, and classical references.

**John Selden (1584-1654)**

It is difficult to say exactly when John Selden met Francis Bacon. Upon Bacon becoming Lord Chancellor, Selden composed *A Brief Discourse Touching the Office of*
Lord Chancellor of England, suggesting some familiarity already in 1618. We know that after Bacon’s impeachment in 1621 Selden was helping him obtain texts for his various projects, since Bacon himself could not enter London. We know that Selden performed this service in regard to the *History of King Henry the VII* which Bacon was composing immediately after his impeachment. Whether Selden assisted with the philosophical works is less certain. However, David Berkowitz has drawn attention to the many ways in which Selden was clearly Baconian in his approach to history, having drawn his principles of sound historical method from the principles for sound scientific method in the *Instauratio Magna*, and he also had a notable interest in natural philosophy and followed Bacon rejection of abstract principles in favor of observation. A letter from Selden to Bacon written in 1621 is particularly cordial, and suggests that the two men were in common discussion on Bacon’s projects, and that Selden’s assistance was a matter of routine. As we have already observed, Selden was also a scholarly friend of Andrewes, who respected him greatly, and defended him when he came under fire for his *History of Tithes*. Thus there was more than one connection between the two men, and it would be reasonable to recognize that both men were part of a much larger literary and correspondence circle which centered on Bishop Andrewes. Finally, according to an early draft of Bacon’s will, he instructed John Constable to consult with Selden as well as an

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113 Berkowitz, 35.

114 Woolf, pp. 47-54.

115 Berkowitz, 32-33, 48, 69ff. A more direct discussion of the interrelationship of Bacon’s induction and Selden’s development of a concept of natural law is presented by Reid Barbour, *John Selden: Measures of the Holy Commonwealth in Seventeenth-Century England* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003), 179-187. Both Barbour and Berkowitz raise an important point regarding Bacon’s method by highlighting Selden’s dependence upon it: the method was designed for the reformation of all fields of learning as an integrated whole, and not merely for natural philosophy which was Bacon’s particular interest.

116 Woolf, 52.
unidentified “Mr. Herbert of the Inner Temple” regarding which of his works should be published.\footnote{WFB, XIV, p. 540.}

John Selden has a history of being regarded by scholars as a man lacking in piety and religious conviction. This is quite possibly attributable to the fact that he never hesitated to criticize or reject any opinions which he found to be lacking in scholarly merit, even when they were held by eminent theologians and bishops. Selden’s faith came into question numerous times in his own lifetime. As he was active from the reign of King James through the early years of the Commonwealth, and frequently weighed-in on matters pertaining to the faith, it is not surprising that charges would fly. But in his case they came from all sides.

One of those who denounced Selden as “being more learned than pious” was Sir Simonds D’Ewes, who was himself a man of “pronounced puritanical views,” and there would be good reason, as we will see, for a Puritan, of any age, to be bothered by Selden’s positions.\footnote{For the quotation of D’Ewes itself see George W. Johnson, \textit{Memoirs of John Selden and Notices of the Political Contest During His Time} (London, Orr and Smith, 1835), 362. For his puritanism see DNB vol. 5 pp. 901-02.} On the other hand, Selden’s \textit{History of Tithes} had offended many bishops, and this was not forgotten either. The British Library contains a manuscript of the French Protestant theologian Jean LeClerc written sometime after 1729, in which LeClerc vigorously defended Selden against the charge that he “hated the clergy.”\footnote{Add. 4462 ff. 2-5b.} LeClerc pointed out that the charge, in this case made by a Dr. Drake, was in reference to Selden’s \textit{History of Tithes}, but LeClerc observed that Drake never cited anything specifically in the
writings of Selden to support such a view. In fact, it would have been difficult for Drake to do so. The *History of Tithes* itself nowhere objects to the English Episcopacy or the tithe as it was historically understood, but rather demonstrated that the English system of enforced tithing (essentially a “church tax”) was not to be defended historically or scripturally. If it offended, it did so not because of its scholarship, but because it struck directly at a contemporary, guaranteed source of income for the parish priest. LeClerc concluded that “mr. Selden, as he lived and was active during the unhappy divisions of his country, so he appears to have had the good fortune of being rever’d by both sides as well as to have lamented and endeavour’d to correct the follies of both.” Endeavoring to “correct both,” which he certainly did throughout his life, kept him from being owned by “either” side. Devoted to his scholarship rather than partisan interests, John Selden was caught between the various religious factions of his day.

Although a lawyer by profession, Selden was highly regarded as a historian and a linguist, and not without cause: he had mastered Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, and numerous other languages, and employed them in his extensive historical studies, of which the *History of Tithes* is only his most controversial example. By 1640 Selden had an established reputation as “one of England’s foremost orientalists” according to Berkowitz. Already in 1605 Selden had done a study of the Syrian mythology found in the Old Testament, *De Diis Syris*, which was well received throughout Europe after its

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120 Ibid. Drake’s conclusion was somehow connected with Selden’s unwillingness to attribute the authorship of a book of Antiquities to Archbishop Matthew Parker.


122 Berkowitz, 41. We may note that Selden performed the official review and approval of an annotated polyglot Bible, along with his friend, and fellow orientalist, Bishop Usher, their joint report is filed as British Library Ms.: Add. 32093 f. 335.
While his interests as a scholar ranged widely, it is clear from his writings that he had a special interest in Old Testament Hebrew and the Church Fathers. Christian antiquity, but even more, Jewish antiquity, held a place of special authority which always trumped the tenets of Reformation theology. Recent developments in religion were always measured by Selden against “ancient” norms, which he identified through a rigorously critical reading of the ancient sources.

Selden’s interest in the Old Testament was quite different than that of his clerical counterparts, but it was no less motivated by his religious concerns. Most often he employed the Old Testament as an authority in legal history and a precedent for adjusting the legal system of his own day. The titles of several of his works make this clear: De Successionibus ad Leges Ebraeorum in bona Defunctorum (on Inheritance, according to Hebrew Law, in the case of a good Death); De Successione in Pontificatum Hebraeorum (on the succession of the Hebrew Priesthood); De Jure Naturali et Gentium Juxta Disciplinam Ebraeorum (on the Natural and Gentile Law in comparison with Hebrew Teachings); Uxor Ebraica (i.e. on marriage and the legal status of the wife in the Old Testament). Although Berkowitz suggested that the legal connection implies that Selden’s interests in the Old Testament were secular, the conclusion of Reid Barbour is more consistent with the writings themselves: John Selden was concerned with measuring his own society, particularly as it established a new form of government in the Commonwealth, against the authoritative example of God’s chosen People. Selden may not have fit neatly with any party in the English Church, but he was not secular as a

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123 Berkowitz, 40.

124 Reid Barbour, John Selden: Measures of the Holy Commonwealth in Seventeenth-Century England (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003). This was a conclusion to which I had come before Barbour’s book was published, but had struggled to articulate. Barbour’s treatment is thorough, and engages the Hebrew-oriented texts which dominated Selden’s later literary activity, but which previous writers had not considered in full.
scholar. Most of his scholarly work in antiquities was concerned with questions of the faith, whether it be denying the historicity of the English system of tithes, “proving” that Christ was indeed born on December 25th, or attempting to ground the laws, religion, and polity of the Commonwealth in the Old Testament, as Reid Barbour has shown.

Toward the end of his life, Selden embraced the tenets of Thomas Erastus, which subjected religion to the control of the state, but the association of Erastianism with atheism or secularism (which was a common connection for all clergy of the middle to late seventeenth century) is misapplied, in Selden’s case. Selden’s road to eventual Erastianism is complex, and Barbour has traced its windings at length. As this journey occurred after Bacon and Andrewes had been dead for some years, and largely as a result of the political situation which arose under Charles I and Archbishop Laud, the details of Selden’s thought along the way are not of direct concern for this study. However, it was not accompanied by a move toward secularism. Barbour has shown that Selden’s concept of placing state authority over matters of religion relied upon the subjection of both Church and state to the one God. Human beings were free to choose the best church-state political arrangement, and for Selden, that came to be epitomized by the historical example of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Therefore the last thing that Selden wished to propose was a secularization of Church matters, when his example implied a sacred state. As Barbour summarized it:

Indeed these civil duties [in Barbour’s context, legal duties] themselves are sacred, the law that they administer is holy, as are, ultimately, all aspects of living in a religious society. To this extent at least, Selden’s Judaic Erastianism does not secularize the sacred; it consecrates the civil even as

———Barbour, 13-15, 50-53, etc. The value of the Sanhedrin as a ruling body is the point of Selden’s work, De Synedriis et Praefecturis Juridicis Veterum Ebraeorum, as the title implies. This work was, by Selden’s own activity on it, his magnum opus, for it spanned the years from the early 1530’s to his death. Barbour is the only scholar to examine this work along with Selden’s other studies of Jewish law in an attempt to present a coherent picture of what Selden actually held regarding the relationship between Church and State. pp. 329-338.
it asserts a disjunction between sacred civility and spiritual labour. Since ancient Judaism provides the model for a unified jurisdiction -- of jurisdiction in one kind -- it follows that the civil agents, theologians to a man, and procedures for the execution of justice are sacred. Their domain does not ‘mingle’ with the sacred because nothing can be said to mix with itself. In the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, justice is as dear to God as ritual purity and times, more so than any notion of personal redemption. In any case, ritual purity and times are also the concerns for the deliberation of the Sanhedrin. Selden stresses what is found in Chronicles - - that judges should worry about pleasing God rather than man (2 Chron. 19:6). In making a ruling over what might seem a secular controversy, judges in the Sanhedrin are vested with a sanctity regarding the law that they serve or the office that they fill, or both.126

Barbour’s identification of the centrality of the Jewish civil order to Selden’s thought is a valuable hermeneutical key to unlock the question of the sacred and the secular in all of Selden’s writings. Although he came late to the conclusion that the Sanhedrin represented an ideal form of governance, nowhere did Selden separate the sacred and secular. In almost every one of Selden’s works there is a hierarchy of textual authority with Hebrew writings at the top.127 The writings of early Christianity come next in the hierarchy, for Christianity, in its inception, was reformed Judaism, though on questions of civil and ecclesial governance in society the early Christians got off track when they rejected the Jewish norm.129

126 Ibid., 329. On a divine office of Lawyers, cf. Selden’s Table Talk (London, 1689.) p. 34, sub. “Minister Divine”: “Those words you now use in making a Minister [receive the Holy Ghost] were us’d amongst the Jews in making of a Lawyer, from thence we have them, which is a villainous key to something, as if you would have some other kind of Praefecture, than a Mayoralty, and yet keep the same ceremony that was us’d in making the Mayor.”

127 From the History of Tithes (London, 1618) we can see a pattern of authority which is reflected in Selden’s writings thereafter: The Hebrew texts are considered as the ultimate source, then the New Testament, then the Church Fathers, with the caveat that although their mistakes were made with good intentions, they did not always get everything right. Following the Church Fathers, Selden proceeded to recount how the practice drifted ever farther from its pure form and motivation. For a work which Barbour did not consider, see also Selden’s QEANQROPOS (London, 1661.) for a similar use of authorities.

128 See John Selden, Table Talk, 11, sub “Christians.”

129 See Barbour’s discussion pp. 30-31.
Barbour observed that in attempting to resurrect the Sanhedrin in England Selden shared a goal of the Fifth Monarchists.\textsuperscript{130} However, the similarity goes no farther than this basic idea, for Selden's Sanhedrin would curb the very type of zeal which was represented by the Fifth Monarchists and other radical groups.\textsuperscript{131} Selden's conclusion that a new Sanhedrin was necessary was not the result of Millennial expectations, but was rather a conclusion at which he arrived rationally. The Sanhedrin, according to his reading of texts, was the most practical way of balancing the interests of Church and State, with the least room for infringement of the liberties of the governed, as he saw it, and if it had the imprimatur of being used by God's chosen people, so much the better. At the end of his book, Barbour examined how Selden came to be either commonly rejected by all sides, or, among his admirers, recast in the image of Post-Restoration Anglicanism.

Although his particular conclusions regarding Church and state resulted in his condemnation as one trying to subvert the order and authority of the Church as it had been established in England, in many other respects his views reflected a concern for moderation, religious toleration, and the value of tradition and ritual. In discussing Selden's role in offering opinions on religion to the 1629 Parliament, Barbour is careful not to classify Selden in relation to the divide between the Puritans and Arminians. While Barbour notes that Selden sided with the cause of the "godly" when their works were threatened with censorship, and on any number of other issues which restricted their freedom, he did not support the addition by the Westminster Assembly of Calvinist confessional documents, such as the Lambeth Articles or the results of the Synod of Dort, as a doctrinal standard for the Church of England.\textsuperscript{132} Instead he insisted that the

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\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 164-165.
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boundaries remain broad, insisting that only those documents approved by public act of
the Church be included:

that our Catechisme is a publique Act of the Church; and the booke of
Homilies, the booke of Ordinacion of Ministers, the booke of Common
Prayer; the articles which were agreed unto in the Convocation house A.
1571: which was alsoe a publique act of the Church.”133

Selden was obviously offering a legal opinion here, regarding what was permissible
according to the legal sanction of the English Church in its “public actions.” Barbour has
a different thesis to pursue, and so he leaves the question of Selden’s allegiances open.
However, Selden’s most widely read work, the *Table Talk*, gives us a picture of Selden’s
position on a number of hot issues of the day, including the role of tradition, the
interpretation of the Scriptures, his view of preaching, and certain theological
commonplaces such as the doctrine of predestination. According to the *Table Talk* there
are good reasons not to associate Selden with the Puritans beyond their political alliances,
and to recognize why Puritans as well as Anglicans would have reservations about
Selden’s faith.

Selden’s *Table Talk*, much like Luther’s *Tischreden*, is a collection of his brief
opinions on a wide variety of topics, which, in this case, were recorded by his amanuensis
in the 1640s, and published after his death.134 The entries are organized alphabetically by
topic, and are notable for their scathing criticism and sharp wit. Selden’s comments on
church matters are often some of his most critical, which, no doubt, fed into the
posthumous image of Selden as irreligious. However, Selden was not universally critical
of theology and the faith. As with any “table talk” collection, we are not reading the
words as Selden himself recorded them, and we are at the mercy of what his editor

133 Selden’s words as recorded in Reid Barbour, 165.

134 The *Table Talk* was edited by Selden’s long time amanuensis, the Rev. Richard Milward and published
in 1689.
decided to set down, and later determined to be worthy of print. With this caveat in mind, it is clear from the Table Talk that Selden had embraced Erastianism already in the 1640s, but there is also good evidence for ideas and positions which endured from the days when he was a friend of Andrewes and Laud, and survived his Erastian shift.

On the Sacraments, Selden was comfortable with the position of Calvin, presenting Baptism as essentially symbolic, and following Calvin’s careful shelving of the question of transubstantiation on the basis that the presence of God in the Eucharist was a mystery. On the doctrine of predestination, however, Calvin had failed to recognize that it also was a divine mystery, as Andrewes had maintained, and not useful for human contemplation. Selden wrote: “Predestination is a point inaccessible, out of our reach; we can make no notion of it, ’tis so full of intricacy, so full of contradiction.”

Furthermore, those who insisted upon it as a necessary doctrine were often reduced to the absurd:

Doctor Prideaux in his Lectures, several days us’d arguments to prove Predestination; at last tells his Auditory they are damned if they do not believe it; doing herein just like School-boys, when one of them has got an Apple or something the rest have a mind to, they use all the arguments they can to get some of it from them: . . . when they cannot prevail, they tell him he’s a jackanapes, a Rogue, and a Rascal.

Elsewhere, in a more direct strike upon some of his fellows in the House of Commons, Selden condemned the idea that anyone should think they had a right to rule because preachers had convinced them that they were of the Elect, “and have the Spirit, and the rest a company of Reprobates that belong to the Devil.”


136 *Table Talk*, 47. sub “Predestination.”

137 *Table Talk*, 47.

138 *Table Talk*, 31. sub “Learning.”
Calvinist emphasis on election is in keeping with one whose motto was “peri panton thn elouqerian,” -- “in all things liberty.” Human free will was of central importance to Selden, not only in religion, but also in politics, hence under the heading of “Free Will” in the Table Talk he drew attention to the double irony of Puritans and Arminians on this issue:

The Puritans who will allow no free will at all, but God does all, yet will subject his Liberty to do, or not to do, notwithstanding the King, the God upon Earth. The Arminians, who hold we have free will, yet say, when we come to the King, there must be all Obedience, and no Liberty to be stood for.  

Selden’s defense of the Puritans against censorship, and his refusal to admit the authority of the Lambeth Articles, were both the result of him remaining true to his own motto.

Selden also did not share the Puritan animosity toward images. In explaining why the commandment against images of the Old Testament no longer applied in the new he reproduced the argument of the eighth century eastern Church Father, John of Damascus:

For the Jews could make no figure of God, but they must commit idolatry, because he had taken no shape; but since the assumption of our flesh we know what shape to picture God in. Nor do I know why we may not make his Image, provided we be sure what it is: as we say Saint Luke took the picture of the Virgin Mary, and Saint Veronica of our Saviour.

The “Learned Papists,” continued Selden, also did not pray to images, but he acknowledged that there was a problem among the ignorant. He chose the example of a man in Spain who regularly venerated the image of St. Nicholas, but when that image was broken and another made out of his own plum tree he then refused to venerate the image, for he knew it to be but a piece of his own tree. This was evidence that his reverence toward the original image was idolatry, for all images are but material things. Again, this

139 Table Talk, 20. sub “Free Will.”

remains true to the writing of John of Damascus, who, following the writings of St. Leontius, carefully separated the image from that which it represents, making the argument that the image itself is nothing, and should be burned when it gets too old to serve its purpose.\footnote{Ibid., 98. It was not necessary for Selden to have direct access to the writings of John of Damascus, for, as we see also in the Fathers which John of Damascus quoted, the arguments were ubiquitous throughout the Christain East for many centuries. John of Damascus did put the argument in its most concise and accessible form. Some material from John of Damascus had made it to the West by 1605, as is evidenced by the Boleian Catalogue (Cf. Thomas James, \textit{Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Publicae quam vir Ornatissimus Thomas Bodleius. . . .}, 446), but the Bodleian did not have the treatises on images at that time.} Having set forth his own position, Selden concluded the discussion by resorting to his common canon of practicality, which reflected his consciousness of the sensitivity of the issue in England in his day: “Tis a discreet way concerning Pictures in Churches, to set up no new, nor to pull down no old.”\footnote{Table Talk, 24.}

As Barbour noted, Selden frequently sided with Parliament, and the Puritans within Parliament, against the King. However, this has more to do with Selden’s aversion to the repressive policies of Laud and his own emphasis on liberty, than with a sympathy of religious conviction. Selden at all times called for a broadly tolerant English church, siding neither with those who would make the Lambeth Articles an official confession, nor with what he perceived as the repressive policies of the Crown. Selden advocated peaceful coexistence, and sought policies which would produce that effect. This is reflected in the \textit{Table Talk} as well when he denounced the polemics adopted by religious “rulers:”

In matters of Religion to be rul’d by one that writes against his Adversary, and throws all the dirt he can in his face, is, as if in point of good manners a man should be govern’d by one whom he sees at Cuffs with another, and thereupon thinks himself bound to give the next man he meets a box on the ear.
'Tis to no purpose to reconcile Religions, when the interest of princes will not suffer it. ‘Tis well if they could be reconciled so far, that they should not cut one another’s Throats.143

Needless to say, Selden had a very low view of wars being fought under the pretext of religion, and in the Table Talk he separated religion itself as a motive for war, from those who would use religion for the end of war:

If men would say they took arms for any thing but religion, they might be beaten out of it by reason; out of that they never can, for they will not believe you whatever you say.

The very Arcanum of pretending religion in all wars is, that something may be found out in which all men may have interest. In this the groom has as much interest as the lord. Were it for Land, one has one thousand acres, and the other but one; he would not venture so far as he that has a thousand. But religion is equal to both.144

As the Civil War opened, Selden attempted to retain a mediating role, as much as possible,145 and it was only after a new order was imminent, in his opinion, that he turned to the model of the Sanhedrin for the formation of a new ecclesial government for the Commonwealth.

Selden was not the enemy of bishops that he was portrayed to be by Dr. Drake and others, but he did not see the Episcopal office as divinely commanded either. Even as tithing was not de jure divino instituted for the maintenance of the Church, so also the Episcopal office was a matter of expediency for Selden. At least by the 1640s Selden was Erastian enough to hold that each state must do what is best for the maintenance of the Church:

There is no government enjoyn’d by example, but by precept; it does not follow we must have Bishops still, because we had them so long. They are equally mad who say Bishops are so Jure Divino that they must be

143 Table Talk, 52. sub “Religion.”

144 Table Talk, 52. sub “Religion.”

continued, and they who say they are so Antichristian, that they must be put away, all is as the State pleasing.\textsuperscript{146}

If other orders were possible and acceptable, however, that also didn’t mean that it was a good idea to start casting about for them when the episcopal system worked and had stood the test of time. Order was necessary in the Church.

To have no ministers, but presbyters, ‘tis as in the temporal state they should have no officers but constables. Bishops do best stand with Monarchy, that as amongst the laity you have dukes, lords, lieutenants, judges, &c. to send down the King’s pleasure to his subjects; so you have Bishops to govern the inferior clergy: These upon occasion may address themselves to the King, otherwise every parson of the parish must come, and run up to the court. . . .

If there be no bishops, there must be something else, which has the power of bishops, though it be in many, and then had you not as good keep them? If you will have no half crowns, but only single pence, yet thirty single pence are a half crown; and then had you not as good keep both? But the bishops have done ill, ‘twas the men, not the function; as if you should say, you would have no more half crowns because they were stolen, when the truth is they were not stolen because they were half crowns, but because they were money, and light in a thieves hand.

They that would pull down the bishops and erect a new way of government, do as he that pulls down an old house, and builds another, in another fashion, there’s a great deal of do, and a great deal of trouble, the old rubbish must be carried away, and new materials must be brought. Workmen must be provided, and perhaps the old one would have served as well.\textsuperscript{147}

According to Selden, it was absurd to try to do away with the idea of hierarchy. It was pointless to change a system that worked, when there was so much trouble involved, and the new system was untried. But all government was of human invention, and when it appeared clear that the old order was being hauled away, Selden’s practical concern for

\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Table Talk}, 8. sub “Bishops out of the Parliament.” Selden states elsewhere that the presbyters do not have their office \textit{de jure divino} either. p. 48. sub. “Presbytery.”

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Table Talk}, 8. sub “Bishops out of the Parliament.”
order motivated him to forward the Sanhedrin system which he had derived from his studies.\textsuperscript{148}

Religion, for Selden, was always a matter of the relationship of the individual to God, and no two individuals would ever be completely alike in their religion any more than they were alike in other ways.\textsuperscript{149} However this did not mean that the individual was necessarily right, and for that reason norms and standards had to be enforced. Selden was concerned with the tendency of some around him to push for ever greater reform:

Alteration of religion is dangerous, because we know not where it will stay; ‘tis like a milstone that lies upon the top of a pair of stairs, ‘tis hard to remove it, but if once it be thrust off the stair, it never stays till it comes to the bottom.\textsuperscript{150}

Religious ceremony and tradition were important and even normative for Selden, if for no other reason than that claiming to do away with them was absurd. Ceremony and tradition were necessary elements of human existence. The Puritan claim to follow Scripture rather than tradition ran counter to reason:

Say what you will against tradition; we know the signification of words by nothing but tradition. You will say the Scripture was written by the Holy Spirit, but do you understand the language ‘twas written in? No. Then for example, take these words \textit{[in principio erat verbum.]} How do you know those words signifie, \textit{[In the beginning was the word,]} but by tradition, because some body has told you so?\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{148} Selden’s discussion of expedience determining the form regional church government is far from unique in Christianity at this time, though in England there was much discussion of the proper, divinely sanctioned government. In the Lutheran lands church government ranged from the consistorial system of Württemburg, to the semi-episcopal system of Brandenburg, to the genuine episcopacy of Denmark, and the Apostolic Succession Episcopacy of Sweden. By the seventeenth century it was common among continental Protestants to discuss forms of church government, and even the ministry itself as matters of expedience,\textit{ necessary} expedience, but, as for Selden, the order itself is not \textit{De jure divino.} Cf. Heinrich Schmid on Lutheranism, pp. 610-616.

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Table Talk}, London, 1689. p. 51. sub “Religion.”

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Table Talk}, 56. sub “Tradition.”
Scripture must be informed by an interpretive tradition, even if all parts of that tradition are not perfect:

Popish books teach and inform, what we know we know much out of them. The Fathers, Church Story, Schoolmen, all may pass for Popish books, and if you take away them, what learning will you leave? Besides who must be judge? The customer or the waiter? If he disallows a book it must not be brought into the Kingdom, then Lord have mercy upon all scholars. These Puritan preachers if they have any things good, they have it out of Popish books, though they will not acknowledge it, for fear of displeasing the people, he is a poor Divine that cannot sever the good from the bad.\footnote{152 Table Talk, 9. sub “Books, Authors.”}

and again, the text cannot be read apart from its historical context: “The text serves only to guess by, we must satisfie ourselves fully out of the Authors that liv’d about those times.”\footnote{153 Table Talk, 3. sub “Bible, Scripture.”} The tradition of interpretation of the Church must inform reading of the text, it cannot be left to individual interpretation:

The Puritan would be judged by the Word of God: if he would speak clearly he means himself, but he is ashamed to say so, and he would have me believe him before a whole Church, that has read the Word of God as well as he. One says one thing, and another another; and there is, I say, no measure to end the controversie. ‘Tis just as if two men were at bowls, and both judged by the eye; one says ‘tis his cast, the other says ‘tis my cast; and having no measure, the difference is Eternal.\footnote{154 Table Talk, 51-52. sub “Religion.”}

There must be a guide to reading the Scriptures, and that is established by the Church (in Selden’s case, the established church of each political state):

When you meet with several readings of the text, take heed you admit nothing against the Tenets of your Church, but do as if you were going over a Bridge, be sure you hold fast by the rail, and then you may dance here and there as you please, be sure you keep to what is settled, and then you may flourish upon your various lections.\footnote{155 Table Talk, 4. sub “Bible, Scripture.”}
If a Church required an interpretive tradition for reading the text, it also required established ceremonies. “Ceremony keeps up all things; ‘Tis like a Penny-Glass to a rich Spirit, or some Excellent Water, without it the water were spilt, the Spirit lost.” Even if the ceremony is cheap and gaudy, it can serve its function, and claiming that ceremony itself is unnecessary was irrational. Public religion was about ceremony, for Selden. He downplayed preaching, and despised long sermons, and emphasized instead public prayer and the Sacraments.

Religion was defined by the ceremonies practiced and it was the business of those in power to see that regular ceremonies were established: “Ours is a parliamentary religion, by reason the Service Book was established by Act of Parliament, and never any service book was before. . . ‘Twas ours because the State received it. The State still makes the religion and receives into it, what will best agree with it.” If Selden has shown his Erastianism here, he has also claimed authority for the Service Book as a defining feature of the Church of England. Selden held that the liturgy of the Church, the order of service, was its normative confession -- its ultimate authoritative statement of belief:

There is no Church without a Liturgy, nor indeed can there be conveniently, as there is no school without a grammar. One Scholar may be taught otherwise upon the stock of his acumen, but not a whole school. One or two that are piously dispos’d may serve themselves their own way, but hardly a whole Nation.

To know what was generally believed in all ages, the way is to consult the liturgies, not any private man’s writing. As if you would

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156 Table Talk, 10. sub “Ceremony.”

157 Cf. Table Talk, 44. sub “Preaching.”

158 “If I were a minister, I should think my self most in my Office, reading of prayers, and dispensing the Sacraments.” Table Talk, 44, sub “Prayer.”

159 Table Talk, 51. sub “Religion.”
know how the Church of England serves God, go to the Common prayer Book, consult not this or that man.\textsuperscript{160}

The principle of determining the doctrine of the Church in various ages through the formal liturgy was one which Selden took seriously in his own scholarship. In demonstrating that Christ was born on December twenty-fifth in his tract, \textit{Qeanqropo}, Selden regarded the fact that the traditional liturgies, both East and West, acknowledged the Nativity to have occurred on this day as evidence that this tradition had come down everywhere the same.\textsuperscript{161} Although individual Church Fathers could err, the established ceremonies of the Church had preserved the ancient tradition intact and remarkably uniform. What was critical, as for the Church Fathers themselves, was the consensus of opinion in the Church. This is the same principle which Bacon expressed a bit differently in \textit{The Advancement of Learning}: “For it is not St. Augustine’s nor St. Ambrose’s works that will make so wise a divine, as ecclesiastical history thoroughly read and observed.\textsuperscript{162} Although such reasoning is not contrary to Protestant practice, it marks Selden as sympathetic to, or at least informed by, a variety of Protestantism which was far from puritanism. It presupposes a tremendous antiquity and authority in the formal liturgy, which the true Puritan, bent on expunging the ceremonies of the Papacy and returning to a “primitive” service of preaching, would not appreciate.

Selden’s own life and writings present an image of a man who was a critical thinker eager to test religious claims against historical “truth,” as a result of which he came up with idiosyncratic answers to common questions. But he was not impious, or without his own religious convictions. Taken on his writings alone, John Selden was a man of

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Table Talk}, 32. sub. “Liturgy.”

\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Qeanqropo} (London, 1661) 38-43.

\textsuperscript{162} WFB III, p. 330.
profound convictions, with a high regard for tradition, Church ceremony, and the Church Fathers, although he measured all things according to his own canon of practicality and reverence.

Selden’s various treatises on Jewish law and government did not have the reforming effect on society, or even on contemporary opinions, which he had intended. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the remarkable effect which the recovery of Hebrew language scholarship could have in early modern England. By approaching the received, authoritative texts of the Western tradition from a different angle, and with a different emphasis, Selden developed creative and original answers to the problems facing his society. If reading the text in its original language can clarify the original meaning and eliminate certain errors of interpretation, it can also lead to a greater diversity of opinion, as the implications of the original language are added to the issues for debate.

In the religious debates in the House of Commons in which Selden participated, he was remembered for countering the points of others by appealing to the Biblical languages: “Perhaps in your little pocket Bibles with gilt leaves the translation may be thus, but the Greek or Hebrew signifies otherwise.”163 On the one hand, we may recognize in this statement the legitimate appeal to the authority of original texts over translations. On the other hand, this appeal was made for the rhetorical purpose of justifying a rejection of the opinions of others, and allowing room for his own, often divergent, conclusions. The texts in their original languages may have supported Selden’s conclusions, but this should not be understood to mean that no other conclusions could be drawn from the original languages. Lancelot Andrewes, for example, also read the New Testament in Greek, and the Old Testament in Hebrew, and was thoroughly versed in the

163 Recorded in Whitelocke’s Memorials, as quoted in George W. Johnson, 303.
Church Fathers. However, Andrewes’ conclusions on tithes and the nature of the episcopal office were far different from those of Selden.

**George Herbert (1593-1633)**

The poet George Herbert was corresponding with Bacon by 1620, evidently courting Bacon’s patronage at that time. It is possible that the two men met earlier, however, through their mutual friend, Lancelot Andrewes, or through another mutual friend, Henry Wotton. In the early 1620’s Herbert assisted Bacon by translating sections of *The Advancement of Learning* into Latin to be used in the more extensive work, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. It is clear from a number of poems which Herbert wrote in Bacon’s honor, including a memorial after his death, that Herbert held Bacon in high regard. Bacon, for his part, dedicated his *Translation of Certaine Psalmes into English Verse* to Herbert with the following words:

> The pains that it pleased you to take about some of my writings I cannot forget: which did put me in mind to dedicate to you this poor exercise of my sickness. Besides, it being my manner for dedications, to choose those that I hold most fit for the argument, I thought that in respect of divinity and poesy met, (whereof the one is the matter, the other the stile of this little writing,) I could not make better choice. So, with signification of my love and acknowledgment, I ever rest

> Your affectionate Friend,

> Fr. St. Alban

Thus Bacon acknowledged his gratitude for Herbert’s work on the *De Augmentis*, and dedicated a work to him which reflected an interest which they shared in the poetic

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165 It is not clear when Herbert and Andrewes first struck up a friendship, but it may have been as early as 1608, (Summers, 30) and it certainly was not much after 1615 (Welsby, 108.) In any case, each had a great admiration for the other. For the reference to Herbert’s long friendship with Wotton see Izaak Walton, *Life of George Herbert*, (London, 1670), 27.

166 Summers, 32. Summers also discussed the significant influence which Bacon, and Baconian themes, had upon Herbert’s poetry and language.

167 Ibid., 40.
reinterpretation of the book of Psalms. This was by no means the only interest which the two men shared. Herbert’s Herbert took Bacon’s plan for the Instauration seriously, and contributed to the propagation of Bacon’s ideas.

In the early 1630’s Herbert collaborated on an English translation of three tracts, which were published under the name of the first and longest work, Leonard Lessius’ *Hygiasticum*. All of the works deal with dietary directions for the “preserving of life and health to extreme old age.” (Ironically, this book was published in 1634, the year after Herbert’s death at age 40.) Although Herbert’s translation was in response to a request from a patron who wanted it for personal use, it is clear from the introduction that the book was assembled and published as the result of a desire of its various translators to make this information known more generally. Those involved in the book’s production saw themselves as engaged in a single collaborative project, and evidently were in common discussion on matters of diet, and how moderation in diet could lengthen and improve life. The justification for the work itself was the example of “The Late Viscount St. Albans,” Francis Bacon, who had given his own directions for the prolongation of life, and had entrusted those who came after him with the task of building upon his work. The book begins with an extract from Bacon’s *Historie of Life and Death* which lays out the basic directions for prolonging life in such a way that the works which follow it are clearly understood as an elaboration upon Bacon.

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168 On Herbert and the Psalms see Chana Bloch, *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1985), 233-236. Bacon’s activity in the Translation of Certaine Psalmes, according to Bloch, was far from an isolated phenomenon. According to Izaak Walton, Andrewes also dedicated a collection of his genuine translations of the Psalms out of Hebrew to Herbert. (Walton, 26.)

169 Leonard Lessius, *Hygiasticum*, or, The right course of preserving Life and Health unto extreme old Age: Together with soundnesse and integritie of the Senses, Judgement, and Memorie. (Cambridge, 1634.)
George Herbert’s theology is a matter of ongoing, and at times heated, debate among Herbert scholars. As Christopher Hodgkins has noted, the stakes are high, for they involve the debate over the definition of Anglicanism in the seventeenth century, the particular place of George Herbert within Anglicanism, and, for students of his poetry, “the very nature of Herbert’s aesthetic.” For the sake of this essay it would not be productive to enter too deeply into the debates on Herbert, for at best he must be regarded as more influenced by Bacon than influential upon Bacon. However, there are certain points which must be agreed upon by all scholars of Herbert, and in considering two points of this scholarly consensus we can get a sense of how Herbert fit into the pattern of the Bacon Circle.

First of all, on the question of predestination, and its correlative doctrines of Election and Reprobation, Herbert was unquestionably Calvinist. Predestination, for Herbert, was double, it was absolute, and it had nothing to do with human choice. On this very issue Herbert had engaged Andrewes in a lively, but friendly, debate. Nevertheless, Herbert believed in a genuinely free human will in things that were “outward,” or not pertaining to spiritual matters.

Second, in his liturgical affinities, Herbert tended toward positions which were epitomized in his day by Andrewes and Laud, and which would come to be associated

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170 See the summary of the field in Christopher Hodgkins, Authority, Church, and Society in George Herbert (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1993), 1-8. See also Gene Edward Veith, Reformation Spirituality: The Religion of George Herbert (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1985), 23-41.

171 Hodgkins, p. 10.


173 Izaak Walton, 26.

174 Summers, 58.
later with the “high-church” movement.\textsuperscript{175} As Gene Edward Veith has pointed out, however, this was reflective of a liturgical conservatism common among Protestants, and should be seen as separating Herbert from Puritans and Presbyterians, and not necessarily from Calvinism, particularly as Calvinism was received in England by Cranmer and others.\textsuperscript{176} Nevertheless, in an England which was already polarized over ceremony Herbert’s position necessarily put him into a “camp.”

Among the members of the Bacon Circle who remained on good terms with Bacon, Herbert is the only recognizable Calvinist. However, Herbert’s Calvinism must always be qualified. Herbert’s defense of the received liturgical traditions of the English Church, as well as his general agreement with Episcopal government, keep him out of any tidy association with Puritans or Presbyterians, though as Laudian reforms were coming into fashion toward the end of his life, he did not associate with that movement either.

Christopher Hodgkins has made a compelling case that Herbert could properly be labeled an “old Conformist,” distinguishing him from the new Conformity advocated by Laud, as well as the more extreme reform movements. Herbert sought the fading conformity of the Elizabethan Settlement, as it was represented by Whitgift and others.\textsuperscript{177}

\textbf{Thomas Bushell\textsuperscript{178} (1594-1674)}

Thomas Bushell entered Bacon’s household service in 1609 at the age of 15. In addition to his other duties as a servant, Bushell assisted Bacon in taking notes on various experiments. Bushell also engaged in his own experiments, which, on more than one occasion, incurred serious debts, which Bacon paid for him. Bushell remained in Bacon’s

\textsuperscript{175} Joseph H. Summers provides a standard, and somewhat prescriptive, presentation of this based upon Herbert’s \textit{Musae Responsoriae}. (pp. 55-57.)

\textsuperscript{176} Veith, 206.

\textsuperscript{177} Hodgkins, 37ff.

\textsuperscript{178} DNB, vol. 3, pp. 487-489.
service continually until Bacon’s death, with the exception of a brief intermission at the time of Bacon’s impeachment. Later, beginning in 1636, Bushell went on to a fairly successful career as a mineral speculator, and, by introducing new methods of mining and mineral extraction, he succeeded in renovating and improving the Royal Mines at a number of locations. In the Civil War Bushell was an ardent royalist, and held Lundy Island for the King until the King allowed his surrender of it in February of 1647. Bushell went into exile until 1652, when he was allowed to return. In 1658 the Lord Protector granted him the right to work the old royal mines again, and with the Restoration of the monarchy Bushell continued his mining under Charles II. Thomas Bushell was a lifelong admirer of his old master, and in his writings he frequently referred to the influence of Bacon’s instruction and example in his life.

Although Bushell’s writings are filled with quotations and anecdotes from his years with Bacon, Spedding concluded that he was “a bad authority at best,” and with good cause, for Bushell had a remarkable tendency for remembering events and conversations that never could have happened. At one point in his writings Bushell recorded a lengthy speech which he insisted that Bacon prepared for the house of Lords, in which he would discuss with them his plan to erect in Britain the “Solomon’s House” which he had “modeled” in his New Atlantis. This speech would necessarily have been prepared around 1620, for Bushell insisted that Bacon’s plans were interrupted by his fall from power. Among other historical problems with this remarkably detailed speech is the fact that the New Atlantis did not see the light of day until its publication by Rawley in the year after Bacon’s death, and the speech is written with the assumption that the Lords were all familiar with this work.

179 WFB XIV, p. 199.
180 Bushell recorded the speech in An Extract by Mr. Bushell of his late Abridgement of the Lord Chancellor Bacons Philosophical Theory in Mineral Prosecutions (London, 1660), postscript pagination, pp. 18-19.
According to Bushell, King James had arranged to finance Bacon’s academy out of Bacon’s own mining discoveries combined with a generous bequest of the revenues of estates which had been forfeited to the Crown. Bacon, in modesty, refused this offer, replying that he would only require the revenues of certain mines which had been flooded and deserted and considered useless.\textsuperscript{181} Bacon himself would make these mines produce, we are left to believe, through his marvelous method which he passed on to Thomas Bushell. At the very least it is odd to think of Bacon turning down the very financial support which he had always craved because of a conviction that he could just as easily raise the money from defunct mines. In this instance, it seems more likely that Bushell has superimposed the events of his own life onto Bacon, for Bushell did return flooded mines to operation in the years after 1636.\textsuperscript{182}

Bushell also declared that Bacon wrote the \textit{History of King Henry VII} at the special command of King James, and as a result of his obedience to the King’s desire for this project he was not able to do more in natural philosophy before his death.\textsuperscript{183} According to Bacon, however, the \textit{History of King Henry VII} had been his own idea, which he had the leisure to write as the result of his sudden lack of responsibilities after the impeachment, and which he offered to the King as a gift, presumably in order to regain favor.\textsuperscript{184} Bushell’s recollections of Bacon are at the very least confused, and are in some cases completely fictional.

\textsuperscript{181} Bushell, 5, & 15.

\textsuperscript{182} DNB vol. 3, p. 488.

\textsuperscript{183} Bushell, 11.

\textsuperscript{184} See Bacon’s letter to the King of 22 April, 1621, in which he promises to openly “bribe” the King with a history of England, see also his letter of 8 October, 1621, in which he sends the manuscript with an explanation of why he chose to begin with Henry VII. WFB XIV, pp. 241-242, & 303.
There are a host of other examples of altered history in Bushell’s writing, some of which make sense, while others are merely puzzling. Some of his inaccuracies may be ascribed to his own creative hagiography. Bacon is always above reproach, and always appears to be regarded by the King as a singular confidant and wisest advisor, even in his (unjustified) impeachment. In other cases, such as Bacon’s claim for extracting a fortune out of defunct mines through proper method, it appears that Bushell was giving greater authority to some of his own personal ideas and inventions by ascribing them to Bacon, and portraying himself as Bacon’s most trusted confidant. It is possible that Bushell may not have thought that he was embellishing at all, or confusing matters, for it also appears that he possessed a fairly shaky hold on reality. At the time of Bacon’s impeachment in 1621 when all of his friends either stood by him or distanced themselves from him, Bushell, interpreting the events in a somewhat more extreme light, dramatically fled the scene and spent a number of months in self-imposed exile, disguised as a fisherman on the Isle of Wight. The line separating reality from his own imagination may always have been a bit blurry.

The caveats which must accompany the use of Bushell as a source apply also to matters of religion. Although Bushell’s writings are dripping with prayers, sermons, and religious sentiments, some of which he attributes directly to the sayings of his old master, “His Lordship” Francis Bacon, these passages may have no correspondence to anything

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185 It is difficult to explain, for example, why Bushell believes that the *Advancement of Learning* was dedicated to Prince Charles, though Bushell makes a point of explaining the significance of this dedication following upon the death of Prince Henry. In 1605, when *The Twoo Bookes on the Advancement of Learning* came out Henry was not yet dead, and the dedication was to the King. The *De Augmentis* of 1623 was also dedicated to the King. Bushell, postscript pages, p. 18.

186 DNB vol. 3, p. 488. For Bushell’s own account of these events see Bushell, pp. 30-31, as well as pp. 26 ff. in the postscript pages. It appears that Bushell has completely muddled the facts of two separate incidents -- his time of the Isle of Wight, and his later period in a hut on the Calf of Man. For the proper order of things refer to DNB. We may note, in considering his mental condition, that the mines which he recovered in Wales in the mid-’30s, and in which he spent most of his career, were lead mines.
Bacon believed or said. Nevertheless, he was a member of the literary circle, and there is no evidence for thinking, as with Hobbes or Bodley, that Bushell was at odds with Bacon on religion.

Bushell’s religious statements and prayers are for the most part quite theologically shallow: they are on the order of pious ejaculations concerning God’s sovereignty, power, or mercy, and man’s duty of humble service to the Creator. However both Bushell’s writings as well as his life evince a curious fascination with asceticism and the life of a hermit, which he always ascribed to the wise influence of Bacon. As we have seen already in Bacon’s writings, there may be some grounding for this claim of Bushell’s in the words of his old master. Bushell wrote that he was advised by Bacon to take up the life of a hermit, spending his time in prayer and fasting, and thereby gain control of his sensual appetite before moving on to the higher work of natural philosophy when he would put Bacon’s theories concerning minerals into practice.

But he suddenly falling from an eminent height, as I by that time had deviated from his grave directions in the secure Paths of Vertue, imposed on me a new task, which was, not to search the Rocky bosoms of the barren Mountains, but, by a timely retirement to some solitary place where I might seclude myself from the treacherous vanities of the tumultuous world, to explore the deceitful Meanders of my stony heart, and when Divine grace should have assisted my better Reason in overcoming the rebellious affections of my Sensual appetite, if then the like Providence should call me thence to a more active life in the prosecution of his mineral documents, I should without any regret of my former penance attend the good hand of God in that design with humble patience; assuredly believing, that since he had supported me in the conquest of my self, he would conduct me through all difficulties, to the accomplishing so great a work for my Countryes good, and his own glory. 187

Whatever Bacon had actually said to Bushell on the subject, the younger man took it very much to heart as he has recorded it here. After Bacon’s death Bushell spent three years

187 Bushell, 30-31.
on a desolate island in the Irish Sea, living alone in a hut 470 feet above the water, and on a scant diet of “herbs, oil, mustard, and honey, with water sufficient.” After this episode, Bushell returned to the mainland and sought his fortune in the mines. Bushell recounted Bacon’s advice, among other places, in two addresses to prisoners during the time of the Commonwealth. He exhorted the prisoners to work in the mines as an ascetic discipline, claiming that hard work and the scant diet of the experience would assist them in developing the proper penitent attitude for salvation, for “the Penitent only shall recruit the Regiments and glorious host of the intellectual Angels, by supplying the place of them that fell with Lucifer in his great rebellion. To which God of his mercy for the Son of his love’s sake bring us all in his appointed time,. . .”

Concluding Thoughts on the Bacon Circle

Bacon’s literary circle represents a significant turn away from his Nonconformist upbringing. The list of those who worked with Bacon on his literary projects is notably lacking in names which could be called “puritan” by any of the definitions of the term. Certainly none of them would have fit with the Nonconformists as Bacon described them in his own Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England. The only exception to this rule would be Thomas Bodley, but, as we have seen, it is an exception which very much proves the rule. It could reasonably be said that the difference between the two boiled down to a radically different understanding that each had of the significance of earthly knowledge, based on their very different theological assumptions. While Bodley’s view of the usefulness of human knowledge follows the pattern of Calvin’s discussion of the same in the Institutes, Bacon had a much higher assessment of earthly knowledge and human potential after the Fall.


189 Bushell, 29-41. Quotation is on p. 41. The idea that the souls of the righteous would replace the fallen angels was also held by Thomas Aquinas.
As we noted in the introduction to this chapter, it is significant, in an era which was almost completely dominated by forms of Calvinist theology, that Bacon’s literary circle was not particularly Calvinist, and that his closest advisors from the formative years, Andrewes and Matthew, rejected the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism completely. Again, as we expand our focus, there are some names about which we must simply admit ignorance, but otherwise George Herbert would be the only name with a genuinely Calvinist association other than Bodley. Herbert was a fairly late acquaintance of Bacon’s, and on a number of issues Herbert was inclined to disagree with Calvin, most notably on the doctrine of human free will after the Fall. The lack of dogmatic Calvinists among Bacon’s literary circle is not particularly surprising when we recognize that the founding principles of Bacon’s Instauration run entirely counter to what Calvin asserted in the Institutes. Nowhere is this more apparent than on Calvin’s doctrine of total depravity. Bacon’s Instauration simply could not occur if the human intellect had become depraved and incapable of effecting its own recovery, or if, as Calvin put it, “soundness of mind and integrity of heart were withdrawn” as part of the punishment for sin.\footnote{Institutes, book 2, ch. 2, sec. 12.}

It is also notable that the circle lacked genuine Arminians other than, perhaps, Wotton. In general, ritual and tradition were highly valued among the Bacon circle, but not in ways that were particularly congruous with the rising English Arminian movement. George Herbert may be recognized to fit this trend to the extent that he valued the traditional forms of ritual and polity, and was critical of that which could be construed as innovation in doctrine or ceremony. There was a tendency among the individuals in this group to look to authorities which were not part of the dogmatic movements of the Reformation. For Andrewes, Matthew, and Selden, certainly, and seemingly Rawley as
well, contemporary religion was measured against the canon of ancient authorities. Bacon’s patristic turn certainly conforms to this feature of his literary field.

Another theme uniting members of Bacon’s literary circle was the concern for a broadly tolerant English Church. The religious writings of the circle, like Bacon’s *Advertisement*, could, for the most part, be classified as irenic rather than polemic. The exceptions to this would be those writings of the Protestants of the circle which were directed against Catholics, and Father Tobie Matthew’s tract from the other side. However, with the exception of *Charity Mistaken*, Matthew’s writing was directed more toward the consolation of English Catholics than toward the divisive issues of the day. The advocacy of religious tolerance was an important position for anyone who was not associated with the dominant theological trends or parties of the day, for if the Church became too confessionally narrow their own convictions were likely to be proscribed, even as Osiander’s were among both Calvinists and confessional Lutherans. The theology of the members of Bacon’s circle was both a result and a reflection of the diversity present within the English religious environment. For Andrewes, Selden, Bacon, and certainly Matthew there was a strong sense that the Reformation, in its extant doctrines and practices, had not gotten things entirely right. While they were leery of the agenda of continuous reform of the Puritans, Andrewes, Selden, and Bacon did not want to see the Church so narrow that their own legitimate differences of opinion, and possibly future adjustments of doctrine and practice, would no longer be tolerated.

The writings of those who were associated with Bacon show an interest in natural philosophy and the influence of Bacon’s ideas in regard to the nature of knowledge and

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191 However on this point it is worth noting that Andrewes only engaged in polemics against the Roman Church when asked to do so by the King, apart from his rants against insurgency after the Gunpowder Plot. See Paul Welsby, chapters 4 and 5. It is also informative to examine Andrewes’ notes on the response to Cardinal Perron. (*Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, vol. 11. pp. 36ff.) The lines between Protestant and Catholic can be seen here as Andrewes drew them.
the need for reform. In all cases natural philosophy and the reform of learning blend freely with religious discussions, at times supporting a theological argument, and at times serving as the motivation for theological conclusions. The circle is far from separating theology and secular learning, and, according to the use to which they put natural philosophy and Bacon’s method, it is debatable whether any learning could have been called “secular” by them, in the way we now understand the term.

The Bacon circle is properly a network. There were many associations that these individuals had with one another apart from their connections with Bacon. Lancelot Andrewes, who also knew and corresponded with most of the other men, could be placed at the center of this network as easily as Bacon.

Finally, the group may be divided into generations, in respect to Bacon’s literary production. Of those we have discussed in some depth, only Andrewes, Matthew, and Wotton were connected with Bacon’s work early on, during the formative years of the Instauration program. Of these three, Andrewes is of special importance. He is important because his friendship with Bacon coincided with the early development of Bacon’s philosophy and his theological patristic turn. Andrewes is also significant because of the remarkable similarities between his writing and that of Bacon in the expression of key theological ideas, as we will note in the next chapter. It is also informative to examine the younger members of Bacon’s circle, such as Rawley, Selden, Bushell, and Herbert, for in examining them we can see both the effect of Bacon’s work upon younger men, and the religious convictions of those who were originally attracted to the project. The Bacon literary circle was truly the very first generation of Baconians.
CHAPTER 4:
The Theology of Instauration: The Instauration Event and Its Place in the Narrative of Sacred History

Francis Bacon’s beliefs can only be clearly seen when he is recognized as participating in the religious and theological discourse of his society and his literary circle. The value of this project of contextualization lies in the provision of a hermeneutical key for understanding the theological passages of his writings dealing with the event which he named the “Great Instauration.” The timetable of Bacon’s life is significant: From a very early age he was concerned with the reform of natural philosophy and the benefits which this would produce for humankind, but he produced nothing significant on the matter until after the period of the theological shift described in chapter two.

By his own testimony in his 1592 letter to his uncle Lord Burghley, as well as his later recollection to Father Fulgentino, Francis Bacon’s mind was much occupied with natural philosophy and his plan for the reformation of learning already in the 1580’s and 1590’s. Yet between 1585, when, according to his letter to Fulgentino, he wrote the now lost *Temporis Partus Maximus* at the age of 24, and the early 1600’s when we know he was working on the manuscript of *Valerius Terminus* and the first book of *The Advancement of Learning*, we have no clear evidence of any substantial writing being produced on either natural philosophy or the reform of learning.¹ All of the extant works

¹ Of the miscellaneous undated works and fragments which made it into the Isaac Gruter volume, *Francisci Baconi de Verulamio Scripta in Naturali et Universali Philosophia*, only two could reasonably have been written before 1605: the *Cogitationes de Rerum Natura* and the fragments entitled, *Cogitationes de Scientia Humana*. Even these, however, could have been produced later. (Cf. WFB III, pp. 13ff, and 179ff. respectively.) Thus the *Valerius Terminus*, on which Bacon most likely abandoned further development in 1603, (See the observation on Harleian Mss. 6462 by Spedding in WFB III, p. 206.) is possibly the earliest extant writing in which it is clear that Bacon was working toward the program of philosophical reform as it is found in the *Instauratio Magna*. The *Valerius Terminus* is most certainly the earliest extant document in which the program itself, and not merely observations on nature, are laid forth.
which deal directly with natural philosophy and his program for the reform of learning were produced by Bacon after 1600, or, in other words, within the last twenty-five to twenty-six years of his life, between the ages of 40 and 65. There can be no doubt that Bacon was working on these projects in the intervening years for, in addition to his own statements to this effect, the *Valerius Terminus* and *The Advancement of Learning* are both highly developed in thought and structure. Furthermore, Bacon’s clearly theological writings, the *Meditationes Sacrae* and the *Confession of Faith* discussed in the second chapter, have much to say on the relationship of the natural world both to the Creator and to humanity. It was, of course, reasonable that Bacon should wait to publish his ideas until he was in a political position which was secure enough to make the most of it, but this may not be the only reason for the timing of his work. In both the unpublished *Valerius Terminus* (on which he apparently stopped working around 1603) and the published debut of his vision in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon supported his argument with a well-structured theological system that was both unique in many points as well as reflective of the theological shift evident in his earlier writings. Both of these works present a coherent plan of what Bacon would later term “Sacred History,” and they could not have presented the argument as they did until the theological support could be clearly articulated. The theological shift which Bacon underwent in the 1580’s and 1590’s clearly facilitated the writing itself, and it appears that Bacon had to be clear in his own mind just how the vision of a restoration of Edenic knowledge and power over nature, in which he believed so strongly, fit into the providential actions of God, in which he also believed.

**The Instauration Corpus: The Instauration as Event, and the use of the Texts**

The vast amount of scholarship on Bacon focuses primarily upon a very narrow list of his published works. In connection with the history of science and Bacon’s
proposal for the reform of learning, the single text which dominates secondary literature is the 1620 publication entitled, *Instauratio Magna*, which included a formal introduction to his proposal for the reform of learning, and what was essentially the second part of his proposal, a defense and brief description of the new method for acquiring knowledge itself, the *Novum Organum*.² It is not uncommon to hear this one book referred to as “Bacon’s Instauration,” as if the book itself were the *Instauratio Magna*. But for Bacon the Instauration was not a book, but an event or an historical phenomenon. This event was not the subject of one book, but many -- a literary corpus dealing with the event, the history leading up to it, the reasons for it, its consequences, and the details of a new scientific method, the establishment of which was the heart of humanity’s role in the event. Indeed, there are very few of Bacon’s writings, apart from his purely legal and political works, which do not directly address the Instauration and its themes.³ As Benjamin Milner has shown, the theological writings of the *Meditationes Sacrae* and *The Confession of Faith* are very much concerned with establishing a theological space for the event which dominated Bacon’s thinking throughout his life: the establishment of human mastery over nature through a reformation of scientific method. With this in mind, we have already addressed some of the writings in Bacon’s corpus dealing with the Instauration when we considered these theological works in chapter two. Thus, at the end of Bacon’s life, in his letter to Father Fulgentino, the publication of the 1620 materials is discussed by him as merely a part of a project which began with his *Temporis Partus Maximus* in 1585 and in which he would still be involved upon his death. But what, according to Bacon, was this event called the *Instauratio Magna*?

² See the Introduction to the *Novum Organum* by Robert Leslie Ellis, WFB I, pp. 71 ff.

³ Yet even these cannot be dissociated from the event of the Instauration itself, as Julian Martin has demonstrated.
Charles Whitney has examined the meaning of the event which Bacon called the “Great Instauration” according to the choice of the word Instauratio which Bacon applied to the event. The word itself is theologically charged, as Whitney demonstrated. While Instauratio could be translated “restore,” “reestablish,” “renew,” or “begin again,” and it could refer to many acts of renovation, it was a word characteristically associated with the reestablishment of religious rites in the classical world. There are also architectural overtones to the word, but even these are theologically conditioned. It was applied to the “godlike” activity of emperors in civic renovation and improvement, and in the standard Vulgate translation of the Old Testament the word referred specifically to the rebuilding of the Temple upon the return from the Babylonian Captivity. From this usage in the Vulgate, which connected with other uses in the Vulgate, as Whitney observed, a typology developed which strongly influenced the use of the term in theological Latin:

In Amos 9:11 the Day of the Lord will see the “instauration of David’s tabernacle”; in Ephesians 1:10 it is the apocalyptic Christ in whom the universe will be “instaured” or summed up at the end of time. Two dozen or so uses of the word in the Vulgate refer to the restoration of Solomon’s Temple. Where there had been no such connection in the Hebrew and Greek originals, the Vulgate in effect creates a typology or symbolism of instauration by lexically connecting the architectural instauration of Solomon’s Temple both to a prophetic “rebuilding” of Israel and to a Christian instauration of all things in the apocalypse.

In light of the discussion in chapter two, it is particularly significant that, as Whitney noted, Ephesians 1:10 was one of the sedes doctrinae for Irenaeus’ doctrine of

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5 Ibid., 373.

6 Ibid., 374-76.

7 Ibid., 377.

8 Ibid., 377.
“recapitulation,” in which God would restore the Heavens and the Earth and undo the effects of the Fall.” Through the tremendous influence of Augustine, *instauratio* came to signify “the new covenant” specifically, and “Resorting to a classical meaning of *instauratio* as restoration of health or life, Augustine also found that ‘the instauration of the new man is signified by the resurrection.’”10 Whitney also pointed out, quite significantly, that in the Renaissance the word came to refer to the revival of classical learning.11 However, even then it was not stripped of its connection with divine action. Whitney noted that Budé had used the term to discuss the restoration of learning under Christ, “the head of the new philosophy.”12

The event of the Instauration, according to the word itself, was a matter of a divine action of restoration which could not be dissociated from its implications in theological Latin. Bacon adopted the term only gradually, but by 1620 he used it frequently to refer to the phenomenon which he had been observing and describing for many years. Whitney’s argument meshes completely with Bacon’s own words describing the Instauration (in Aphorism 93 of book one of the *Novum Organum*) as an imminent change which was coming over the world as the result of God’s providential action:

> The beginning is from God: for the business which is in hand, having the character of good so strongly impressed upon it, appears manifestly to proceed from God, who is the author of good and the Father of Lights. Now in divine operations even the smallest of beginnings lead of a certainty to their end. And as it was said of spiritual things, “The kingdom

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8 In connection with this idea Whitney noted Lancelot Andrewes’ quotation of Irenaeus from his Christmas sermon in 1623. Whitney’s citation of Irenaeus’ *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, however, must be qualified, for this text was not available to Bacon and has only recently been recovered. (Ibid., p. 378.) Cf. *Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, vol. 1, pp. 265 ff.

9 Charles Whitney, “Francis Bacon’s Instauratio: Dominion of, and over, Humanity.” 379.

10 Ibid., 380.

11 Ibid., 380.

12 Ibid., 380.
of God cometh not with observation,” so it is in all the greater works of Divine Providence; everything glides on smoothly and noiselessly, and the work is fairly going on before men are aware that it has begun. Nor should the prophecy of Daniel be forgotten, touching the last ages of the world:-- “Many shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;” clearly intimating that the thorough passage of the world (which now by so many distant voyages seems to be accomplished or in course of accomplishment), and the advancement of the sciences, are destined by fate, that is by Divine Providence, to meet in the same age.13

If the event of the Instauration was a matter of divine agency, it was also a matter of human agency, for it is humans themselves that “go to and fro” for the increase of knowledge. Bacon’s part in the Instauration event, as he conceived it, was to lead the way in the advancement of sciences by formulating and publishing the guidelines for the reform of human learning. While his program was intended for all forms of human learning,14 he focused particularly on natural philosophy. As we will see, he had compelling reason to do so, for, as he understood the Genesis narrative, humankind was created from the beginning to be about the business of the investigation and manipulation of nature. Bacon argued that by the meticulous observation of the details of nature (the “particulars”) and experimentation, humanity could learn the very laws by which the natural world operates. Near the end of the first book of the Novum Organum he described his own project in this manner:

For I am building in the human understanding a true model of the world, such as it is in fact, not such as a man’s own reason would have it to be; a thing which cannot be done without a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world.15

13 WFB vol. 4, pp. 91-92. This is the Spedding translation which is much closer to the Latin in this section than some others, particularly that found in Basil Montagu’s collection of Bacon’s works.

14 See Novum Organum, book 1, Aphorism 127. WFB I, pp. 219-220.

When the laws and principles of nature were known, then humankind could gain mastery over nature, and the suffering and hardship of earthly life could be eliminated. Past approaches to the natural world had been haphazard, lacking the necessary systematic rigor to truly understand and master nature. In his own age the proper conditions had arisen (by God’s Providence) for the investigation of nature and the advancement of technology, and the human race stood poised on the verge of a new era of the “Kingdom of Man,” [Regno Hominis] as he termed it in the title of the second book of the Novum Organum. The benefits of the discoveries and technological advances which came from his program would “extend to the whole race of man,”\textsuperscript{16} and would result in the restoration and extension of the “dominion of the human race over the universe.”\textsuperscript{17} The whole program for the restitution of the sciences, while it was to be the project and product of human agency, was, nonetheless, to occur in accordance with the divine plan and will, and was to be governed by proper religion:

\begin{quote}
Recuperet modo genus humanem jus suum in naturam quod ei ex dotatione divina competit, et detur ei copia: usum vero recta ratio et sana religio gubernabit. [Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion.]
\end{quote}

Thus the Instauration was a matter of divine and human cooperation in which, quite understandably, a “sound” or “healthy” religion (as \textit{sana religio} is better translated), was an essential element.

The interrelation between divine and human agency is one key aspect of the Instauration event which must be explored through the corpus of writings dealing with the

\textsuperscript{16} Novum Organum, book 1, Aphorism 129. WFB I, p. 221.

\textsuperscript{17} Novum Organum, book 1, Aphorism 129. WFB I, p. 222. The Latin of this section is significant, as it places the word \textit{instaurare} in its Baconian context: “\textit{Quod si quis humani generis ipsius potentiam et imperium in rerum universitatem instaurare et amplificare conetur,...}’’

\textsuperscript{18} WFB I, p. 223. Spedding Translation, WFB IV, p. 115. I do not know how to account for the confusion of adjectives in the translation.
event itself. There are other issues, as well, for in proposing his new method as an element of this cosmic event, Bacon set it within the context of a coherent theological system. This chapter is primarily concerned with locating the Instauration within Bacon’s theological system, as he presented it in the context of the narrative of Sacred History. This will involve an examination of how the Instauration related to other sacred events within that history, such as the Creation, and the Incarnation.

We are concerned in this essay with Bacon’s own perspective, and we must remain informed by his historical context. Therefore we are examining the Instauration event as Bacon conceived it in the range of writings which have come down to us. The clearest exposition of the event is not to be found in his 1620, Instauratio Magna, for this was not Bacon’s first published work dealing specifically with the event of the Instauration. There is much in the 1620 book which is merely a summary or recapitulation of points made before in the Two Bookes on the Advancement of Learning in 1605. This is especially true of the Novum Organum which has taken the elaborate discussion of the Advancement of Learning and presented it again, along with new material, “digested into aphorisms.” The 1620 publication therefore adds to the previous arguments, but it does not necessarily supersede them or define, in and of itself, the event of the Great Instauration. In this regard we should note that when Bacon took it in hand to revise his whole discussion of the event and its accompanying reform in learning what resulted was a revision and expansion of the 1605 project, which, now translated into Latin, was the De Augmentis Scientiarum of 1623.

Our consideration in this chapter will focus on the first coherent expositions of the Instauration to emerge in written form, the Valerius Terminus and The Advancement

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19 Thus Bacon’s own description of the Novum Organum, “sed tantum digestam per summas, in Aphorismos.” WFB I, p. 146.
**of Learning.** The *Valerius Terminus* is a manuscript in which Bacon was carefully laying out a description of the Instauration event along with the implications of the new method of approaching the study of nature which he was proposing. He was working on it around the turn of the seventeenth century, and may have set it aside around 1603.\(^\text{20}\) It was unfinished, and we may suppose that it was superseded by his later writings, for the thoughts which he expressed in the *Valerius Terminus* are repeated, to a large degree, in *The Advancement of Learning* and the *Instauratio Magna*. We know that after he left off writing on the *Valerius Terminus* itself, he kept this work and apparently valued the way he had presented his ideas here, for later notes in the manuscript show that he consulted this draft in the construction of his later writings.\(^\text{21}\) It is entirely possible that Bacon was working on the first draft of *The Advancement of Learning* at the same time that he was still at work on his earlier, and different, presentation of the Instauration in *Valerius Terminus*.\(^\text{22}\) It is certain that the texts present complementary discussions of the same ideas. While there is some overlap, understanding Bacon’s vision of the Instauration as he emerged from his theological shift at the turn of the century requires a reading of both texts together, for, as the result of the way the texts have come down to us, they offer entirely different perspectives on the event.

\(^\text{20}\) See the observation on Harleian Mss. 6462 by Spedding in WFB III, p. 206.

\(^\text{21}\) Extensive amendments and comments in Bacon’s own handwriting are to be found in Harleian Mss. 6462, which was otherwise in the hand of a secretary. This suggests a reasonable amount of consideration of this document at a later date. As Spedding has noted, Bacon also went to the trouble of having this work transcribed into a bound volume for his own later use. (WFB III, p. 206.) See also Spedding’s comment regarding the shift in Bacon’s handwriting at the time of the accession of James, suggesting that the comments in this Manuscript, which were made without variation in the later more latinate form, were made some considerable time after he changed his writing. (WFB III, pp. 208-09.)

\(^\text{22}\) See Spedding’s discussion of the dating of the *Valerius Terminus* overagainst Ellis’ opinion, WFB III, pp. 209-10. The significant differences in approach between *Valerius Terminus* and *The Advancement of Learning* would seem to argue against the idea that there was a strict progression from the former to the latter, and suggest strongly that Spedding had the right of it: these were two separate projects upon which Bacon was engaged at about the same time.
If *The Advancement of Learning* represents Bacon’s writings on the Instauration event as he thought fit to present his thoughts to the public for the first time, it was also a text which, as we noted in chapter three, was heavily edited by Tobie Matthew and Lancelot Andrewes before it hit the press. The *Valerius Terminus* is Bacon’s earlier, and more candid, discussion of the same ideas set within a different overall argument. Although the one represents a more public presentation, and the other can be considered his private draft, it is notable that in both Bacon devoted a great deal of energy to situating his program for the reform of learning within a theological system.

The *Instauratio Magna* of 1620 represented a significant development of thought between 1605 and its publication. However, the theological points changed very little, and are more explicitly set forth in the earlier writings. Furthermore, as the 1620 edition was intended for a much wider audience than his previous publication, the potentially controversial statements which are to be found even in *The Advancement of Learning* have been occasionally curtailed, or softened. Quite conceivably this was as much the result of the caution of Bacon’s editors as his own, for as we have noted Bacon had requested of Andrewes in editing the *Cogitata et Visa* that he would edit rigorously:

> that not by pricks, but by notes, you would mark unto me whatsoever shall seem unto you either not current in style, or harsh to credit and opinion, or inconvenient to the person of the writer;...And though for the matter itself my judgment be in some things fixed, and not accessible by any man’s judgment that goeth not my way: yet even in those things, the admonition of a friend may make me express myself diversely.23

Rather than suffer from the harsh judgments of others, Bacon had chosen to “express himself diversely.” In some points, as in the passage used above concerning God’s providential action in bringing an age of learning, Bacon’s thought is actually more boldly expressed than before, and in other places Bacon has merely rendered the same ideas more

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23 WFB XI, p. 141.
succinctly. Therefore, the 1620 text will be used frequently for clarification and support of ideas which were simply not so clearly expressed early-on, and where there are significant differences in theological points, the *Instauratio Magna* of 1620 will be taken fully in hand.

Other texts which are clearly part of the Instauration corpus, such as the *Cogitata et Visa*, will be used to inform these three main sources when applicable, but these works assume the theological structure which Bacon has established elsewhere rather than setting forth a theological argument of their own. The consideration of texts will not substantially go beyond 1620, though, again, later texts, such as *De Augmentis*, and the *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis* will be used to reinforce the argument where appropriate. The goal of this chapter is not to provide a detailed discussion of all of Bacon’s theological statements, but to identify the contours of the theology of Instauration, and demonstrate that when Bacon is read in historical context the theological structure underlying the Instauration is coherent, and consistent with that context.

**Sacred History, or The History of Divine Action**

In discussing what was necessary for theologians to contribute to the new learning in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* Francis Bacon separated the main heading of theology into three approaches, none of which are original, but reflect his observation of the field. Bacon made them correspond to the three aspects of the human soul which he considered to be the natural and observable state of things -- memory, reason, and imagination -- and thus the approaches to theology already in place are doubly justified. Corresponding to the reason is dogmatic theology, which is the study of divinity in the philosophical abstract. Corresponding to the imagination are the parables, which are divine fables or poetry, the “literature” of divinity. Corresponding to the memory is Sacred History, which is the record of God’s actions in the world of time and place. Unlike purely human
history, Sacred history includes prophecy, for this also is a record of God’s actions in
time and place, and in divine history “the narration may be before the event as well as after.”

Apart from certain passages in his early Meditationes Sacrae Bacon very rarely
approached theology from the abstract. It is precisely dogmatic theology which Bacon
leaves to the theologians. Neither does he concern himself much with constructing
parables, unless, after we have given due attention to the theology behind the
Instauration, we might contend that he has done exactly that in his New Atlantis. That
is a matter for another essay, however. The approach which Bacon has taken to the
theology of the Instauration is that of Sacred History. Christian theology operates in
connection with a chronological narrative stretching from the Creation, through the Fall
and the Incarnation of Christ, to end up in the return of Christ and the new heaven and
new earth. The whole of Christian dogma can be presented in connection with the events
of this narrative. This is the Historia Sacra, the Heilsgeschichte, of classical theology.
When viewed specifically in light of the Edenic Fall and the means of recovery from it, it
is also termed, “Salvation History,” for it tells the tale of the providential hand of God
working for human recovery, and it reveals the Via Salutis: the progressive way in which
that recovery is accomplished in time, both in respect to the Church and the individual.
Throughout Bacon’s Instauration corpus he referred to this grand narrative of Christian
theology, and he has placed the divine action of the Instauration event within the
narrative, to function as an organic part of it. This required some shifting of the standard

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24 Translation, WFB IV, p. 293. Original Latin: narratio factum praecedere non minus quam sequi posit.,
WFB I, p. 495. This discussion was originally set forth in a much shorter form in The Advancement of
Learning, which is, of course, the original draft of the De Augmentis Scientiarum. See the original

25 Another possible exception is the Sapientia Veterum, or Wisdom of the Ancients, in its English
translation, in which Bacon reinterpreted a number of ancient myths according to his own understanding of
history. See WFB VI, pp. 605 ff.
furniture in order to make room for his new addition. It also required some explanation on his part to justify adding an element to the sacred narrative which had not been there before, and which, apparently, only he had recognized for what it was.

The prior omissions of the Instauration by theologians would not be particularly surprising to anyone who accepted Bacon’s criticisms of the state of theology in his day as he set them forth in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. While he generally avoided criticism in this work, particularly in fields not his own, he was quick to claim that theologians had neglected two crucial elements in Sacred History: the “History according to Prophecy,” and the “History of divine judgment or Providence.”26 By the “History according to Prophecy” Bacon meant the activity of connecting prophecies with their evident fulfillment in time. This had not been adequately done, and when it was done it had to be done with “great wisdom, sobriety, and reverence, or not at all.”27 And it was essential that when the task was done prophecies should not be improperly limited in interpretation, as if it were a matter of strict one-to-one correspondence between prophecies and discreet events: “and though the height or fulness of them is commonly referred to some one age or particular period, yet they have at the same time certain gradations and processes of accomplishment through divers ages of the world.”28 By the “History of Divine Judgment or Providence” Bacon meant the manifestation of the will of God in the world specifically through the coincidences of events which made it clear that the Will of God was actively at work for judgment or unexpected deliverance, or in the

26 WFB I, p. 515. The Latin is, respectively, *Historiam ad Prophetias,* and *Historiam Nemeseos sive Providentiae.* The latter term borrows from the Greek, *νεμέσις,* which implies not merely the common sense of “retribution” but properly, a “just distribution” or even an “enactment” of Divine judgment or determination.

27 Translation, WFB IV, p. 313.

28 Translation, WFB IV, p. 313.
event of “divine counsels, through tortuous labyrinths and by vast circuits, at length manifestly accomplishing themselves.”

Both of these alleged omissions on the part of theologians tie in with Bacon’s retelling of the narrative of salvation history. On the one hand, as the quotation from the *Novum Organum* cited earlier attests, Bacon saw the Instauration as the fulfillment of specific prophecies which had not, up to his day, been properly understood. According to his discussion in *De Augmentis* the History according to Prophecy had simply not been adequately developed. On the other hand, as is also evident from the earlier quotation from the *Novum Organum*, Bacon saw the Instauration as the result of a divinely appointed convergence of the expansion of the known world through discovery and the advancement of the sciences. The Providential hand of God was clearly at work, though others had not recognized what was going on. According to *De Augmentis*, this could be ascribed to the deficient state of the History of Providence among theologians, part of which discipline was the observance of “divine counsels” which “through tortuous labyrinths and by vast circuits” at last came to pass and could be observed. Bacon had observed what the theologians had not. Throughout his writings dealing with the Instauration, Bacon amended the standard narrative, weaving the Instauration into his exegesis of the Scriptures and his presentation of Church History. Many of these moves were only possible because of his theological shift away from Calvinism. In addition, Bacon’s retelling of the narrative involved a significant reinterpretation of many passages of the Old Testament, which, however, was not out of line in his day due to the increased fluidity of Old Testament interpretation which resulted from the recovery of Hebrew scholarship. Bacon himself did not know Hebrew, and thus would have been a poor judge of the latitude which would have been acceptable among theologians of his day. But it is

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[29] Translation, WFB IV, p. 313.
not insignificant that Lancelot Andrewes, who was, for his era, a recognized authority in the Hebrew Scriptures was Bacon’s “inquisitor” on the drafts of the *Advancement of Learning*. Furthermore, there is a great deal of similarity to start with between the ideas presented by Bacon in his Instauration corpus and the doctrine of God and Creation presented by Andrewes. This suggests, as we noted in chapter three, that there was a significant discussion between the two men on such subjects from the late 1580’s and at least through Andrewes’ departure from London when he was elevated to the episcopacy of Ely in 1605.

In the sections which follow, we will move chronologically through the narrative of Sacred History as Bacon understood it, and particularly as he situated the Instauration event systematically within the theological points of the standard narrative. Along the way it will become clear that Bacon did not see himself as injecting anything new into the narrative. Rather, he was observing something which had been present from the beginning, but had gone unobserved by the generations which had gone before his own. The Scriptures, the doctrines of the Church Fathers, the events of history, and the obvious evidence of changes occurring in his own day wove themselves into a theological fabric in Bacon’s mind which served as the motivation for, and the justification of, his own work in natural philosophy. If he was the first to understand the course of events leading to the providential age of the Instauration, it was, nevertheless, true, and substantiated by all of the sources just mentioned. The evidence of what was occurring was clear, for those able to read the signs.

**Bacon on the Order of Creation as the Pattern of Instauration**

The beginning of the narrative of Christian Sacred History must always be where the text of the Scriptures places the beginning of all things, in the original divine action of Creation. But there is more to the Creation than the mere fact that it occurred. The
Genesis narrative had much to say about the Creator Himself, and Bacon derived principles from it which were significant for the Instauration. Bacon’s God was the God of order who had constructed an orderly and predictable universe. This had significant implications for the Instauration at a number of levels: Chronologically, it meant that the entire history of the cosmos could be divided into four discreet ages; cosmollogically, it meant that the universe was so structured that it always operated according to rules which governed the realm of secondary causes; and practically, it meant that if the human role in the Instauration were to be carried out properly humankind must follow the prescriptive hierarchy which was manifested in the order in which all things came to be. We will consider these aspects in turn.

According to Bacon’s *Confession of Faith*, God created heaven and earth to operate according to “constant and everlasting laws, which we call *Nature*, which is nothing but the law of the creation; which laws nevertheless have had three changes of times, and are to have a fourth and last.”\(^3\)\(^0\) The first period of time was that in which God had made matter, but had not yet begun the six days of creation in which He would give it form. The second period includes the days of creation, and the Sabbath, and it culminates in the Fall. After the Fall is the period of the curse, “which notwithstanding was no new creation, but a privation of part of the virtue of the first creation.” There was a change in the laws of creation as a result of the Fall in which the laws received a “revocation in part by the curse, since which time they change not.” This did not involve a complete reordering of nature, but only a certain modification (which is explained in the *Valerius Terminus*), and otherwise “the laws of Nature, which now remain and govern inviolably till the end of the world, began to be in force when God first rested from his works and ceased to create.” It was at this point, after the direct act of forming matter in the course

\(^3\)\(^0\) WFB VII, p. 221.
of the six days, that God’s rule over nature proceeded “by compass,” or a “chain of causes” as in the *Meditationes Sacrae*, rather than being “immediate and direct.” There is also a fourth and final period, which will begin at the end of this present world. This scheme of the history of God and creation outlined in the Confession remained firm throughout Bacon’s life. All of Bacon’s statements regarding God and creation in the Instauration corpus relate to this basic chronological framework.

The concept of a “chain of causes” which we examined in connection with the *Meditationes Sacrae* is an important part of the discussion of nature in *The Advancement of Learning*, where its implications for the reform of human learning can be clearly seen. Bacon responded specifically to the objection that the pursuit of earthly knowledge led to atheism:

> And as for the conceit that too much knowledge should incline a man to atheism, and that 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 do 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 favor towards God; and nothing else but to offer the author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie.  

The target here is not only some group that objected to the knowledge of second causes, but, as the last sentence makes clear, also those who denied second causes or the chain of causation completely because, according to them, nothing happened in the world save by the immediate will and operation of God. In other words, Bacon was arguing against those who took Calvin’s argument discussed in chapter two in its most literal sense. Bacon, in his hyperbole, accuses them of lying. He is countering in advance the

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31 WFB III, p. 221.

32 WFB III, p. 267.
suggestion that he was being impious in advocating the study of nature, by accusing those who deny second causes of impiety themselves. In order to preserve God’s power they were denying what Bacon regarded as the obvious order of the cosmos as God had set it up. In denying the obvious under the pretense of piety, they were lying after a fashion, even if they were only lying to themselves. For Bacon, nature followed an ordinary course which was in obedience to the laws which God established in creation, but which was not to be attributed to His immediate action as Calvin would have it. Therefore, in the same vein as the Advancement of Learning, Bacon stated in the Valerius Terminus: “That a religion...that cherisheth devotion upon simplicity and ignorance, as ascribing ordinary effects to the immediate working of God, is averse to knowledge.”

There was much at stake in the doctrine of God acting through a chain of causes. As we have already noted in chapter two, if God is the immediate cause of everything, there is no room for genuine free will in humankind, and God is necessarily the author of evil. Moreover, and more to the point of the Instauration, if there is no chain of causes but only the immediate action of God in the movements of creation, then God is the only true agent, and nature can not, in any meaningful sense, be freely manipulated by humans. The chain of causes is a space in which the experimental method can operate, and in which humankind, as a free willing agent, can achieve some supremacy and control over other causes.

Bacon’s objection in the Meditationes Sacrae that God was not the author of evil, we can now see, had important connections to his understanding of the nature of matter, and to his understanding of the role of humanity in mastering it through the course of the

33 WFB III, p. 251.

34 This is what Calvin maintained in Institutes, Book I, ch. 16, 1-3. The human invention of arts is not to be attributed to human agency, but to the actions of God through His human instruments, according to Institutes, Book I, ch. 5, 5, in which the “inventing of so many wonderful arts are sure indications of the agency of God in man.” (Beveridge translation).
Instauration. If God always acted in nature immediately, then it would follow that all of
the hardship and affliction which resulted from the Fall would have to be predicated of
God. Bacon did not see it this way. The Fall itself will be considered more fully under
its own heading in this account of Bacon’s Sacred History. For now, it is important to
note that Bacon regarded the Fall as an event which disrupted the entire cosmos, and
caused real damage to the chain of causes itself. Among the consequences of the Fall,
nature itself had also entered into a state of rebellion or waywardness. This is how Bacon
accounted for the suffering, misery, and hardship which afflicted humanity after the Fall,
for he was always unwilling to allow God to be the author of evil. Thus in explaining his
divisions for the study of natural history in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* error is
predicated of matter, or of nature, but not of God:

*Partitionem Historiae Naturalis moliemur ex statu et conditione ipsius
Naturae, quae in tripli statu posita inventur, et tamquam regime trinum
subit. Aut enim libera est natura et cursu consueto se explicans, ut in
coeis, animalibus, plantis, et universo naturae apparatu; aut a
pravitatibus et insolentiis materiae contumacis et ab impedimentorum
violentia de statu suo detruditur, ut in monstris; aut denique ab arte et
opera humana constringitur et fingitur, et tanquam novatur, ut in
artificialibus. Sit itaquae partitio Historiae Naturalis in Historiam
Generationem, Praeter-Generationem, et Artium; quam postremam etiam
Mechanicam et Experimentalem appelare consuevimus.*

*Harum prima Libertatem Naturae tractat; secunda Errores; tertia Vincula.* [The division
which I will make of Natural History is founded upon the state and
condition of nature herself. For I find nature in three different states, and
subject to three different conditions of existence. She is either free, and
follows her ordinary course of development; as in the heavens, in the
animal and vegetable creation, and in the general array of the universe; or
she is driven out of her ordinary course by the perverseness, insolence, and
frowardness of matter, and violence of impediments; as in the case of
monsters; or lastly, she is put in constraint, moulded, and made as it were
new by art and the hand of man; as in things artificial. Let Natural
History therefore be divided into the History of Generations, of
Pretergenerations, and of Arts; which last I also call Mechanical and
Experimental History. Of these three the first treats of the Freedom of Nature, the second of her Errors, the third of her Bonds.]\(^{35}\)

The chain of causes not only allowed for human agency, but also for agency in nature apart from the immediate action of God or the influence of humans. Nature has the liberty in this system to follow the course set by God, and the potential to veer from that course. Furthermore, humankind can choose, through art, to influence and control nature, but this, Bacon contended, requires the imitation of God’s own order and method in creation if it is to be done right.

From the Genesis creation narrative itself Bacon repeatedly drew attention to the fact that God had created light first, and argued that this should inform human efforts in experimentation and natural philosophy. In Aphorism 70 of the *Novum Organum* Bacon expressed it this way:

\[Verum in experientiae vero curriculo, eoque ad nova opera producendo, Divina Sapientia omnino et ordo pro exemplari sumenda sunt. Deus autem primo die creationis lucem tantum creavit, eique operi diem integrum attribuit; nec aliquid materiali operis eo die creavit. Similiter et ex omnimoda experientia, primum inventio causarum et axiomatum verorum elicienda est; et lucifera experimenta, non fructifera quae renda.\]

[But in the true course of experience, and in carrying it on to the effecting of new works, the divine wisdom and order must be our pattern. Now God on the first day of creation created light only, giving to that work an entire day, in which no material substance was created. So must we likewise from experience of every kind first endeavor to discover true causes and axioms; and seek for experiments of Light, not for experiments of Fruit.\(^{36}\)

If the matter of creation is to be manipulated by human activity it is essential, according to Bacon, that humans bear in mind the way in which the universe has been assembled.

This required not only examining the fabric of the universe to understand how its various

\(^{35}\) WFB I, p. 496. Translation, WFB IV, p. 294.

\(^{36}\) WFB I, p. 180. Translation, WFB IV, p. 71. See also the same argument differently worded in the preface to the *Instauratio Magna*, WFB I, pp. 128-129.
elements fit together (which was essentially reading the Book of Nature), but also remembering that God, who had done all things the right way, had revealed the proper order for such a project in the chronological arrangement of the events of creation itself. Even as God created light first, and devoted an entire day to the activity, so humans must proceed slowly and first come to understand the creation before attempting to control it and make it produce. This is more than a convenient analogy.

In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon identified the habit of a “peremptory reduction of knowledge into arts and methods” as an error of previous generations which had to be remedied by looking to the revealed actions of God, who is the arch-type of knowledge:

First, therefore, let us seek the dignity of knowledge in the arch-type or first platform, which is in the attributes and acts of God, as far as they are revealed to man and may be observed with sobriety; wherein we may not seek it by the name of learning: for all learning is knowledge acquired, and all knowledge in God is original: and therefore we must look for it by another name, that of wisdom or sapience, as the Scriptures call it.38

This is a significant passage for understanding the entirety of the Instauration event, particularly in light of the title of the work in which it is found: “learning” is here defined by Bacon as the human acquisition of God’s wisdom. This divine wisdom, the pattern for human “learning,” was expressed first in the act of creation itself, which proceeded according to a governing principle of hierarchy:

To proceed to that which is next in order, from God to spirits; we find, as far as credit is to be given to the celestial hierarchy of that supposed Dionysius the senator of Athens, the first place or degree is given to the angels of love, which are termed Seraphim; the second to the angels of light, which are termed Cherubim; and the third and so following places to thrones, principalities, and the rest, which are all angels of power and

37 WFB III, p. 292.
38 WFB III, p. 295.
ministry; so as the angels of knowledge and illumination are placed before
the angels of office and domination.

To descend from spirits and intellectual forms to sensible and
material forms; we read the first form that was created was light, which
hath a relation and correspondence in nature and corporal things, to
knowledge in spirits and incorporeal things. 39

Bacon was observing here that God always acted in a hierarchical pattern which situated
knowledge, or its corresponding physical icon light, antecedent to, and thus necessary
for, the manipulation of nature by art. It is difficult to say from this passage just how
much weight Bacon ascribed to (pseudo) Dionysius the Areopagite as an authority, but it
was more than typical for an English intellectual in his era. Not only the discussion of
angelic hierarchies, but also the blunt equation of light and knowledge is reminiscent of
Dionysius, and suggests that Bacon may have drawn on him throughout this section.40

Although Dionysius is used only with qualification in this passage, the fact that he is
used at all is significant, given the fact that Dionysius was already known to be a much
later writer than the contemporary of Paul which his name implies, as well as the
dominant Calvinism of Bacon’s environment.41 Calvin had a genuine disdain for the

Celestial Hierarchies which he dismissed as “idle talk” rather than proper theology.42 It is

39 WFB III, p. 296.

40 The use of light as an image for understanding and knowledge among the “intelligences” runs throughout
the Celestial Hierarchies, and although it is not an uncommon metaphor, it is seldom so plainly stated in
connection with Genesis 1:3 or the theme of “Light” in the Fathers. Given Bacon’s concern for the
primacy of “Charity” as a motivation, it is possibly significant that Dionysius also connected light to the
“Good” which flows from God, and illumines all minds, in the Divine Names. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius: The

41 See the discussion, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century” by Karlfried
circles, where the most common reaction was complete rejection.

42 Cf. Institutes, Book 1, ch. 14, 4. There may also have been objections in Bacon’s day to Dionysius’
claim to derive the idea that the “cherubim” were those “full of knowledge,” from some Hebrew original
(Bacon has this very much in mind, it appears). (Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, 161) The
Hebrew דֵּרוּם is of doubtful origin at best (possibly from the Assyrian karibu, meaning be graceful, or, as
an adjective, “great”), but even in the chaotic state of Hebrew scholarship in early modern England there
would have been questions raised about Dionysius’ etymology, for nothing really comes close to that
definition in the Hebrew.
possible that the qualification here was for the benefit of the English audience, and may
reflect the concern of his editors. Notably, in the early translation which Tobie Matthew
prepared for a Continental (and largely Catholic) audience, there is no qualification of
Dionysius as a source, which may reflect Bacon’s original intent here, given the
certainty with which he proceeds in the argument. In any case, regardless of whether
the ranks of angels can be marshaled to his cause or not, it is clear that Bacon regarded the
order in which God operated, placing light before production, and spending a significant
amount of time on light in creation, as normative for human method, precisely because he
regarded divine wisdom as the archetype for human learning.

**Humanity in the Garden**

As we have already observed in considering Bacon’s *Confession of Faith*,
humankind was created to have a special place within the hierarchies of creation as that
creature to whom God would unite His own divine nature in the hypostatic union at the
Incarnation. From the beginning humanity was designated as the point of contact through
which God would establish a communication between Himself and the entire cosmos.
Even before the Incarnation, however, humanity held a special place of rulership over
material creation, though not yet over the angels. According to the *Confession of Faith*
“God created Man in his own image, in a reasonable soul, in innocency, in free will, and in
sovereignty.”† There is nothing unique to Bacon in asserting humanity’s sovereignty over
the lower orders of creatures. Calvin said much the same thing in many more words in the
*Institutes*. Human sovereignty over the earth is a theological commonplace based upon
God’s command to humanity to “subdue the earth” in Genesis 1:28. However, the
implications of humanity’s sovereignty and the meaning of “subdue the earth” were taken

† WFB VII, p. 221.
by Bacon in a different direction. This is clearly seen in Bacon’s numerous statements about the vocation and the activity of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

In the *Valerius Terminus* Bacon declared that God had created the human mind for the purpose of investigating and understanding the universe:

> God hath framed the mind of man as a glass capable of the image of the universal world, joyning to receive the signature thereof as the eye is of light, yea not only satisfied in beholding the variety of things and vicissitude of times, but raised also to find out and discern those ordinances and decrees which throughout all these changes are infallibly observed.\(^4^4\)

The mind of man is designed to investigate and learn the laws of nature which God has laid out for the governance of creation. In connection with this principle Bacon referred to Proverbs 25:2, a verse which would also figure prominently in his preface of the *Instarutio Magna*: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but it is the glory of the King to find it out.” In his explanation of this verse in *Valerius Terminus* Bacon does not allow it to refer specifically to kings, but to the general vocation of humankind from the beginning:

> Nay, the same Salomon the king affirmeth directly that the glory of God *is to conceal a thing, but the glory of the king is to find it out*, as if according to the innocent play of children the divine Majesty took delight to hide his works, to the end to have them found out; for in naming the king he intendeth man, taking such a condition of man as hath most excellency and greatest commandment of wits and means, alluding also to his own person, being truly one of those clearest burning lamps, whereof himself speaketh in another place, when he saith *The spirit of man is as the lamp of God, wherewith he searcheth all inwardness*.\(^4^5\)

Thus, in *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon presented the work of Adam in the Garden as an act of learning:

\(^4^4\) WFB III, p. 220.

\(^4^5\) WFB III, p. 220.
After the creation was finished, it is set down unto us that man was placed in the garden to work therein; which work so appointed to him could be no other than the work of contemplation; that is, when the end of work is but for exercise and experiment, not for necessity; for there being then no reluctance of the creature, nor sweat of the brow, man’s employment must of consequence have been a matter of delight in the experiment, and not matter of labor for the use. Again, the first act which man performed in Paradise consisted of the two summary parts of knowledge: the view of creatures, and the imposition of names.46

The activity of Adam in Eden was that of the natural philosopher. He contemplated nature and actively experimented with it in order to experience the joy of understanding the universe which God had made. The work of Adam in Eden was the same as that work which Bacon was proposing in the Instauration writings, but with the significant difference that Adam did not have to contend with the rebellion, or “reluctation,” of a natural world corrupted by sin.

In engaging in this work of the contemplation of, and experimentation with, nature, Adam was partaking in a truly divine activity, for the high point of the creation narrative was the seventh day when God contemplated his works: “So in the distribution of days, we see the day wherein God did rest and contemplate his own works, was blessed above all the days wherein he did effect and accomplish them.”47 The activity of Adam in the Garden of Eden, and of humans in the Instauration, is closely tied to their identity in being made in the very image of God. Humankind and its Maker were united in the contemplation of creation: humankind, the image of God, learned through investigation and experiment what God knew about His own power in the cosmos. We should note, in connection with Bacon’s patristic turn, that this understanding of the human vocation in perfection is entirely in keeping with the doctrine of the Cappadocian

46 WFB III, p. 296.
47 WFB III, p. 296.
Fathers, particularly Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who were widely read in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Gregory of Nyssa summarized the teachings of Basil on the place of man in the cosmos:

For not as yet had that great and precious thing, man, come into the world of being; it was not to be looked for that the ruler should appear before the subjects of his rule; but when his dominion was prepared, the next step was that the king should be manifested. When, then the Maker of all had prepared beforehand, as it were, a royal lodging for the future king (and this was the land, and islands, and sea, and the heaven arching like a roof over them), and when all kinds of wealth had been stored in this palace (and by wealth I mean the whole creation, all that is in plants and trees, and all that has sense, and breath, and life; and-if we are to account materials also as wealth -- all that for their beauty are reckoned precious in the eyes of men, as gold and silver, and the substances of your jewels which men delight in-having concealed, I say, abundance of all these also in the bosom of the earth as in a royal treasure-house), he thus manifests man in the world, to be the beholder of some of the wonders therein, and the lord of others; that by his enjoyment he might have knowledge of the Giver, and by the beauty and majesty of the things he saw might trace out that power of the Maker which is beyond speech and language. 48

For Bacon, Adam’s vocation as a natural philosopher was exemplified by the action of naming all creatures on the first day of his existence. The act of the observing and naming of the creatures (Gen. 2:19-20) was, for Bacon, nothing other than observing the creatures and identifying them according to their roles, functions, and uses in the divinely established hierarchies. 49 In the perfect knowledge of created things which existed in Adam before the Fall, he “did give names unto other creatures in Paradise, as they were brought before him, according unto their properties.” 50 The act of naming was not merely


49 When Bacon mentions in the quotation above that Adam did not have to labor for the “use,” but for experiment, it should not be understood as implying that the creatures had no uses before the Fall. Rather, the use of the creatures was not essential for man’s continued existence or the improvement of his estate, as was necessary after the Fall. (See below.)

50 WFB III, pp 264-265.
a nouthetic activity, but it was integrally associated with humanity’s power over the lesser creatures. Man was not only to identify the earth and appreciate it, but to subdue it, expressing his identity as God’s image in creation by exercising the power which God gave him over the lower orders in the hierarchy. The connection of naming to human power over creation has significant overtones of Renaissance magic which become unmistakable in Bacon’s claim in *Valerius Terminus* that “whenever he [man] shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again command them.” However, we must remember that what is implied here, magical though it may be in its derivation, is more sophisticated than basic incantation.

For Bacon, the “name” is always the identification of the thing according to its true function and use. Naming is the recognition of the properties of a thing and its place in creation so that it may be used according to its properties. Adam’s activity of naming was a matter of discriminating between creatures, and defining them, according to their properties. The Edenic naming of the creatures, then, is akin to Bacon’s doctrine of “Forms,” or the “formal cause” as Bacon has adopted and adapted the term from Aristotelian natural philosophy. In the second book of the *Novum Organum* Bacon explained the meaning of “Forms” in his system as follows:

> Licet enim in natura nihil vere existat praeter corpora individua edentia actus puros individuos ex lege; in doctrinis tamen, illa ipsa lex, ejusque inquisitio et inventio atque explicatio, pro fundamento est tam ad scirendum quam ad operandum. Eam autem legem, ejusque paragraphos, Formarum nomine intelligimus; praesertim cum hoc vocabulum invaluerit et familiariter occurrat. [For though in nature nothing really exists beside individual bodies, performing pure individual acts according to a fixed law, yet in philosophy this very law and the investigation, discovery, and explanation of it, is the foundation as well of knowledge as of operation. And it is this law, with its clauses, that I mean when I speak of *Forms*; a

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name which I the rather adopt because it has grown into use and become familiar.]\textsuperscript{52}

This definition of “Forms” is more developed than his parallel discussion in the *Valerius Terminus*, where they are simply left as the “true differences” between the things of nature, but it cannot be doubted that the concept was present, if in seminal form, already in the earlier writing.\textsuperscript{53} The discovery of Forms in both the *Novum Organum* and the *Valerius Terminus* is characterized by the actions of “dividing” and “defining,” of which Plato despaired, saying that “he will revere him as a God, that can truly divide and define.”\textsuperscript{54} Many steps are now required for humanity, in a fallen world, to divide and define nature and recover the Forms by which the specific bodies of nature operate, including the direct observation of natural bodies and motions, and the gathering of specific instances. Adam, for his part, was able to perform this action of division and definition merely upon seeing the creatures before him.

**The Fall and Knowledge**

In Bacon’s interpretation of Sacred History the Genesis Fall narrative is crucial, and his interpretation of it is absolutely essential for understanding the place of the Instauration event in the history of God’s interaction with the world. In arguing that human knowledge could and should be advanced and developed, Bacon had to contend with the role that knowledge may or may not have played in the Fall itself, for the first sin was nothing other that eating from a tree of knowledge. Throughout the Instauration

\textsuperscript{52} Aphorism II, of the *Novum Organum*, WFB I, p. 228. Translation, WFB IV, p. 120. See footnote 3 in WFB I, p. 228 for the particular reasoning behind the translation of *paragraphos* as “clauses.” The language is an application of legal Latin to the laws of nature.

\textsuperscript{53} Cf. *Valerius Terminus*, WFB III, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{54} For the use of this quotation in *Valerius Terminus* see WFB III, p. 239. In the Latin of the *Novum Organum* it reads: “Quod habendus sit tanquam pro Deo, qui definere et dividere bene sciat.” See Spedding’s footnote for a discussion of the probable origin of this quotation. It must be borne in mind that what is significant here is the way in which Bacon used this idea, rather than the context in Plato’s own thought from which it appears to have been ripped. (See WFB I, p. 277.)
Bacon took great care to ensure that human knowledge was not implicated in the Fall of Adam into sin. Early-on in the *Valerius Terminus* Bacon raised the issue of the nature of the temptation which caused humanity to fall:

Man on the other side, when he was tempted before he fell, had offered unto him this suggestion, *that he should be like unto God*. But how? Not simply, but in this part, *knowing good and evil*. For being in creation invested with sovereignty of all inferior creatures, he was not needy of power or dominion; but again, being a spirit newly inclosed in a body of earth, he was fittest to be allured with appetite of light and liberty of knowledge; therefore this approaching and intruding into God’s secrets and mysteries was rewarded with a further removing and estranging from God’s presence.  

The Fall was not occasioned by knowledge *per se*, and certainly not by the knowledge of nature, as some in Bacon’s day believed. The fault lay elsewhere, as he suggests in a passage which he retained through the entire course of his Instauration writings in some form:

But if any man without any sinister humour doth indeed make doubt that this digging further and further into the mine of natural knowledge is a thing without example and uncommanded in the Scriptures, or fruitless; let him remember and be instructed; for behold it was not that pure light of natural knowledge, whereby man in paradise was able to give unto every living creature a name according to his property, which gave occasion to the fall; but it was an aspiring desire to attain to that part of moral knowledge which defineth of good and evil, whereby to dispute God’s commandments and not depend upon the revelation of his will, which was the original temptation.

Desire for knowledge became sin in the fact that humans wanted to trade places with the Divine Judge and make their own rules concerning good and evil. The problem is associated with hubris, humanity’s “aspiring desire,” more than with knowledge itself. This is a point which becomes sharpened considerably in later versions of this passage.

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55 WFB III, p. 217.
56 WFB III, p. 219.
Consider the wording in *The Advancement of Learning* where “pride” and Adam’s “intent” become the focus of the guilt:

. . . 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 properties, 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. 57

And in 1620 in the preface to the *Instauratio Magna* the wording to this effect is even more straightforward:

> Neque enim pura illa et immaculata scientia naturalis, per quam Adam nomina ex proprietate rebus imposuit, principium aut occasionem lapsui dedit. Sed ambitiosa illa et imperativa scientia moralis, de bono et malo djudicantis, cupiditas, ad hoc ut Homo a deo deficeret et sibi ipsi leges dare, ea demum ratio atque modus tentationis fuit. [For it was not that pure and uncorrupted natural knowledge whereby Adam gave names to the creatures according to their property, which gave occasion to the fall. It was the ambitious and proud desire of moral knowledge to judge of good and evil, to the end that man may revolt from God and give laws to himself, which was the form and manner of the temptation.] 58

Humans wanted to revolt from God. The problem is not knowledge at all, here, but the sin lies in the selfishness and arrogance of man’s motivation for the knowledge of good and evil. Humankind ate of the tree in a desire to switch places with God and make his own rules, in order not to be dependent upon God.

In the first quotation from *Valerius Terminus* Bacon associated the sin with an intrusion into the “secrets and mysteries” of God. There is also a common theme running through these quotations that in the act of sin man was rejecting God’s commandments or his “revelation.” Man knew that eating from the tree was wrong. God had revealed to him that this was not to be done, and that the eating bore serious consequences. In this

57 WFB III, pp. 264-265.

sense the original sin, according to Bacon, was the result of a rejection of the knowledge which Adam already had concerning the tree, rather than an improper desire for further knowledge. In order to fully appreciate how this point operates in the course of Bacon’s theology we must recognize Bacon’s prior understanding of the doctrine of the Deus Absconditus, or the hiddenness of God. The Deus Absconditus, the idea that there is always that in God which is simply beyond knowing, is a commonplace in Christian Doctrine stemming from the inherent differences between creatures, who are always finite or bounded, and God, who is unoriginate, transcendent, and infinite. However, Christian theologians are not always in agreement on where the line between the knowable and the unknowable should be drawn.

In the Confession of Faith Bacon drew the line between the knowable and the unknowable when he distinguished between the laws of nature, and the laws of God’s hidden and secret will, which governed His interaction with spiritual creatures:

At the first the soul of Man was not produced by heaven or earth, but was breathed immediately from God; so that the ways and proceedings of God with spirits are not included in Nature, that is, in the laws of heaven and earth; but are reserved to the law of his secret will and grace.59

The minds of humans, we will recall, were designed to comprehend Nature or the universe, not the inner workings and plans of the transcendent God. God’s personal interactions with “spirits,” including the human soul, are beyond human comprehension, and this included such matters as God’s giving of commandments to humans for their benefit. God, being eternal and the designer of all, could comprehend the goodness of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil being in the Garden, as well as the goodness of His prohibition of the eating of that tree. Humans, being time-bound and finite, could never comprehend the reasoning, or the perspective, of God who is by nature eternal and

59 WFB VII, p. 221.
transcendent. Nevertheless, God had directly revealed that part of his will which could be comprehended by human beings, namely, that the tree was not to be used for food, and that there would be specific consequences if it was. In eating from the tree humankind rejected God’s revelation and sought to know that which was, by definition, unknowable.

One implication of this interpretation of the Fall for the Instauration is that there is absolutely nothing in the investigation of the material universe which is either proscribed or necessarily beyond human comprehension. This idea will unfold more completely as we consider other aspects of Bacon’s Instauration writings, but some mention should be made here of Bacon’s oft-repeated discussion of the role of natural philosophy as a support for the faith, for this, too, is based upon Bacon’s line between the knowable and the Deus Absconditus.

In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon wrote:

> It is an assured truth and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a farther 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 masseth on farther, 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 be tied to the foot of Jupiter’s chair.\(^60\)

If natural philosophy necessarily leads to a recognition of the divine, by ascending through the chain of causes, the caution must always be borne in mind that natural philosophy should not be thought to open into the Deus Absconditus, and reveal that which is beyond comprehension. As Bacon said it a bit earlier in *The Advancement of Learning*:

\(^{60}\) WFB III, pp. 267-268.
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 the creatures themselves) knowledge; but having regard to God, no perfect knowledge, but wonder, which is broken knowledge.  

Bacon is not suggesting here, as the last two phrases have sometimes been interpreted, that natural philosophy reveals nothing specifically about God and His work in the world. In context he is clearly stating that the things which are genuinely hidden from human reason, the nature and will of God, are inaccessible through natural philosophy. For Bacon, natural philosophy always reveals something about God, namely, His power manifested in a well-ordered universe. One of the essential functions of natural philosophy, Bacon stated further on in the work is “opening our belief, in drawing us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God which is chiefly signed and engraven in his works.”  

Neither should it be inferred from passages such as those above that nothing can be known concerning the nature or will of God, for God revealed much about both directly in the Scriptures. As we will discuss in the next chapter under the heading of “The Two Books,” Bacon regarded Nature and the Scriptures as complementary theological sources, the former revealing God’s power, and the latter his will. But there is always a distinction made by Bacon between that which may be learned through observation and that which must be revealed.

Bacon’s line is drawn in very much the same way that Irenaeus drew his line between the knowable and the unknowable in God. For Irenaeus, it was only through direct interaction with the second person of the Trinity, the “Logos,” or Christ, that anything could be known of what was otherwise part of God’s hidden nature or secret

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61 WFB III, p. 267. See also the parallel section in Valerius Terminus, WFB III, p. 218.

62 WFB III, p. 301.
will. Revelation was required, and that revelation was only made complete through the
Incarnation of Christ. Thus Irenaeus wrote:

_Unus igitur Deus, qui Verbo et Sapientia fecit et adaptavit omnia: hic est
authem Demiurgus, qui et mundum hunc attribuit humano generi, qui
secundum magnitutdinem quidem igitur est omnibus his qui ab eo facti
sunt: nemo enim investigavit altitudinem ejus, nec vpterum qui quieverunt,
secundum eorum qui nunc sunt, secundum autem dilectionem cognoscitur semper
per eum, per quem constituit omnia. Est autem hic Verbum ejus Dominus
noster Jesus Christus, qui novissimis temporibus homo in hominibus
factus est, ut finem conjungeret principio, id est, hominem Deo. [There is
therefore one God, who by the Word and the Wisdom created and arranged
all things; but this is the Creator (Demiurge) who has granted this world to
the human race, and who, as regards His greatness, is indeed unknown to
all who have been made by Him (for no man has searched out His height,
either among the ancients who have gone to their rest, or any of those who
are now alive); but as regards His love, He is always known through Him
by whose means He ordained all things. Now this is His Word, our Lord
Jesus Christ, who in the last times was made a man among men, that he
might join the end to the beginning, that is man to God.]

What was revealed through creation itself (by the action of the Logos, again) was nothing
more or other than God as Creator. This is what Bacon regarded as the knowledge of
God’s power, and the manifestation of God according to His creation is clear to all who
see that creation, according to Irenaeus:

_Etenim per ipsam conditionem revelat Verbum conditorem Deum, et per
mundum fabricatorem mundi Dominum, et per plasma eum qui
plasmaverit artificem, et per Filium eum Patrem qui generaverit Filium._
[For by means of the creation itself, the Word reveals God the Creator;
and by means of the world [does He declare] the Lord the Maker of the
world; and by means of the formation [of man] the Artificer who formed
him; and by the Son that Father who begat the Son.]

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It was only in the Incarnation that anything could be known of God beyond his power and majesty as Creator. It was only through the visible Son that the Father could be personally known. Thus, according to Irenaeus, Moses, the Prophets, and all who came before the Incarnate Christ could know nothing of God’s nature or will which had not been directly revealed by an interaction with the then pre-incarnate Christ, and this occurred only through specific theophanies, as in Isaiah’s heavenly vision or the burning bush of Moses. In the case of Elijah, according to 1 Kings 19:11-12, Irenaeus noted that God made it clear that He was not to be found in the powerful wind, in the earthquake, or in a fire. Only in the “scarcely audible voice” [vox aurae tenuis] of His revelation, did Elijah have any knowledge of God’s will or His plan for humanity.65 God’s power, indeed, could be known through the things of Creation themselves, but anything of His will or his nature could only be known through the direct action of Christ in the world.

The distinction evident in this discussion is operating throughout Irenaeus’ Contra Haereses, but it is only firmly made in opposition to the Marcosians, who had contended that there was much to be known of the transcendent God from creation itself, apart from the revelation of God in Jesus.66 For Bacon, who concerned himself directly with the things of nature, this distinction was a bit more crucial. As we have observed in the Confession of Faith, it was only through the Mediator and His Incarnation that true communication between the unknown God and His creation was established. God could not be known personally through creation, apart from the act of uniting Himself with Creation in the hypostatic union.

Bacon felt that it was necessary to repeatedly make the point that knowledge of Nature, and the unrestricted pursuit of it, was not only not proscribed but that it was


inherently good. The reason that this was necessary, according to Bacon, was that there were any number of people who would object to his argument that the pursuit of knowledge itself was an integral part of Adam’s sin. In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon was concerned with refuting a specific objection of the “divines” of his day:

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 over-much knowledge was the original temptation and sin, whereupon ensued the fall of man; that knowledge hath in it somewhat of the serpent, and therefore when it entereth into a man it makes him swell.\(^67\)

In the *Valerius Terminus* Bacon issued a concise and direct attack on the detractors of human knowledge, accusing them of envy of anyone who might possess a greater knowledge than they:

But now, there are again which in a contrary extremity to those which give to contemplation an over-large scope, do offer too great a restraint to natural and lawful knowledge, being unjustly jealous that every reach and depth of knowledge wherewith their conceits have not been acquainted, should be too high an elevation of man’s wit, and a searching and ravelling too far into God’s secrets; an opinion that ariseth either of envy (which is proud weakness and to be censured and not confuted), or else of a deceitful simplicity.\(^68\)

In the *Novum Organum*, Bacon drew together several of the themes we have already considered in a similar rejection of “certain divines:”

\[Deinque invenias ex quorundam theologorum imperitia aditum alicui philosophiae, quamvis emendatae, pene interclusum esse. Alii siquidem simplicius subverentur ne forte altior in naturam inquisitio ultra concessum sobrietatis terminum penetret; traducentes et perperam torquentes ea quae de divinis mysteriis in scripturis sacris adversus remantes secreta divina dicuntur, ad occulta naturae quae nullo interdicto prohibentur. Alii callidius conjiciunt et animo versant, si media ignorentur, singula at manum et virgulam divinam (quod religionis ut putant maxime intersit) facilius posse referri: quod nihil aliud est quam Deo per mendicacium gratificari velle. [Lastly, you will find that by the simpleness\]

\[^{67}\text{WFB III, p. 264.}\]

\[^{68}\text{WFB III, p. 219.}\]
of certain divines, access to any philosophy, however pure, is well nigh closed. Some are weakly afraid lest a deeper search into nature should transgress the permitted limits of sobermindedness; wrongfully wrestling and transferring what is said in holy writ against those who pry into sacred mysteries, to the hidden things of nature, which are barred by no prohibition. Others with more subtlety surmise and reflect that if second causes are unknown everything can more readily be referred to the divine hand and rod; a point in which they think religion greatly concerned; which is in fact nothing else but to seek to gratify God with a lie.]

These statements were directed against “certain divines.” It is important for us to recall that the divines of his day were primarily Calvinist. It was particularly a Calvinist understanding of human knowledge, or at the very least a Calvinist caution about it, which is the target of these statements, and which necessitated his interpretation of the fall as consisting of pride, rather than forbidden knowledge.

The Calvinist Understanding of the Fall

Pertaining to the fall and recovery, the issues between Bacon and Calvin center on a web of Calvin’s contentions regarding the purpose of human knowledge, the trustworthiness of human knowledge, and the merits of the study of nature generally. For Calvin, already in the original paradise, human knowledge had only two objects: human beings knew and understood God, and human beings knew and understood themselves in relation to God. The contemplation of nature was valuable to Calvin precisely because through studying nature humankind could know God better, for “The invisible and incomprehensible essence of God is, to a certain extent, made visible in his works.” It is clear from this statement alone that Calvin had drawn the line between the knowable and the Deus Absconditus in a much different way than Bacon was suggesting in his writings.


⁶⁰ Institutes, book 1, ch. 1, sec. 1.

⁶¹ Institutes, Book 1, ch. 5, sec. 1.
for according to Calvin the things of nature were capable of revealing more than God’s power as Creator. Bacon had objected that no knowledge of God’s essence was attainable through His works. If Calvin’s position is accepted, the question immediately arises of the degree to which the study of nature might be proscribed. If it is used to pry into the hidden things of God, could not such study become a “searching and a ravelling too far into God’s secrets?” For Bacon it was simply not possible to pry into any part of God’s essence through created things, and therefore the study of nature was not proscribed. The error of those who tried learn of God’s nature through creation, such as the Pythagoreans, was akin to the error of the Calvinist theologians around him who also treated human knowledge as if prying into natural things were to blame for the Fall.

Human knowledge was heavily implicated in the Fall as Calvin discussed the event. Eve’s error, according to Calvin’s lecture on Genesis 3, lay in trusting her senses which told her that the tree was good for food, and in desiring greater knowledge of the things of the Garden than she was permitted to have.

Eve erred in not regulating the measure of her knowledge by the will of God. And we all daily suffer under the same disease, because we desire to know more than is right, and more than God allows; whereas the principal point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God.

Eve had entered into an unlawful study of the created Tree, and, according to Calvin, her observation led her to what Bacon called, “the aspiring to over-much knowledge.” This was the position which Bacon had in his sights in the passages from Valerius Terminus and The Advancement of Learning quoted above. Knowledge and trust in the senses was set in opposition to faith, in Calvin’s discussion, for Eve had turned from true knowledge, provided by revelation, to the deceitful knowledge provided by the senses. Human

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73 A Commentarie of John Caluine, upon the first booke of Moses called Genesis, trans. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), Chapter 3, sec. 5.
judgment is set in juxtaposition to divine revelation. In a similar discussion in the *Institutes*, Calvin augmented the ascription of Eve’s sin to the desire for human knowledge through creation by ascribing it to the original sin more generally. According to the *Institutes*, it was the desire for the extra “knowledge” which the tree could provide which was sinful because man was “longing for more than was allotted him.” It does not follow, of course, that human knowledge was completely proscribed for Calvin or for later Calvinists, many of whom, as Charles Webster has shown, were heavily engaged in the scientific activities of the Royal Society and its predecessor institutions. However, there is a serious difference between Calvin and Bacon on the understanding of the Fall here, and, leaving the scientific activity of later Calvinists aside, the disparagement of the pursuit of human knowledge based on Calvin’s doctrine was a common theme of some of the most prominent Calvinists of Bacon’s own day.

In connection with the theological censure of the pursuit of the knowledge of nature, Perez Zagorin has noted the example of William Perkins, whom he justifiably calls “one of the foremost English theologians of the later sixteenth century.” William Perkins was a staunch Calvinist who was one of the most vigorous early opponents of the doctrines of Jacob Arminius, and he was noted in his day as a leader among the Puritans as well, who personally resisted the pressure of Whitgift for Conformity. The Dictionary of National Biography records that during the last years of his life, that is, shortly before 1602, and, significantly, while Bacon would have been working on *Valerius Terminus* and quite likely *The Advancement of Learning* as well, “Perkins reputation as a

74 *Institutes*, book 2, ch. 1, sec. 4.
75 Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine, and Reform 1626-1660* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1975.)
76 Zagorin, 47.
77 DNB, vol. 15, pp. 892-95.
teacher... was unrivaled in the university, and few students of theology quitted Cambridge without having sought to profit in some measure by his instruction.”

The passage to which Zagorin refers for understanding Perkins’ thought on the subject of the advancement of knowledge is to be found in his *Discourse of Witchcraft*, and deals with the desire for humans to master natural things for the working of wonders. Perkins discussed the desire for knowledge which God had not granted as one of the dangerous “discontentments” of the mind which resulted in the practice of witchcraft:

> The second degree of discontentment is in the mind and inward man; and that is *curiositie*, when a man resteth not satisfied with the measure of inward gifts received, as of knowledge, wit, understanding, memorie, and such like, but aspires to search out such things as God would have kept secret; and hence hee is moved to attempt the cursed art of Magicke and Witchcraft, as a way to get further knowledge in matters secret and not revealed, that by working of wonders hee may purchase fame in the world, and consequently reape more benefit by such unlawful courses, than in likelihood he could have done by ordinary and lawful meanes.

The “ordinary and lawful means” are discussed at length in the sections following, and set at odds with the workings of Satan. Notably, Perkins made the point that there were many thousands of things that man, according to his natural limitations, could never know in the natural world, but Satan accomplished wonders by his tremendous knowledge of natural things. It is not difficult to see where and how this thinking is at odds with Bacon’s belief that an age had come in which human activity would advance the sciences immeasurably. But there is another locus of contention between Bacon’s program and Perkins’ theology. Perkins’ censure of “curiositie,” is not limited to curiosity which happens to lead to witchcraft. It is part of a much larger censure of humans being

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78 DNB, vol. 15, p. 893.


80 Ibid., 610-11.
discontented with their divinely prescribed lot in life. In many of Perkins’ other writings he discussed the necessity of suffering and misery in the world as a specific punishment for sin which cannot be shaken off. Similarly, Perkins censured those who will not accept the misery and suffering of this life as God’s just judgment on sinners. This understanding of all suffering as the direct, and “chastening,” action of God is a necessary corollary to the denial of second causes. As such, humans should be thankful if suffering is lifted by God whether directly or through human arts, but as suffering and misery themselves were the result of the direct action of God in the world, there was no point in attempting to eradicate them. Indeed, struggling against misery and suffering, since they were God’s judgments and occurred according to His will, could easily be construed as impious.

Another significant example of the effect of Calvin’s doctrine on English thought is to be found in Thomas Cartwright, the perennial Nonconformist target of Archbishop Whitgift, whose work, we have noted, Bacon read while at Gray’s Inn. In his discussion of the Fall in A Treatise of Christian Religion, Cartwright paralleled the exact argument of Calvin’s Genesis commentary in presenting the sin of Eve as clearly the desire for forbidden knowledge which came through the tree. He elaborated that those things which God has not revealed should not be sought, and that “ignorance in such things, is the best knowledge.” In addition, Cartwright discussed the fact that Eve’s temptation to the

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81 See William Perkins, How to live, and that well, In all estates and times, specially when helps and comforts faile, (Cambridge, 1601), pp. 45 & 51. See pp. 62ff. on the sin of seeking for relief from sources other than God. See also the sermons published in, A Treatise of Man’s Imaginations, (Cambridge, 1607), pp. 197ff, and 143-147 (on not accepting God’s judgements). The sufferings in this world are listed as the specific curses of God on man in The Christian Doctrine, [later edition in English and Irish] (Dublin, 1652), p. 45.

82 Cf. Jardine and Stewart, 79.

forbidden knowledge came through the senses of sight and hearing, both of which she trusted in believing the fruit good to eat. From this Cartwright concluded that knowledge derived from the outward senses could be particularly deceptive now, after the Fall, and these senses should be at all times guarded: “they are (as it were) windowes, whereby sinne entred into the heart when there was no sinne; and therefore will much more now, the heart being corrupted.” Cartwright also shared the belief that suffering and misery were properly to be regarded as the judgments of God and the manifestation of God’s anger for sin, and therefore true relief was not to be expected as long as there was sin in the world.

For Calvin and his adherents, human knowledge still exists after the Fall, but it is corrupt and always untrustworthy. For, as a part of the punishment for sin, “soundness of mind and integrity of heart were withdrawn.” While Calvin conceded that all knowledge was not lost in the fall, and encouraged thankfulness for the blessings which have, by God’s “indulgence,” proceeded from human intellect in spite of its corruption, the real value of earthly knowledge is always suspect. Attempts to improve earthly conditions through arts and actions are ultimately vain, as is taught in the book of Ecclesiastes, because corruption adheres even the actions of God’s chosen in this world. Finally, the believer’s proper attitude toward this earthly life itself must be one of renunciation, for heavenly life cannot be obtained if the soul is distracted by even the

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84 Cartwright, 51.

85 Ibid., 70-72.

86 Institutes, book 2, ch. 2, sec. 12.

87 Ibid, sec. 25.

88 Ibid., book 3, ch. 14, sec. 3. See also the mention of “Reason” being hopelessly blemished in William Perkins, A Treatise of Man’s Imaginations, Cambridge, 1607. p. 149.
good things in a corrupt world. As there can be no hope of transformation here the hope of the believer must focus on transcending this world by passing to the next. The bottom line is that while certain benefits may be derived from intellectual pursuits such as civil government and technological aids to life, the possibility of any actual recovery from the effects of the fall in this world is proscribed by the pervasiveness of the corruption of the Fall. The Calvinist doctrine of total depravity applied to every aspect of human nature after the Fall. As William Perkins put it, corruption of human nature was to be found “In every part both of body and soul, like as a leprosie that runneth from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.” Bacon sharply differed with Calvin and the Calvinists on this concept of the net effect which the Fall had upon human nature, and this, too, was significant for his understanding of the Instauration event.

The Fall and its Effects According to Bacon

In the Valerius Terminus Bacon discussed the purpose of his program for the advancement of knowledge in terms of the recovery of the power which humanity possessed over nature in Eden:

And therefore it is not the pleasure of curiosity, nor the quiet of resolution, nor the raising of the spirit, nor victory of wit, nor faculty of speech, nor lucre of profession, nor ambition of honor or fame, nor inablement for business, that are the true ends of knowledge; some of them being more worthy than other, though all inferior and degenerate: but it is a restitution and reinvesting (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and power (for whencesoever he shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again command them) which he had in his first state of creation. And to speak plainly and clearly, it is a discovery of all operations and possibilities of operations from immortality (if it were possible) to the meanest mechanical practice.

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89 Ibid., book 3, ch. 9, passim.


91 WFB III, p. 222.
We may note, in the catalog of those things which are not the true ends of knowledge an engagement of the concerns of the Calvinists that knowledge leads to the sins of pride and greed, but that which Bacon declared to be the true ends of knowledge are also incompatible with Calvinist doctrine. Bacon continued, in the same paragraph, to discuss exactly to what extent this edenic power and knowledge may be recovered, in the age which he identified in the *Confession of Faith* as the third age of nature, namely the state after the Fall:

> It is true, that in two points the curse is peremptory and not to be removed; the one that vanity must be the end in all human effects, eternity being resumed, though the revolutions and periods may be delayed. The other that the consent of the creature now being turned into reluctation this power cannot otherwise be exercised and administered but with labor, as well in inventing as in executing; yet nevertheless chiefly that labor and travel which is described by the sweat of the brows more than of the body; that is such travel as is joined with the working and discursion of the spirits in the brain.\(^{92}\)

The Fall did not entail total depravity. It did not result in a significant corruption of the human faculties as well as the human soul. The most significant change was that nature had rebelled against humankind and now mastery could only be regained and subsequently maintained through great mental labor, which was the very purpose of the sciences. The other result of the Fall was that whatever humans accomplished, it would be rendered vain by the coming of the fourth age of nature, when there would be a new heaven and a new earth. Nevertheless, edenic “sovereignty and power” were recoverable. If Adam’s ability to recognize the true name and purpose of the creatures on sight had also been lost, this was but a setback. It did not prevent humanity from obtaining a complete knowledge of all created things, for, as Bacon interpreted Ecclesiastes 3:11:

> Let no man presume to check the liberality of God’s gifts, who as was said, *hath set the world in man's heart*. So was whatsoever is not God but

\(^{92}\) WFB III, pp. 222-223.
parcel of the world, he hath fitted it to the comprehension of man’s mind, if man will open and dilate the powers of his understanding as he may.\textsuperscript{93}

The human mind and its potential for knowledge remained as great as before the Fall, and humans had the freedom to make the most of it if they so chose. This point is important for understanding Bacon’s later statement in Aphorism 28 of the second book of the \textit{Novum Organum} that man’s understanding is “depraved by custom and the common course of things,” rather than by sin.\textsuperscript{94}

Bacon’s explanation of Eccleisastes 3:11 in \textit{The Advancement of Learning} is a bit more extensive, and adds to our understanding of why Bacon believed that the Instauration had not occurred before his own time:

\begin{quote}
\textit{God hath made all things beautiful, or decent, in the true return of their seasons: Also he hat 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 \textit{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 labors, ill tradition of knowledge over from hand to hand, and many other inconveniences whereunto the condition of man is subject.\textsuperscript{95}
\end{quote}

Here again, the mind of man is not the problem, but, after the Fall, humankind suffers from shortness of life, and has for one reason or another, failed to bring the labors of

\textsuperscript{93} WFB III, p. 221.

\textsuperscript{94} And therefore it can be mended by a change of method: “... et medentur intellectui depravato a consuetudine et ab iis quae fiunt plerunque.” WFB I, p. 282.

\textsuperscript{95} WFB III, p. 265.
different people together, and failed to establish a trustworthy tradition of human knowledge. There are other similar “inconveniences” and “impediments,” but it is significant that in the Instauration writings Bacon gave directions for the removal of all of these impediments, from the directions for removing the “Idols of the Mind” in the *Novum Organum*, to his call for collective effort in the sciences, to his suggestions for lengthening life indefinitely in the *Historia Vitae et Mortis*. Edenic mastery could be recovered, although for various reasons it had not been recovered before.

This understanding of the Fall remained constant throughout Bacon’s writings. In the conclusion to the second book of the *Novum Organum* he wrote:

Homo enim per lapsum et de statu innocentiae decidit, et de regno in creaturas. Utraque autem res etiam in hac vita nonnulla ex parte reparari potest; prior per religionem et fidem, posterior per artes et scientias. Neque enim per maledictionem facta est creatura prorsus et ad extremum rebellis. Sid in virtute illius diplomatis, In sudore vultus comedes panem tuum, per labores varios (non per disputaciones certe, aut per otiosas ceremonias magicas) tandem et aliqua ex parte ad panem homini praebendum, id est, ad usus vitae humanae subigitur. [For man by the fall fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his dominion over creation. Both of these losses however can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences. For creation was not by the curse made altogether and forever a rebel, but in virtue of that charter, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” it is now by various labors (not certainly by disputations or idle magical ceremonies, but by various labors) at length and in some measure subdued to the supplying of man with bread; that is, to the uses of human life.]96

This twofold fall entailed a twofold solution: 'Innocency' was restored by the action of the Church and faith, and dominion over creation was restored by the human work of Bacon’s Instauration.97 From this point onward in his Sacred History the spiritual and

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97 Bacon’s belief that proper religion was antecedent to proper science will be considered below. The reference to “idle magical ceremonies” here may be referred specifically to the Paracelsians, for they are censured by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* for assuming that the good effects may come without labor, and to counter them Bacon employed his interpretation of Genesis 3:19. See WFB III, p. 381.
material recoveries of man can be seen to proceed along separate, though interrelated, paths.

Bacon’s interpretation of Genesis 3:19, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,” figures prominently in both the *Valerius Terminus* and the *Novum Organum*, and it is important for understanding how he conceived of the Scriptural support for his argument. He has taken a verse which is commonly regarded as a curse, and has made of it not only a promise, but a prophecy of human recovery. In doing so he has established an interesting parallel between this verse and the combination of a curse and promise made to the woman. According to common Christian exegesis, childbirth would be painful and difficult for the woman as a result of the Fall, but she had the assurance that eventually, through the bearing of children, the Messiah would come. The messianic promise was made indirectly, as a result of the cursing of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 with the prophecy that his head would be crushed by the woman’s seed. Similarly, mastery of nature now required labor for the man, but eventually, in the Instauration, it would lead to recovery from the material loss brought by the Fall. In the *De Augmentis*, Bacon made the charge that the “History of Prophecy” had been very much neglected by theologians. Genesis 3:19 appears to have been one verse which had not received its proper attention. Bacon was willing to correct that omission.

**Bacon and Andrewes**

The first chapters of Genesis are the natural starting point in the Scriptures for any discussion of the relationship between God and creation or of humanity’s place in the created order, both before and after the Fall. As we have examined Bacon’s account of Sacred History thus far it is clear that his conception of the Instauration as an event that entailed the restoration of human knowledge and control over nature owed much to Bacon’s particular interpretation of the Genesis narrative. Bacon’s reading was
fundamentally at odds with that of the Calvinists around him, but it was strikingly similar in many points to the exegesis of Lancelot Andrewes found in the *Apospasmatia Sacra*. The *Apospasmatia Sacra*, we should recall, consists of detailed notes taken on lectures which Andrewes presented in London during the late 1580’s and early 1590’s. The subject matter was, primarily, Genesis chapters 1-4, which Andrewes examined verse by verse. These were the years when Andrewes and Bacon were in London together, and, at the very least, it is evident that the thought of the two men ran along the same lines in regard to the Genesis narrative. If Bacon’s ideas were not in line with Calvinism, they were at least sanctioned, in large part, by their similarity to the thought of a theologian who, by the time of the publication of *The Advancement of Learning*, had been elevated to Bishop and was respected in the Court. The occasion of Andrewes’ rise may have been connected to the specific timing of Bacon’s publication of ideas on which he had been working for more than two decades before. It was certainly a convenient development in light of Bacon’s dual aspirations in politics and natural philosophy.

Bacon’s own career was gaining momentum at this same time, and it would not have benefited from charges that he, who was a self-proclaimed non-theologian, had exceeded the bounds both of right belief and his own vocation.

**Andrewes on creation**

For Andrewes, the act of creation, every bit as much as the act of redemption, was the work of Christ as the “mediator” between God and creation.98 While the *Apospasmatia Sacra* does not go into the detail of the *Confession of Faith*, the similarity in nomenclature for the Logos theology is unmistakable. After creating matter, God proceeded to give it form according to an orderly pattern. The purpose of this order, and particularly of his revelation of it to us through Moses, was not only to present

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98 *Apospasmatia Sacra*, 38.
Himself as the God of order, but to guide us in our own meditation on nature: “God also took this orderly proceeding, partly that we entering into the meditation of God’s works, might have, as it were, a thread to direct us orderly therein.” Thus, for Andrewes, as for Bacon, the order of creation itself was a pattern for natural philosophy. Light was, for Andrewes, quite naturally the first of God’s creatures, for it is the creature by which all other things are distinguished from one another, and it is directly related to the human faculty of knowledge: “for all our knowledge cometh of light, and is compared to light.”

To this point, the interpretation of the Creation narrative is nearly identical between Andrewes and Bacon. But Andrewes, as the theologian, went into a much more detailed discussion of the events of the six days, and the proper understanding of God’s actions therein. Significantly, the activity of giving form to matter is presented by Andrewes as an act of distinction and dividing, increasing by increments the complexity of created order from the first day in which God distinguished light from darkness. As part of the process of this act of continual distinction, “in all the six dayes works, God gave names to the things as he made the, and to Adam himself, and in these seven things named, are contained all other particular things made in, and with them.” The act of divine naming had a specific purpose for humankind: “as God gave...the natural use of things, so now he took order that we might have a use of them by names, to know and talke of them so.” This brings us to Adam’s place and activity in the Garden.

99 Ibid., 11.
90 Apospasmatia Sacra, 23. See also p. 55, where Andrewes directs his listeners: “This is also profitable matter to learn for imitation, for as we see God doth here, we must express the like in our actions that we may be like unto God; Forst when we have received our light of knowledge, we are taught by the order of Creation, that the next course in regeneration is to extenuate our earthly affections...”
101 Apospasmatia Sacra, 25ff.
102 Ibid., 33.
103 Ibid., 33.
Andrewes on naming and knowing

For Andrewes the act of giving names to all creatures merely by looking at them is evidence of the perfection of Adam’s knowledge, even as Bacon had discussed “that pure and uncorrupted natural knowledge whereby Adam gave names to the creatures according to their properties.” For both men, the Edenic act of naming formed the apex of human knowledge. In Andrewes, this faculty of human beings appears as an aspect of their identity as the image of the Creator, for Adam was recognizing those names, or properties, which had been given to all things according to the wisdom, or Word, in their formation. Naming was not an arbitrary act on the part of Adam in the *Apostasmatia Sacra*, for naming was nothing other than recognizing the true natures of all things, both according to their internal and external properties:

> All names man giveth is of the property; we say commonly that this is the nature, *scilicet*, the propertie of a thing: The knowledge of which properties is either sensible of outward things, or intelligible of inward qualities. The names of things after *Adam* were of properties sensible, as *Esau* was so called, for that he was red and rough with haire: *Jacob* was so called, for that at his birth he held *Esau* by the heel, his brothers supplanter, *Genesis* 25. ... But *Adams* names came from inward qualities, which he could perceive partly by the light of nature.\(^{104}\)

Andrewes regarded false knowledge as misunderstanding the place of creatures in creation, and not recognizing God’s intent for them, their properties, and their true natures:

> The end, to which God gave & imposed sundry names was, that we should do as he hath done, that is, when things have a true being, then to give names to them accordingly, and not to our fancies....for as man draweth good Liquor out of the Cask, so out of the meaning of the Word, and denominations given by God, we may draw out the hidden nature and knowledge of the thing.\(^{105}\)

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\(^{104}\) Ibid., 213.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 33.
If we call things by their correct names we are identifying them according to both the properties and the use which God gave them in creation, otherwise we are using names improperly. Thus Bacon also expresses his frustration in the introduction to his Historie Naturall and Experimentall, that his own generation is still averse to true knowledge, “For we create worlds, we direct and domineer over nature, we will have it that all things are as in our folly we think they should be, not as seems fittest to the Divine wisdom, or as they are found to be in fact.” The error of his own generation was in refusing to learn God’s intent for nature, and recognize things according to their true “names.”

For Andrewes, Adam’s activity in the Garden did not stop with the act of naming, or the observing of the properties and use of created things. It proceeded on to using all things according to their properties. For: “God made the Earth as his work-house and shop, and Heaven as his chamber and place for a rest and reward, and both for one; and that is man.” Adam was placed specifically in the workshop of the Garden in order to manipulate it and learn how to make it produce:

But all the Fathers doe agree in this, that it was Gods will that the Garden should bring forth, not only opera naturalis, of his own accord, but also by the industry and diligence of man, it should bring opus voluntarium. So that divers other faire and pleasant things should be bestowed on the Garden, and caused to grow by his labor, and so he should both discere & docere, how many things by industry might be done above nature.

As Bacon saw Adam’s activity as experimentation to discover the potential of all nature, so Andrewes presented Adam as engaged in the business of the laboratory: a “hands-on” program of learning and demonstration (discere & docere) of what could be done with the material of nature that was at hand. Elsewhere Andrewes described how man was to rule

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107 Apospasmatia Sacra, 121.

108 Ibid., 179-180.
and to manipulate the things of the world, demonstrating his similarity to his creator in his own creations:

God, by his power, createth man, and maketh a natural World: And Man, likewise, maketh artificalem mundum, as ships for carriage, temples for service, lights and candles as artificial starres: creavit etiam homo alteram quasi naturam.\textsuperscript{109}

**Andrewes on knowledge and the Fall**

In several lectures dealing with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the condition of Adam before the Fall, Andrewes argued that knowledge itself, being good and the creation of God, could in no way be held responsible for the fall. From the time of creation Adam was designed to know all that could, intellectually, be known. In regard to created things, Andrewes maintained that “Adam knew all things, not only perfectly, but exactly.”\textsuperscript{110} This knowledge of all things came to Adam naturally: “God gave him wisdom, he learned it not.”\textsuperscript{111} Only the essence of God and his hidden will were excluded from Adam’s knowledge, but these transcend created reason and hence, by definition, are unknowable. All of the created cosmos, however, fell within the grasp of human knowledge. For Andrewes, this was because humankind was designed to be God’s “viceregent,”\textsuperscript{112} and “lieutenant,”\textsuperscript{113} lord of all things save God himself, and knowledge was necessary for rulership. For Andrewes, Adam’s perfect knowledge of all created things applied also to the forbidden Tree.

\textsuperscript{109} Apospasmatia Sacra, 95. It is significant, given the prelapsarian context of this discussion, that man’s similarity to God as a lesser creator applies to things which still occur after the Fall.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 96.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 211.
Adam had complete understanding of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, in that Adam knew all that there was to know about it.

But some may say, What hurt is it to know good and evil?... I answer that God forbiddeth not to eat the fruit, nor that he would have us ignorant of that knowledge, quam quis quae​rit a Deo, sed quam quis quae​rit a scipso, And no doubt Adam had the knowledge both of good and evil, per intelligentiam & si non per experientium. And he knew how to choose the one, and to refuse the other, to pursue the one, and to fly from the other, he understood it then, but when he would know both by experience, Gen. 3.6. He could not see why God should forbid him, and therefore the Tempter taking occasion by it, made him make an experiment of it.  

The experience of rebellion did not really add to humankind’s basic knowledge, according to Andrewes’ discussion of Genesis 3:22, where God says “Behold, the Man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” Andrewes saw a measure of irony in this passage for the “knowledge” aspect of the Tree did not come from eating of the tree, but from knowing what God said about it in His command. In knowing of the tree they knew that to obey God was good and disobedience was evil. The serpent had merely confused the matter. It is an irony to Andrewes that Satan’s temptation offered Adam and Eve what they already had: they were already like God, being created in His image, and they already had the “knowledge of good and evil,” though not the experience of it. This may be profitably compared with Bacon’s summary statement regarding the nature of the serpent’s deception in The Advancement of Learning: “but the moral knowledge of good and evil, wherein the supposition was, that God’s commandments or prohibitions were

114 Apospasmatia Sacra, 166. cf. p. 189, where the same point of experimental knowledge of good and evil is referred to St. Augustine (though it is perhaps more of Andrewes’ interpretation than the intent of Augustine here.)

115 Apospasmatia Sacra, London, 1657. p. 189: “God, then by forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge, did not envy or grudge that they should have knowledge, but rather . . .”

116 Ibid., 336 and 264.
not the originals of good and evil, but that they had other beginnings, which man aspired to know. It is a further irony that now the knowledge which Adam possessed in Eden by nature, can only be recovered in the fallen world by experience and “making an experiment of it.” But for Andrewes, as for Bacon, Adam’s knowledge could, to some degree, be recovered.

After the Fall, knowledge of nature was still possible, though it had to be acquired through method and art. This was achieved to a much greater degree by Noah, Moses, and Solomon than by the later heathen philosophers:

The wisdome of all the Heathen Philosophers, compared to the knowledge of these three, Noah, Moses, and Salomon, was but ignorance, Yet Adam was created in wisdome, without corruption; their wisdome was bred in corruption, and the Heathen are destroyed in their own Wisdoms, Psal. 9.15. They three and all the wise men of the world had the light of their understanding per scientiam acquisitam, by study and former observation: Adam had his without observation, non per discursivam scientiam sed intuitivam, for when he had beheld them he gave them names.

We should note that it is not “wisdome” itself which is corrupt, for Andrewes. But even the knowledge of the godly men, Noah, Moses, and Solomon, came about in a corrupt world. This means, in the Apospasmatia Sacra, that it was a world in which nature was in a state of rebellion:

We are here to note the obedience of the Creatures while man was obedient: and that the mutinie and discention between them, and their disobedience to man, did arise by mans rebellion to God his Maker.

This concept of a rebellion in nature which follows upon the rebellion of humanity rests on an Aristotelian conception of a chain of causes in which humankind is the pivot point, or the primum mobile:

117 WFB III, pp. 296-97.
118 Apospasmatia Sacra, 212.
119 Ibid., 96.
Man is as the Great Sphear, the *primum mobile* to the other Creatures; his obedience to God draws the obedience of Plants, Trees, Beasts, and all the Elements unto him; during his obedience all Creatures are serviceable unto him; but afterwards the earth was unkinde, and as he moves all Creatures move with him: if he move against God all move against him.\(^\text{120}\)

Knowledge is very reasonably greater among the godly patriarchs than among the heathen philosophers, according to this passage, for the patriarchs possessed the necessary prerequisite for regaining the obedience of created things -- they were submissive and obedient to the one true God. Nevertheless, in a rebellious world, Noah, Moses, and Solomon had to come by their knowledge “*per scientiam acquisitam*, by study and former observation,” while Adam had it from his very creation.

Andrewes regarded Genesis 3:19 as a curse, but it was also a verse which contained a blessing, and demonstrated the mercy of God: “God might have suffered the earth to have been fruitless let man have labored never so much, but that man for all his sinne, yet with his labour shall make the earth fruitful, in my opinion is a great mercy.”\(^\text{121}\) It is significant for Andrewes, that God did not actually curse man at all in the Fall, but rather cursed the earth instead.\(^\text{122}\) As a result, “the fruitfulness must be recovered by man’s labor, so that labor is a consequence of the earths Curse.”\(^\text{123}\) This is, notably, a point also made by Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*:

> Neque enim infirmus est Deus neque injustus, qui opitulatus est homini et in suam libertatem restauravit eum. Propter hoc et in initio transgressionis Adae, sicut enarrat Scriptura, non ipsum maledixit Adam, sed terram in operibus ejus, quemadmodum ex veteribus quidam ait: “Quoniam quidem transtulit Deus maledictum in terram, ut non perseveraret in homine.”

[For God is neither devoid of power nor of justice, who has afforded help

\(^{120}\) Ibid., 318.

\(^{121}\) *Apospasmatia Sacra*, 320.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 320, “but here the earth of which Adam was made, not Adam himself was cursed.”

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 318.
to man, and restored him to His own liberty. It was for this reason, too, that immediately after Adam had transgressed, as the Scripture relates, He pronounced no curse against Adam personally, but against the ground, in reference to his works, as a certain person among the ancients has observed: ‘God did indeed transfer the curse to the earth, that it might not remain in man.’

This concept has important implications for the potential of the intellect after the Fall in Andrewes’ theology, as opposed to the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity.

**Andrewes on the limits of learning**

Behind Bacon’s lamentation concerning the stubbornness of his own generation lie several assumptions which set him apart from the main theological systems of his day in regard to how and why human learning has not succeeded in recovering Adam’s Edenic mastery over nature. For Calvin recovery was precluded because the human intellect was corrupted in the Fall and no longer even capable of correct, or uncorrupted, knowledge.

For Aquinas, and for most Western Christians who were not Calvinist, complete recovery was precluded not because the human reason itself was flawed, but because the ubiquitous human sinful nature always derailed even the best efforts of the intellect.

Lancelot Andrewes’ view on the subject was very much like this second position, but with a significant difference: according to Nicholas Lossky’s analysis of the *XCVI Sermons* (and the *Apospasmatia Sacra* bears this out) Andrewes rejected the idea of human nature being universally or inherently sinful in rejecting the doctrine of an inherited “original sin.”

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125 *Institutes*, Book 2, ch. 12.

126 Cf. *Summa Theologica*, Part 2 #1, Question 85, articles 2-3. With the desire for virtue absent as a result of sinful nature, the intellect cannot be pure in its effects.

127 Lossky, 170 ff.
For the Eastern Fathers, whose position Andrewes had taken on the subject, humankind was born weak and into a world of corruption, and thus would always commit sinful thoughts and acts, lacking the strength to do aught else, and sin entailed the inheritance of death. Death itself was, as Andrewes stated it, a “deformation,” and it constituted the deprivation of Adam’s original perfection. But sin was always regarded by the Christian East in its strict verbal sense: as the specific actions and thoughts of the individual who committed them, not as a quality of human nature itself.

The West, since Augustine, embraced the idea of “original sin” being a quality of corruption of nature necessarily inherited by all human beings born after the Fall, with the exception of Jesus (and for later Catholics, Mary), and hence present in all people universally, generically, and necessarily. If sin is an inherited and necessary handicap of the human psyche (meaning κακία), then it follows that “sin” is necessarily an insurmountable obstacle to recovery: like a spiritual crabgrass, it is universally present no matter what actions any individual may or may not have taken. And if sin is the limit to knowledge, then knowledge is limited to the degree man is sinful, and in Western theology this means universally, generically, and necessarily.

For Andrewes, however, there was no generic or universal sinful nature which, a priori, limited knowledge for all. Rather, the actual sin of each individual was an obstacle to that individual’s knowledge. Thus, when writing of the conditions which limited the knowledge of Solomon as an individual Andrewes put it this way: “But these (mental qualities) were more excellently in Adam than in Salomon, who had no vanity to seduce him, no sicknesse to weaken him, no temptation to hinder his wisdome as Salomon

128 Apospasmatia Sacra. 121.

Similarly, in referring to Noah, Moses, and Solomon together Andrewes writes that “no one of them knew all things” as Adam did, again predicating the limitations of knowledge of each of them as individuals.131 

In one sense, the implications here for knowledge are not much different than those of Augustine’s original sin doctrine, for all mere mortals who are born into a corrupt world are too weak not to sin, and all will fail to recover Edenic mastery through knowledge. However, there is also an interesting option left open when it is the shortcomings of each individual which limit knowledge, namely the possibility that through collective effort and correction the errors of individuals could be overcome. Although this option was rejected for a number of reasons by Andrewes as well as the Eastern Fathers, Bacon adopted collaboration as an essential key to completing his program for the recovery of human knowledge.132 

Given the similarities of Bacon’s theological statements to those of Andrewes and the Church Fathers, it is important to recognize that the concept of a twofold recovery from a twofold fall is unique to Bacon. For the Eastern Church Fathers, and for Eastern Orthodoxy still today, the relationships between God and humans and between humans and nature were indeed recoverable to some degree in this life, but this recovery is not predicated of human arts and technology. Spiritual recovery and the restoration of nature both occur through the spiritual activity of the Church in prayer and the sacraments.133 

130 Apospasmatia Sacra, 214. 
131 Apospasmatia Sacra, 212. 
132 Cf. Bacon’s discussion of this in the De Augmentis, WFB IV, p. 322 and also pp. 328-29. Also Valerius Terminus, p. 231. 
133 As Fr. John Meyendorff described the recapitulation of man’s edenic role in the Liturgy: “The central role of man in the cosmos is also reflected -- better perhaps than in any system of concepts -- in the Byzantine liturgy with its emphasis on the union of heaven and earth, its sacramental realism, its rites for blessing food, nature, and human life, as well as in the affirmation that, by nature, man is closer to God than the angels themselves.” (Byzantine Theology 142.)
Thus, for example, in the liturgy of the Eastern Church “holy water” or the water of Baptism as a substance (as separate from the rite) is nothing other than water restored to its original state and function through the prayers of the Church. In this way the recovery of the edenic state is tied-up completely with the hypostatic union of the second person of the Trinity with humankind in Christ, and the Church’s mystical union with Christ through the sacraments. There is one solution for the various aspects of the Fall, not two.\textsuperscript{134}

Andrewes, certainly, shared a high view of the efficacy of the sacraments with the Eastern Fathers, but it must be said that he does not anywhere present the concepts of the preceding paragraph. His theology admits for a certain amount of recovery through art and labor, but in the end his focus is primarily on spiritual recovery. Where Bacon was optimistic concerning the potential of material recovery Andrewes was pessimistic. While technological helps for man were the real vestiges of Adamic power, these were not evidence of a new age, or even of improvement. For although, “the knowledge of the faith” in this time of Reformation, “is as the morning light which groweth lighter; the knowledge of reason is as the evening which groweth darker and darker.”\textsuperscript{135}

It is useful to recognize the many doctrinal similarities between Bacon and Andrewes because, even if Bacon took these ideas in a different direction, they are evidence that Bacon’s statements are more deeply grounded than they might appear when considered in isolation. The differences between Bacon and Andrewes in regard to the points discussed could be properly understood as more a matter of emphasis than of

\textsuperscript{134} Consider Meyendorff, again: “In the person of Christ, in the sacramental reality of His Body, and in the life of the saints, the transfiguration of the entire cosmos is anticipated, but its advent in strength is still to come. This glorification, however, is indeed already a living experience available to all Christians, especially in the liturgy.” (Byzantine Theology, 153).

\textsuperscript{135} Apospasmatia Sacra, 83.
doctrine in all points except for the introduction of a twofold fall on Bacon’s part (and, of course, its implications for the Instauration.) Still, the differences are significant as the narrative of Sacred History progresses.

**Bacon’s Sacred History after the Fall**

The trajectory of Bacon’s Sacred History after his discussion of the Garden and the Fall points to his own age, in which he believed that edenic mastery and dominion over the creatures was being restored through the combined activity of God and humankind. The narrative of Sacred History leading up to the Instauration, as Bacon told the tale, consisted of three elements: 1) The Incarnation, which constituted man’s spiritual recovery and necessarily preceded the Instauration even as the spiritual outranked the material; 2) A running explanation of why the Instauration event had not occurred before his present age; and 3) The relation of what Bacon called “providential history” as it pertained to the Instauration event, or, in other words, the account of how the providential working of God had prepared the way for the Instauration.

In the *Valerius Terminus* Bacon passed this general judgment upon the learning prior to the recorded learning of classical antiquity:

> For as for the uttermost antiquity which is like fame that muffles her head and tells tales, I cannot presume much of it; for I would not willingly imitate the manner of those that describe maps, which when they come to some far countries whereof they have no knowledge, set down how there be great wastes and deserts there: so I am not apt to affirm that they knew little, because what they knew is little known to us.\(^\text{136}\)

This agnosticism concerning learning prior to recorded history is typical of Bacon’s caution throughout his method when evidence was lacking, but it also reflects one of his most basic principles of chronology:

\(^{136}\) WFB III, p. 225.
for the truth is, that time seemeth to be of the nature of a river or stream, which carrieth down to us that which is light and blown up, and sinketh and drowneth that which is weighty and solid.\textsuperscript{137}

Thus, if little had come down to his generation from “uttermost antiquity,” much of the reason for it is that subsequent generations, such as the Greeks (who receive the blame for much of the loss of knowledge in Bacon’s writings), were negligent in what they admired and consequently transmitted. Nevertheless, Bacon contended that the recovery of edenic knowledge never occurred, and never could have occurred, prior to his own era, for knowledge, which he had described as “a plant of God’s own planting”\textsuperscript{138} had not yet come into season:

The encounters of the time have been nothing favourable and prosperous for the invention of knowledge; so as it is not only the daintiness of the seed to take, and the ill mixture and unliking of the ground to nourish or raise the plant, but the ill season also of the weather by which it hath been checked and blasted. Especially in that the seasons have been proper to bring up and set forward other more hasty and indifferent plants, whereby this of knowledge hath been starved and overgrown; for in the descent of times always there hath been somewhat else in reign and reputation, which hath generally diverted wits and labors from that employment.\textsuperscript{139}

The metaphor of a fruitful plant is common for Bacon in describing the providential development of an age in which knowledge would flourish and explaining the reason that it had not done so before. Although the learning of those in the most ancient ages of the world may have been great, it did not produce the Instauration because it was not yet the proper season. Every age before Bacon’s own had other concerns, or hindrances, which

\textsuperscript{137} The Advancement of Learning, WFB III, p. 292. See the repetition of this concern in the Instauratio Magna, where it is linked to the unfortunate democratic nature of knowledge, which served, in the past, to “dumb-down” the legacy that was received: “Quamobrem altiores contemplationes si forte usquam emicuerint, opinionem vulgarium ventis subinde agitatae sunt et extinctae. Adea ut Tempus, tanquam fluvius, levia et inflata ad nos de vexerit, gravia et solida demerserit.” WFB I, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{138} In Valerius Terminus, WFB III, p. 220.

\textsuperscript{139} WFB III, pp. 224-225.
prevented the plant of knowledge from bearing fruit before his own time. In regard to antiquity, this led him to the judgment that there was insufficient travel for the the possibility of anything more than the beginning of the recovery of knowledge:

But if you will judge of them by the last traces that remain to us, you will conclude, though not so scornfully as Aristotle doth, that saith our ancestors were extreme gross, as those that came newly from being molded out of the clay or some earthly substance; yet reasonably and probably thus, that it was with them in matter of knowledge as the dawning or break of day. For at that time the world was altogether home-bred, every nation looked little beyond their own confines or territories, and the world had no through lights then, as it hath had since by commerce and navigation, whereby there could neither be that contribution of wits one to help another, nor that variety of particulars for the correcting of customary conceits.\footnote{WFB III, p. 225.}

Antiquity was simply not the age in which “many shall go to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.” At the earliest stages of human existence after the Fall, the violence of the era reinforced this parochialism, and effectively prevented necessary travel.\footnote{“the studies of those times you shall find, besides wars, incursions, and rapines, which were then almost everywhere betwixt states adjoining (the use of leagues and confederacies being not then known), were to populate by multitude of wives and generation...and to build sometimes for habitation towns and cities, sometimes for fame and memory monuments, pyramids, colosses, and the like.” Thus antiquity had other more parochial concerns. WFB III, p. 225.} Nevertheless, Bacon allowed that there may have been much of use in those early eras which had simply been lost in the mud at the bottom of the river of time. The actual natural philosophy of past ages had not been preserved in the Scriptures any more than it had come down through an unbroken tradition, but the Scriptures still had much to say about the usefulness of, as well as the proper approach to, natural philosophy. Bacon drew a great deal of support for the Instauration and his method of study from the Biblical narratives.

From the very first story after the Fall, the account of Cain and Abel, Bacon drew support for his contention of the superiority of mental over brute labor, which we
observed in his treatment of Genesis 3:19 in the *Valerius Terminus*. In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon continued his Sacred History after the Fall as follows:

To pass on: in the first event or occurrence after the fall of man, we see (as the Scriptures have infinite mysteries, not violating at all the truth of the story or letter,) an image of the two estates, the contemplative state and the active state, figured in the two persons of Abel and Cain, and in the two simplest and most primitive trades of life; that of the shepherd, (who, by reason of his leisure, rest in a place, and living in view of heaven, is a lively image of the contemplative life,) and that of the husbandman: where we see again the favour and election of God wen to the shepherd and not to the tiller of the ground.\(^\text{142}\)

Abel was approved by God, not merely because of the nature of his offering, according to Bacon’s reading of Genesis 4, but also because of his devotion to contemplation rather than brute labor. This is another example of Bacon’s renovation of the “History of Prophecy” where, as he claims, without violence to the other truths which are taken from these verses, he has added a prefiguring of the Instauration event, for it was not by the sweat of the body but of the brows that mastery would be recovered.

Continuing his march through Genesis, Bacon noted next in *The Advancement of Learning* that “in the age before the flood, the holy records within those few memorials which are there entered and registered have vouchsafed to mention and honour the name of the inventors and authors of music and works of metal.”\(^\text{143}\) While the Scriptures do not go into detail, it is clear, according to Bacon’s reading, that the fact that technological advances were specifically mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, that this implied God’s approval of such endeavors, particularly when the only other noteworthy feature of this epoch was its violence and wickedness (which brought about the flood).

\(^{142}\) WFB III, p. 297.

\(^{143}\) WFB III, p. 297. Cf. *Valerius Terminus*: “And the first holy records, which within those brief memorials of things which passed before the flood entered few things as worthy to be registered, but only lineages and propagations, yet nevertheless honour the remembrance of the inventor both of music and works in metal.” WFB III, p. 219.
Following the Biblical chronology, Bacon briefly mentioned the account of the Tower of Babel in the next sentence:

In the age after the flood, the first great judgment of God upon the ambition of man was the confusion of tongues; whereby the open trade and intercourse of learning was chiefly imbarred.\textsuperscript{144}

Twice, therefore, on account of the wickedness of men God intervened in human advances and the recovery of power over nature was prevented. Again this is part of what Bacon described as the “History of Providence,” or, as he alternatively termed it in the \textit{De Augmentis}, the “History of the Judgments of God.” One of the hallmarks of the true Instauration, as we will see, is that it coincides with the triumph of what Bacon regarded as “true religion.” It was the wickedness of the motive, after all, which was behind the Fall itself. Throughout the Instauration writings Bacon emphasized the importance of the proper motive, namely, charity, or, in practical application of that virtue, “the relief of man’s estate.”\textsuperscript{145}

Next in line in Bacon’s Sacred History is “Moses the lawgiver, and God’s first pen.” Moses had some of his excellence in natural philosophy from the Egyptians, but there was a difference, which Bacon ascribed to the observation of “some of the most learned Rabbins.” According to the Jewish authorities (and also Lancelot Andrewes, as we have noted above), Moses’ knowledge was augmented by his piety, or devotion to the one true God. (As we will see shortly, the first requirement for recovering right knowledge was right religion.) Therefore, Bacon contended (via vague references to Rabbinic authorities, which may imply a secondhand knowledge of Talmud), the Law

\textsuperscript{144} WFB III, p. 297.

\textsuperscript{145} As per \textit{The Advancement of Learning}, WFB III, p. 294.
given through Moses reflected the wisest course both according to theology and natural
philosophy. 146 The case cited is the law concerning the isolation of lepers in Leviticus 13:

As in the law of the leprosy, where it is said, \textit{If the whiteness have
overspread the flesh, the patient may pass abroad for clean; but if there be
any whole flesh remaining, he is to be shut up for unclean}; one of them
noteth a principle of nature, that putrefaction is more contagious before
maturity than after: and another noteth a position of moral philosophy,
that men abandoned to vice do not so much corrupt manners, as those that
are half good and half evil. So in this and very many other places in the
law, there is to be found, besides the theological sense, much aspersion of
philosophy. 147

The book of Job also demonstrated that prior to classical antiquity there was a significant
concern for natural philosophy. 148 The example of Solomon is the pinacle of pre-classical
evidence for a proper and godly concern with natural philosophy. Having prayed for
wisdom, God granted him knowledge of natural philosophy as well as divinity and moral
philosophy:

By virtue of which grant or donative of God, Salomon became enabled not
only to write those excellent parables or aphorisms concerning divine and
moral philosophy, but also to compile a natural history of all verdure,
from the cedar upon the mountain to the moss upon the wall . . . and also
of all things that breathe or move. 149

In the examples which Bacon has chosen, there is a distinction between divine learning
and natural philosophy, but the line of distinction is not one of absolute separation. Both

\footnotesize

146 WFB III, p. 297-98. Much work still needs to be done in identifying the rabbinic sources available in
England at the time. However, as we had noted the general negativity toward rabbinic sources in the first
chapter, this suggests that Bacon, along with (or perhaps on account of) his source, was, like Sebastian
Münster, far from averse to the use of rabbinic authority as authority. This is a case of Bacon’s
perspective overlapping with that of Selden, but it is most likely, given the date, that the rabbinic
information came via Andrewes.

147 WFB III, pp. 297-98.

148 WFB III, p. 298.

Moses and Solomon were versed in divinity as well as natural philosophy, and Bacon has presented the two forms of knowledge as entirely complementary. As Bacon interpreted the case of Solomon, knowledge of both was the twofold result of his single prayer for wisdom, thus placing the origin of both in God. In the case of Moses, natural philosophy and theology inhere in the very same law, which may be understood according to either form of knowledge. While there is some sense of separation between divinity and natural philosophy here, the overriding sense is one of interaction. The contours of this will become more clear when we consider Bacon’s doctrine of the “two books” in the next chapter.

According to Bacon, the knowledge of classical antiquity itself, as represented principally by the Greeks, was a poor affair when it came to natural philosophy. Although Bacon borrowed from both heavily, and was not without praise for either, Plato and Aristotle are described by him as precisely the flotsam and jetsam of time’s river, in comparison with the weightier knowledge of earlier ages that had been lost. Bacon’s objections to the methods of the Greeks, favoring disputation rather than experiment, as he claimed, have been frequently noted by Bacon scholars, and his particular methodological objections are not the subject of this essay. However, there is also a decidedly religious reason for Bacon’s criticism of the Greeks. Plato and Pythagoras, Bacon noted, mixed their theology and their natural philosophy by using natural philosophy as an improper basis for their theology. At the end of Valerius Terminus the “heathen” are censured for having a religion which consisted in “rites and forms of

\[150\] As in Aphorism 77 of book 1 of the Novum Organum: “Sed temporibus insequentibus ex inundatione barbarorum in imperium Romanum postquam doctrina humana velut naufragium perpessa esset, ex materia leviore et minus solida, per fluctus temporum servatae sunt.” WFB I, p. 185.

\[151\] For Plato see The Advancement of Learning, WFB, III, p. 293, and the expanded version of this discussion in the De Augmentis, book 2, WFB I, p. 570. Pythagoras serves as a somewhat more appropriate target in Novum Organum, book 1, Aphorism 65. WFB I, p. 175.
adoration, and not in confessions and beliefs.” This led them to use natural philosophy as a platform for “metaphysical or theological discourse” and thus not to proceed further in the inquisition of nature itself.\(^{152}\) In other words, the Greeks, and the heathen generally, did not have a functioning distinction between nature and the hidden mysteries of God. This is stated more succinctly in the *Novum Organum*, book 1, Aphorism 79, where he portrayed Greek natural philosophy as lasting a “minimum duration” [*minime diuturna*] before being eclipsed by “moral philosophy,” which was as religion to the heathen.\(^{153}\) Thus the Greeks have a significant place in the overall narrative of Sacred History as a negative example. The Instauration could not have occurred among them for their erroneous religion contributed to their flawed approach to the method and meaning of natural philosophy. In keeping with his basic principle of associating proper human learning with what he regarded as the proper religion, many of Bacon’s examples of the most learned of the pagan emperors of late antiquity are listed by Bacon as amenable to, if not fascinated by, the Christian religion.\(^{154}\) In spite of his negative comments, Bacon does note, however, that the Greeks and Romans were aware of the divine nature of natural philosophy and invention, and this led them to revere their inventors and philosophers as gods.\(^{155}\)

The Incarnation of Christ is a singular event according to Christian theology, to say the least, but even this event served to bolster Bacon’s overall argument for the Instauration. The divinely ordained pattern of knowledge preceding action which Bacon observed in the creation of light, and which underlay his argument for knowledge

\(^{152}\) WFB III, p. 251.

\(^{153}\) *Novum Organum*, WFB I, p. 187.


\(^{155}\) *The Advancement of Learning*, book 1, WFB III, p. 301, See also *Novum Organum*, book 1, Aphorism 129, WFB I, p. 221.
preceding action in the human activity in the Instauration, was also evident in the activity of Christ on earth. For before working miracles, Bacon noted, Jesus “did first shew his power to subdue ignorance, by his conference with the priests and doctors of the law.”

This pattern of knowledge preceding works was borne out in the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost also: “And the coming of the Holy Spirit was chiefly figured and expressed in the similitude and gift of tongues, which are but vehicula scientiae [carriers of knowledge.]” The Incarnation was not, as we have noted, the event which restored edenic mastery over nature, for Bacon, but that which reconciled humanity to God. However, these examples are significant, because they show that Bacon found his basic pattern of the proper order of creation inherent in the central act of the spiritual restoration of humankind. This pattern of knowledge preceding action was uncompromisingly paradigmatic. It was only natural that it should inhere in the Instauration as well.

After the Apostolic era Bacon observed that “many of the ancient bishops and fathers of the Church were excellently read and studied in all the learning of the heathen.” Bacon credited the Christian Church with preserving the knowledge of classical antiquity through the barbarian invasions, but he did not ascribe to the Church Fathers any advancement of natural philosophy. However, there was very good reason for this, as Bacon explained in the Novum Organum:

At manifestum est, postquam Christiana fides recepta fuisset et adolevisset, longe maximum ingeniorum praestantissimorum partem ad Theologiam se contulisse; atque huic rei et amplissima praemia proposita, et omnis generis adjuncta copiosissime subministrata fuisset: atque hoc Theologiae studium praecipue occupasse tertiam illam partem sive

156 WFB III, p. 299.

157 WFB III, p. 299.

158 The Advancement of Learning, book 1, WFB III, p. 299.
periodem temporus apud nos Europaeos occidentales; eo magis, quod sub idem fere tempus et literae flore et controversiae circa religionem pullulare coeperint. [Now it is well known that after the Christian religion was received and grew strong, by far the greater number of the best wits applied themselves to theology; that to this both the highest rewards were offered, and helps of all kinds most abundantly supplied; and that this devotion to theology chiefly occupied the third portion or epoch of time among us Europeans of the West; and the more so because about the same time both literature began to flourish and religious controversies to spring up.]

Theology took precedence. This was the era in which doctrine was sorted-out and codified, and the Christological controversies were settled by the ecumenical councils.

Ten aphorisms farther on Bacon observed that there were a few among the church fathers who were actually hostile to certain basic conclusions of natural philosophy concerning the roundness of the earth and the antipodes. This, however, is the result of the religious zeal of some only, and it served in Bacon’s argument to demonstrate that even in the proper religion misguided zeal can be a hindrance to natural philosophy. It was a rhetorical reminder to the zealous divines of his own day that hostility to the conclusions of natural philosophy was unnecessary, for none in Bacon’s day were bothered by a round earth or the consequent existence of antipodes.

Moving ever closer to Bacon’s own age, the medieval scholastics were regarded by Bacon as having a decidedly negative effect upon both theology and natural philosophy.

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159 WFB I, p. 187. Spedding translation, WFB IV, p. 78. By the third epoch of time Bacon means after the era of pagan Rome, which was the second era. This section must be carefully observed within the context of Aphorism 79. The aphorism itself censures those who have willfully neglected natural philosophy, but this part is not a censure, but an exemption of the Christians. Bacon picks up the censure with the philosophers of the second age in the next lines.

160 WFB I, p. 196. Aphorism 89: “nec multo melius a nonnullis antiquorum patrem religionis christianae exceptos fuisse eos, qui ex certissimis demonstrationibus (quibus nemo hodie sanus contradixerit) terram rotundam esse posuerunt, atque ex consequenti antipodas esse assuererunt.”

161 In his notes to the Latin version Robert Leslie Ellis drew attention to the fact that this section is strikingly similar to a passage in Kepler’s De Stella Martis in which the fathers are cited as Lactantius and Augustine. It seems reasonable that Bacon may have been simply acknowledging a commonplace concerning the ignorance of certain Church Fathers rather than establishing a point of his own.
Having taken the erroneous Aristotle as their “dictator” in the sciences, they could not profit from great travel or a wide variety of written sources, “as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges.” As a result their learning dissolved into “a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may term them) vermiculate questions, which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality.”¹⁶² In the Novum Organum the scholastics are passed over along with the “Arabians:”

> Neque enim cause est, ut vel Arabum vel Scholasticorum mentio fiat: qui per intermedia tempora scientias potius contriverunt numerosis tractatibus, quam pondus eorum auxerunt. [For neither the Arabians nor the Schoolmen need be mentioned; who in the intermediate times rather crushed the sciences with a multitude of treatises, than increased their weight.]¹⁶³

The problem with the scholastics is nothing other than the sin of pride, which led them to depart from both of God’s two books, the book of Scripture and the book of nature:

> but as in the inquiry of the divine truth their pride inclined to leave the oracle of God’s word and to vanish into the mixture of their own inventions, so in the inquisition of nature they ever left the oracle of God’s works and adored the deceiving and deformed images which the unequal mirror of their own minds or a few received authors or principles did represent unto them.¹⁶⁴

In regard to the reading of both books, however, a time of reform was at hand.

> Martin Luther was the point man for the reformation of the reading of Scripture, even as Bacon, to his own way of thinking, would restore the proper reading of nature.

To accomplish his task, Luther had to turn to the ancient authorities, as there was little sympathy for his position in his own time:

¹⁶² The Advancement of Learning, WFB III, p. 285. The use of “vermiculate” as well as the image of liveliness amidst “no soundness of matter” refers to Bacon’s earlier comparison of this learning to “many substances in nature which are solid do putrefy and corrupt into worms.” See also the censure in the same on p. 288.


¹⁶⁴ WFB III, p. 287.
Martin Luther, conducted (no doubt) by an higher Providence, but in discourse of reason finding what a province he had undertaken against the Bishop of Rome and the degenerate traditions of the church, and finding his own solitude, being no ways aided by the opinions of his own time, was enforced to awake all antiquity, and to call former times to his succors to make a party against the present time; so that the ancient authors, both in divinity and in humanity, which had long time slept in libraries, began generally to be read and revolved.  

Although it is true that Luther turned to ancient authorities to counter the arguments of his own age, it is interesting that Bacon has laid the Renaissance phenomenon of the recovery of the texts of classical antiquity, and not just the Church Fathers, solely at the feet of Martin Luther and his Reformation interests. In the Continental translation of this passage Tobie Matthew, by then a practicing Roman Catholic, modified this passage considerably, and made Luther a part of the phenomenon rather than its cause.  

According to Bacon’s narrative, Luther’s appeal to ancient texts instituted the important scholarly trend of a careful reading of texts, involving the meticulous attention to grammatical detail in the original languages. However, in fairly short order a negative result emerged from this concern for accurately reading the texts: “for men began to hunt more after words than matter” and even that learning which the scholastics did have “came to be utterly despised as barbarous.”  

This concern for words over matter in the Reformation is just a recent example of a long-standing “distemper of learning” which had plagued humankind and prevented progress throughout past ages. Now, however, in Bacon’s own age, this was changing, and all things were being set right, starting with the observable changes in religion, but this reformation was accompanied by another:

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165 The Advancement of Learning, book 1, WFB III, pp. 282-83.

166 See the footnote of Spedding, WFB III, p. 283.

167 WFB III, pp. 283-84.
And we see before our eyes, that in the age of ourselves and our fathers, when it pleased God to call the church of Rome to account for their degenerate manners and ceremonies, and sundry doctrines obnoxious and framed to uphold the same abuses; at one and the same time it was ordained by the Divine Providence that there should attend withal a renovation and new spring of all other knowledges: and on the other side we see the Jesuits, who partly in themselves and partly by the emulation and provocation of their example, have much quickened and strengthened the state of learning. 168

Human learning, along with divine, was already undergoing a transformation according to the providence of God. It was observable, for those sensitive to the course of the History of Providence. It could be seen in the Jesuits, whom God, according to His Providence, had used as a spur to the work of others as well as the agents of change in their own right. Bacon linked the reform of the Church with the reform of human learning, both of which were occurring gradually, “in the age of ourselves and our fathers,” but in 1605 they were both already underway. Bacon stood on the threshold of a new era, as was evident by the obvious workings of the hand of Providence, and supported by the proper reading of many passages of Scripture. The History of Prophecy and the History of Providence, so often neglected, according to Bacon, both pointed toward a providential age in which humanity would finally recover mastery over nature.

The Instauration as a Providential Age

As many authors have noted, Daniel 12:4, *multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia*, in the Vulgate, or “many shall pass to and fro, and science shall be increased,” in Bacon’s own translation, is the most prominent Scriptural support for Bacon’s belief in the recovery of human knowledge. On the lavish frontispiece of the 1620 *Instauratio Magna* it serves as a caption for the image of tallships passing back and forth through the pillars of Hercules, signifying that the old barriers and limitations were no longer in place.

168 WFB III, p. 300.
There is a specific section in each of the major Instauration writings, *Valerius Terminus*, *The Advancement of Learning*, *The Instauratio Magna*, and the *De Augmentis*, in which Bacon explains the meaning of this verse. The earliest example of his exegesis, and the true prototype for his later treatments, is the following passage from the *Valerius Terminus*:

This is a thing which I cannot tell whether I may so plainly speak as truly conceive, that as all knowledge appeareth to be a plant of God’s own planting, so it may seem the spreading and flourishing or at least the bearing and fructifying of this plant, by a providence of God, nay not only by a general providence, but by a special prophecy, was appointed to this autumn of the world: for to my understanding it is not violent to the letter, and safe now after the event, so to interpret that place in the prophecy of Daniel where speaking of the latter times it is said, *Many shall pass to and fro, and science shall be increased:* as if the opening of the world by navigation and commerce and the further discovery of knowledge should meet in one time or age.169

“Now after the event,” Bacon wrote, it is safe to recognize that this apocalyptic passage was a special prophecy referring to the Instauration. The Instauration was already underway, and Bacon’s generation was in the middle of it. In this “autumn of the world,” knowledge, planted and tended by God through the ages, was bearing fruit. Now that the Instauration was underway, it was also safe to look back over all of Sacred History and recognize the threads of this divine plan that were laid throughout the Scriptures and evident in the history of God’s providential action down through the ages. If others had not recognized the traces and evidence of the coming of this new era as he had, that was not particularly surprising, for, as he explained in the parallel discussion of this verse in the *Novum Organum*:

> In operationibus autem divinis, initia quaeque tenuissima exitum certo trahunt. Atque quod de spiritualibus dictum est, regnum Dei non venit cum observatione, id etiam in omni majore opere providentiae divinae evinire

169 WFB III, pp. 220-221.
reperitur; ut omnia sine strepitu et sonitu placide labentur, atque res plane agatur priusquam homines eam agi putent aut advertant. [Now in divine operations even the smallest of beginnings lead of a certainty to their end. And as it was said of spiritual things, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” so is it in all the greater works of Divine Providence; everything glides on smoothly and noiselessly, and the work is fairly going on before men are aware that it has begun.]

The text on which Bacon grounds the principle of the unobtrusiveness of providential activity is Luke 17:20. As most of his audience would have been aware, the words are Christ’s, and refer not just to “spiritual things,” but specifically to Christ’s own coming in the flesh. The Pharisees had asked when the Kingdom of God would come, not having seen the signs and recognized that the King Himself was right before them. As in the Incarnation, so also in another of God’s major acts, the Instauration, the full truth of the prophecies was not recognized until they were being fulfilled.

There is more to Luke 17:20. It is a transitional verse which not only applies to the first coming of the Christ, but also opens an extensive discussion of the nature and conditions of the parousia, or the second coming of Christ at the culmination of the present, and final, age of the world. Significantly, this section does not foretell the last moments of the earth as marked by gloom and despair, as some other passages have been interpreted (Matthew 24, for example), but it rather emphasizes the coming of Christ as a complete surprise. Up unto the very end people would be going about their business and daily lives, without suspecting that their labor and activity would soon be cut off. Suddenly and as unexpectedly as the lightning (Luke 17:24) Christ would return and put an end to all, and the new heaven and the new earth would ensue. The presentation of the eschaton here is entirely supportive of the providential age which Bacon believed he was observing both in the prophetic words of the Old Testament and in the obvious course of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{170} WFB I, p. 200. Spedding Translation, WFB IV, pp. 91-92. See the parallel use of this verse, in its original form, in Valerius Terminus, WFB III, p. 223.}
human events. The providential age of the Instauration was marked by continual human labor and effort, until all human labor and accomplishments would be ended, for “vanity must be the end in all human effects, eternity being resumed.” However, there is nothing in this passage which would proscribe the reduction, or even elimination, of the suffering and misery produced by material causes. If the parousia is so surprising, it must at the very least mean that the human condition is not particularly desperate. The Instauration event signified an upturn in the human condition in the autumn of the world. It was to be a true “valerius terminus” -- a strong or healthy ending. According to the Protestant hermeneutical principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, meaning that the clear or obvious passages shed light upon the more difficult passages, Bacon is on solid ground here, and he could at least make a valid claim to consistency according to the standards of his society. For it was manifest, according to Bacon, that such an age of material recovery was at hand, and hence prophecies which might be taken to suggest otherwise would therefore be in need of reexamination. Of course, Bacon had called for exactly such a reexamination in calling for the renovation or new construction of the History of Prophecy.

Previous ages had been unable, for different reasons, to accomplish the Instauration, but now the conditions had been arranged by the hand of divine providence and the Instauration was coming to pass. Bacon, in observing the historical events which made this new age possible, provided an example for the theologians of his day of the importance of Providential History. We should recall that one aspect of his description of Providential History in the De Augmentis was the observance of how “divine counsels, through tortuous labyrinths and by vast circuits” were “at length manifestly

\[171 \text{ WFB III, p. 222.}\]
accomplishing themselves.” Divine counsel had decreed that the Instauration of human dominion would occur in his present age, and its coming, like the coming of Christ, was unobservable except to those who knew how to properly interpret what was before them. If most had missed the significance of the baby in Mary’s arms, Anna and Simeon, gifted with special sight, had not, and neither had John the Baptist. If others, including the Continental Jesuits who had been among God’s early instruments in the Instauration, were unaware of the eschatological significance of what was going on around them, Bacon was not. The coming together of a constellation of essential conditions for the Instauration was perfectly clear to him.

One condition for the Instauration was the “opening of the world by navigation” according to the Valerius Terminus, and this had occurred in the past two centuries with the voyages of discovery and opening of new trade routes. What he said of the limitations of “uttermost antiquity” was not true of his own age:

For at that time the world was altogether home-bred, every nation looked little beyond their own confines or territories, and the world had no through lights then, as it hath had since by commerce and navigation, whereby there could neither be that contribution of wits one to help another, nor that variety of particulars for the correcting of customary conceits.  

172 Other elements of his definition of the history of Providence would also apply well to the Instauration as he has laid it out in Sacred History: it was a “late and unlooked for judgement” of God upon previous ages, “Talia sunt vindictae serae et inopinae;” and it was an unexpected deliverance: “salutes subito affulgentes et insperatae;” It meant the accomplishment of God’s counsels through torutuous ways: “consilia divina per ambages rerum tortuosas et stupendas spiras tandem se manifesto expedientia; et similia;” and as we will see later, it served for the encouragement or consolation of the faithful, and the indictment of the wicked, or “depraved,” (improborum -- of those lacking the proper qualities) for the latter would be unable to accomplish the work of the Instauration, lacking the proper faith: “quae valent non solum ad consolandos animos fidelium, sed ad percellendas et convincendas conscientias improborum.” WFB I, p. 516.

Translation: WFB IV, p. 313.

173 WFB III, p. 225.
In his day, that which had prevented a proper “conjunction of labors,”¹⁷⁴ was no longer an issue. One of the impediments to recovery had been removed. In addition, the voyages of discovery had provided a more complete knowledge of the world itself, and hence they may be joined with the labors of the Continental Jesuits as part of the increase in knowledge which was already underway.

Another condition for the Instauration was civil peace and prosperity. Before the age of Classical antiquity, all ages also had to contend with the violence of their times, for they were marked by “wars, incursions, and rapines, which were then almost every where betwixt states adjoining (the use of leagues and confederacies being not then known.)”¹⁷⁵ Thus human knowledge was taken up with the concern of survival, rather than advancing itself and dominating nature. Bacon, as he saw it, was living in a time, and place, which was notably free from such disruptions. Under Elizabeth, England had experienced “constant peace and security,” and under James the “felicity in the people” was connected with “learning in the prince.”¹⁷⁶ While Bacon’s constant praise for King James was certainly part of the patronage discourse, it is no less true that he saw the continual peace under Elizabeth and James, as well as his own considerable advancement under James, as part of the providential arrangement for the Instauration. It is not mere flattery, then, but an aspect of his understanding of the History of Providence when, in the dedicatory epistle of the 1620 Instauratio Magna, Bacon stated that his work was “as a child of time rather than of wit,” and that “if there be any good in what I have to offer, it may be

¹⁷⁴ Cf. The Advancement of Learning, book 1. WFB III, p. 265. From the De Augmentis we may note that it is this conjunction of labors which “supplies the frailty of man.” (mortalium fragilitati succurrit). WFB I, p. 486.

¹⁷⁵ In Valerius Terminus, WFB III p. 225.

ascribed to the infinite mercy and goodness of God, and to the felicity of your Majesty’s times.”

As it was an event which required the preparations of divine providence, Bacon always held that the Instauration was not to be credited to his own ingenuity. This is not to suggest, however, that he saw himself as playing anything less than a pivotal role in the advent of this providential age. It was he who had observed the hand of God in the course of events and recognized that the fulfillment of Daniel 12:4 was at hand. And it was he who, as a result of the “infinite goodness and mercy of God,” had struck upon the proper method for the complete knowledge of nature. According to the De Augmentis Scientiarum the most important element for the advancement of the sciences was prudent and sound direction (consilii prudentia et sanitas), “For the cripple in the right way (as the saying is) outstrips the runner in the wrong.”

Bacon himself was the instrument of providence for providing humanity with the proper guidance for the recovery of dominion over creation. He was but the means -- the creature cooperating with the divine will of the Creator. Someone had to perform this critical task, and Bacon often refers to it as a special privilege or opportunity granted to him by God. Thus he wrote in the preface to the Instauratio Magna:

Qamobrem, quum haec arbitrii nostri non sint, in principio operis, ad Deum Patrem, Deum Verbum, Deum Spiritum, preces fundimus humillimas et ardentissimas, ut humani generis aerumnarum memores et peregrinationis istius vitae in qua dies paucos et malos terimus, novis suis eleemosynis, per manus nostras, familiam humanam dotare dignentur. [Wherefore, seeing that these things do not depend upon myself, at the outset of the work I must humbly and fervently pray to God the Father, God the Son (Word), and God the Holy Ghost, that remembring the

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177 Latin, WFB I, p. 123: pro partu temporis quam ingenii and, ut si quid in his quae affero sit boni, id immensae misericordiae et bonitati divinae et foelicitati temporum tuorum tribuat, respectively. Translation, WFB IV, p. 11.

sorrows of mankind and the pilgrimage of this our life wherein we wear out
days few and evil, they will vouchsafe through my hands to endow the
human family with new mercies.]179

Bacon saw himself as part of God’s preparation for the new era. In the preface to the
Novum Organum Bacon described his object as “being to open a new way to the
understanding, a way by them untried and unknown.” The adherence to “parties and
schools” which had marked learning in previous eras was “at an end,” and Bacon was
“merely as a guide to point out the road; an office of small authority, and depending more
upon a certain kind of fortune than upon any ability or excellency.”180 By “a certain kind
of fortune” Bacon served as the guide to a new road of human learning. If any should
wonder why previous generations, steeped in their errors, had not seen this road before,
Bacon responded in Aphorism 78 of the Novum Organum that it was more surprising
that anyone should have seen the right way, given past errors. But this was to be
attributed not to Bacon’s intellect, again, but to things occurring in due season:

ut tollatur omnis admiratio, haec quae adducimus homines hucusque
latuisse et fugisse; et maneat tantum admiratio, illa nunc tandem alicui
mortalium in mentem venire potuisse, aut cogitationem cujuspiam subisse:
quod etiam (ut nos existimamus) felicitatis magis est cujusdam, quam
excellenis alicujus facultatis; ut potius pro temporis partu haberi debeat,

179 WFB I, p. 131. Translation, WFB IV, p. 20.

180 The Latin of the passage in its entirety reads: Verum quum per nos illud agatur, ut alia omnino via
intellectui aperiatur illis intentata et incognita, commutata jam ratio est; cessant studium et partes; nosque
indicis tantummodo personam sustinamus, quod mediocris certe est authoritatis, et fortunae cujusdam potius
quam facultatis et excellentiae. WFB I, p. 153. Cf. Spedding Translation, WFB IV, p. 41. I have
corrected the somewhat haphazard translation in my own rendering, most notably in translating fortunae
cujusdam as “a certain kind of fortune” rather than “a kind of luck.” Spedding has taken his cue, it seems,
from the dedicatory epistle, in which Bacon does mention that there is “something of accident (as we call it)
and fortune” (casus (ut loquimur) et quiddam quasi fortuitum). (WFB I, p. 123. Cf. WFB IV, p. 11.)
However, it must be borne in mind that this is in the context of a dedicatory epistle and reflects the requisite
sense of self-deprecation of one writing to his “greater” patron. Cautionary language is to be expected here.
But the sense of extreme arbitrariness implied by “luck” is not inherent in fortunae cujusdam, which, given
the qualification of cujusdam does not mean “sheer luck” or “accident” as we would strictly use these terms.
Given the ubiquity of the ascription of the Instauration to divine providence everywhere but when he is
referring to his own role, this appears as simply a case of appropriate lack of presumption. Writing “God
chose me for this” would be sure to draw fire.
quam pro partu ingenii. [that all wonder how these considerations which I bring forward should have escaped men’s notice till now, may cease; and the only wonder be, how now at last they should have entered into any man’s head and become the subject of his thoughts; which truly I myself esteem as the result of some happy accident, rather than of any excellence or faculty in me; a birth of Time rather than a birth of Wit.] 181

Spedding’s translation has been left unaltered, here, but his choice of “some happy accident” for felicitatis...cujusdam is unfortunate. The sense is not so “accidental” in the Latin. The word, felicitatis can be taken as “good fortune,” but it must be borne in mind that it relates to felix, which means “fruitful” or “fertile.” Felix, like felicitatis, can also mean “fortunate,” or “successful” but both words always imply the fortune which results from proper conditions, and due season. An apple tree full of apples in the fall can be regarded as a “fortunate” or “successful” occurrence (since apple trees might not bear fruit), but it is hardly an accident or a matter of mere chance. In addition, the last phrase of this passage (ut potius pro temporis partu haberis debeat, quam pro partu ingenii) is clearly epexegetical, explaining (particularly in light of the “birth” imagery) that Bacon’s realizations occurred because the time was right for them.

“Guided by Sound Religion”

It is significant, in the course of Bacon’s Sacred History, that the Instauration followed the Reformation, for “sound religion” was required, according to book 1 of the Novum Organum, along with proper reason, for the governance of that power over nature which was humankind’s divine bequest. 182 More than fifteen years earlier, in the Valerius Terminus, Bacon presented the priority of religion over human knowledge as one of the foundational principles of his program, mandating, “That all knowledge is to be limited by


182 See above, as well as the originals of this passage in WFB I, p. 223. Spedding Translation, WFB IV, p. 115.
religion, and to be referred to use and action.”\(^{183}\) Sound religion was another element in the
c constellation of conditions for the Instauration, which divine providence had arranged
through the Reformation.

It is also significant that Bacon did not regard the Reformation as something fully
accomplished by Luther or Calvin, but as a process being carried-out “in the age of
ourselves and our fathers.” The concept of an ongoing Reformation is often associated
with the Puritan call for a continuing purge of Papal abuses. However, the sense of an
ongoing Reformation also permeated the Bacon circle, which was decidedly non-Puritan.
There was no universally accepted vision for what the final outcome of the Reformation
would be, among the Bacon circle, but none of them regarded Geneva or Wittenberg as the
model, or the last word, in the resolution of the religious turbulence around them. The
process was ongoing, at least in England, and their common advocacy of religious
tolerance is recognizable as more than a pious desire for concord: it reflected a resistance
to the type of dogmatic crystallization which might interfere with the natural and proper
course of things. George Herbert sought a synthesis of ritual, high Sacramental theology,
and Calvinism which, as Christopher Hodgkins has observed, was similar to the “old
Conformity” of the Elizabethan period.\(^{184}\) Henry Wotton embraced a tolerant form of
Laud’s Arminianism. John Selden envisioned a merging of the English Church and state in
a Christian Sanhedrin. Lancelot Andrewes turned wholeheartedly to the theology of the
Patristic era, and brought it forward, if in modified form, in his own writings and sermons.
A certain patristic turn marked most of the members of the Bacon circle, including Bacon
himself, and it is noteworthy, in this regard, that Bacon identified the significance of
Luther’s role in the Reformation in *The Advancement of Learning* with the recovery of

\(^{183}\) *WFB* III, p. 218.

\(^{184}\) As per Hodgkins, *Authority, Church, and Society in George Herbert.*
antiquity. Even Tobie Matthew, in his recusancy, embraced the vision of continuing reform as it was expressed in the Catholic Reformation, and particularly as it was made manifest in the Jesuit Order, of which he was a member by the time of his death. 185

For Bacon, the ongoing process of the Reformation included a number of developments which would facilitate the coming of the Instauration. Neither did he leave the course of the Reformation solely in the hands of the theologians. In calling for the establishment of the disciplines of the History of Prophecy and the History of Providence Bacon assumed an active role in the process of theological reform. We have already observed the significance of these new disciplines for Bacon’s understanding of the Instauration as an event in Sacred History. But “sound religion” also required the establishment of the proper line between the investigation of nature, for which the human mind had been designed, and the Deus Absconditus. According to Bacon, past confusion on this point had been harmful to both natural philosophy and religion, and this had been one of the impediments to the Instauration in former generations.

In his draft of a discussion of “the impediments which have been in the state of heathen religion and other superstitions and errors of religion” near the end of the Valerius Terminus Bacon outlined what he would discuss in concluding a section regarding religion and learning. When properly understood, Christianity had the “singular advantage” of recognizing the boundary line of the Deus Absconditus:

And of the singular advantage which the Christian religion hath towards the furtherance of true knowledge, in that it excludeth and interdicteth

185 Arnold Harris Matthew, 122-23, 333. Bacon’s understanding that the Reformation was a work in progress can also inform our understanding of how he viewed the Church of Rome, and why, as a Protestant, he could be so inclusive of Roman Catholics in his program. All issues not being yet settled, the Roman Catholics are merely at an earlier stage of the process. Matthew’s recusancy was a setback, or a matter of ecclesial retrograde motion, rather than a clear abandonment of the true way, or the “communion of the Godly,” as others might have seen it. Bacon did not believe that the Protestants had it entirely right either, and the Catholics, at least in Bacon’s own lifetime, and no doubt a result of the efforts of Father Tobie Matthew, appeared much more receptive to Bacon’s program than a Nonconformist like Bodley.
human reason, whether by interpretation or anticipation, from examining or discussing the mysteries and principles of faith.\textsuperscript{186}

The heathen religions, as we noted in regard to Bacon’s opinions of the Greeks, and Plato and Pythagoras particularly, had erred by founding religion upon natural philosophy. In this same section Bacon also derided the “abuse of Christianity” which led theologians to limit or proscribe natural philosophy for fear of prying into the mysteries of God. This paragraph is a recapitulation of a lengthy discussion earlier in the same work on God, religion, and the study of nature. Bacon’s statement of the principle, “That all knowledge is to be limited by religion, and to be referred to use and action”\textsuperscript{187} led off this discussion, in which Bacon separated the knowledge of the “will” and “nature” of God, which cannot be learned or observed in “sensible and material things,” from the study of creation, which in its entirety was intended by God to be subject to human investigation. This should not be construed as a distinction between sacred and secular studies, for Bacon firmly maintained throughout this discussion and his Instauration corpus, that the study of creation revealed a great deal about its Creator. However, Creation revealed God’s power, glory, and principles of order, as opposed to His transcendent nature (the “divine essence” of patristic theology) and His will. The distinction here is a theological one, which finds repeated expression throughout the Instauration corpus in Bacon’s interpretation of Matthew 22:29:

\begin{quote}
for, saith our Saviour, \textit{You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God:} laying before us two books or volumes to study if we will be secured from error; first the Scriptures revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power.\textsuperscript{188}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{186} WFB III, p. 251.

\textsuperscript{187} WFB III, p. 218.

\textsuperscript{188} WFB III, p. 221. See also the parallel passages in \textit{The Advancement of Learning}, WFB III, p. 301, and the \textit{Novum Organum}, book 1, Aphorism 89. WFB I, p. 197.
We will return to Bacon’s understanding of the classical Christian doctrine of the “two books,” for the proper reading of the second book is the subject matter and primary activity of the Instauration itself. For now, it is important to consider the timing. Through the Reformation the proper reading of the first book was being restored. With “sound religion” in place as a guide, the time to open the second book was at hand.

Sound religion was also a necessary prerequisite for the Instauration because a proper attitude, or disposition of the heart, was required of those working toward the understanding of nature, if their work was not to be derailed by human vanity. Throughout the Instauration corpus Bacon emphasized the need for the Christian virtues of charity and humility to guide the efforts of humankind in the Instauration. Knowledge, for Bacon, did not have power as its end and goal, as Hobbes claimed. Rather, knowledge was power, a power given to humanity by God, and it was to be wielded for the ends which God intended. Thus Bacon wrote in the *Valerius Terminus*:

> But yet evermore it must be remembered that the least part of knowledge passed to man by this so large a charter from God must be subject to that use for which God hath granted it: which is the benefit and relief of the state and society of man; for otherwise all manner of knowledge becometh malign and serpentine, and therefore as carrying the quality of the serpent’s sting and malice it maketh the mind of man to swell; as the Scripture saith excellently, *knowledge bloweth up, but charity buildeth up*. And again the same author doth notably disavow both power and knowledge such as is not dedicated to goodness or love, for saith he, *If I have all faith so as I could remove mountains* (There is power active,) *if I render my body to the fire*; (There is power passive,) *if I speak with the tongues of men and angels,* (There is knowledge, for language is but the conveyance of knowledge,) *all were nothing.*

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189 WFB III, pp. 221-222. See also the discussion of the value of man imitating the goodness of God in the same work, (WFB III, pp. 217-218). For comparison, see the passages on charity in *The Advancement of Learning* (WFB III, p. 266, also Book 2, p. 421.) and the *Institutio Magna* (WFB I, pp. 131-32). This understanding of charity is consistent throughout, though it is presented in greatest detail, and with the most explicit Scriptural exegesis, in the *Valerius Terminus.*
Here Bacon has taken the serpent imagery, used by his opponents to denounce knowledge, which “puffeth up,” and has explained it according to St. Paul’s argument for the importance of charity in I Corinthians 13. It is not knowledge which was the problem, according to Paul, but the absence of charity as the proper motive and end of knowledge. Without this motive in place knowledge would be malign and result in human pride, which was the cause of man’s fall in the first place. Hence, charity and humility were closely connected, even as they were in William Rawley’s sermon. For Bacon’s chaplain, “Meekness” included the virtues of charity and humility, and was rewarded by God with recovery from the misery and physical plight which affected human beings. For his meekness Job had been rewarded with the “instauration” of his material and physical welfare. Even so, in Bacon’s account of Sacred History, charity and humility were essential to the Great Instauration, through which humanity, even in the age of hardship after the fall, would “inherit the earth.”

If charity and humility were absent it would be impossible for the patient labor necessary for human recovery to occur:

The access to this work hath been by that port or passage, which the divine Majesty (who is unchangeable in his ways) doth infallibly continue and observe; that is the felicity wherewith he hath blessed an humility of mind, such as rather laboureth to spell and so by degrees to read in the volumes of his creatures, than to solicit and urge and as it were to invocate a man’s own spirit to divine and give oracles unto him. For as in the inquiry of divine truth, the pride of man hath ever inclined to leave the oracles of God’s word and to vanish in the mixture of their own inventions; so in the self-same manner, in the inquisition of nature they have ever left the oracles of God’s works, and adored the deceiving and deformed imagery which the unequal mirrors of their own minds have represented unto them.190

Again, the theme of the two books undergirds Bacon’s argument, and he equates the heretical error of misreading the Scriptures with the misinterpretation of the “volumes of

190 WFB III, pp. 223-24.
the creatures.” Both are the result of pride and human interests eclipsing divine truth. Throughout the *Novum Organum* Bacon presented the flaws in human thinking and perception which had prevented recovery in previous eras as “idols of the mind.” The use of the term “idols” is usually regarded in scholarly works as merely a convenient metaphor to express the idea that past errors are the result of human fantasy, or that they are particularly difficult to dislodge because they have been enshrined and regarded as incontrovertible through long use. There is no doubt that Bacon intended both of these meanings to be conveyed, but Bacon never suggested that the choice of the term “idols” was merely metaphoric. In the passage from *Valerius Terminus* just quoted errors in natural philosophy were nothing less than misreading one of God’s two books, and adoring the false images of nature constructed in the human mind. There is something genuinely idolatrous at work in the adherence of past generations to the idols of the mind.

Later, in the sixteenth chapter of *Valerius Terminus*, Bacon discussed the concept of Idols more directly, and associated the various idols of the mind with the idolatrous error of predicking a human form of the eternal and transcendent God. The errors in both cases were the result of “pride and partiality as well as of custom and familiarity” for humans were projecting their own understandings and mental images on that which was outside them, rather than learning about things as they really were. Idolatry was an error of perception. The human mind, created to be a “glass” that reflected and comprehended the cosmos was instead forcing God’s creation into its own preconceptions, even as idolaters recast God in their own image. These cherished preconceptions were the “idols of the

191 WFB III, pp. 241-42. We should note that position that the transcendent God cannot be represented in human form is not indicative of a Calvinist rejection of images. All Christian theologians throughout time shared this conviction regarding God according to his transcendent and unknowable nature. The question, as John of Damascus put it, of whether God could be represented in human form according to the Incarnation is a separate one, and on this point Calvin differed with the Lutherans and Catholics.
mind.” Without the humility to accept things as God had made them, and the selfless
desire to turn knowledge to the holy end of charity, pride and idolatry would follow.
CHAPTER 5:
THE THEOLOGY OF INSTAURATION:
ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Patterns in Divine Action

Bacon’s recognition of the coming of the Instauration event rested upon his firm belief in the consistency of God. Not only did God arrange nature according to laws which made it predictable, but He Himself, in His providential actions, proceeded according to consistent principles and patterns. Although God’s actions were not predictable except in so far as He revealed His intentions through prophecy, His consistency made the actions of the Hand of Providence recognizable to those who knew His ways. The central idea behind Bacon’s plan for the History of Providence was to document the observable actions of God and thus come to recognize the patterns of divine action. Thereafter, by continual observation, mankind might be more aware of the workings of God in the world. Bacon himself had recognized the congruence of events which signaled the dawning of the providential age of the Instauration. However, one of the principles of Providence was that the Hand of God worked subtly, and most were entirely unaware of the significance of what was going on around them. As he had interpreted Luke 17:20: “And as it was said of spiritual things, ‘The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,’ so is it in all the greater works of Divine Providence; everything glides on smoothly and noiselessly, and the work is fairly going on before men are aware that it has begun.” When the pattern emerged, however, the full story of how God had intended the Instauration all along, and prepared for it, could be clearly seen.

1 WFB IV, p. 92.
Bacon’s concept that acts of divine providence followed discernible patterns can be seen in the striking number of correspondences between the history of the event of the Instauration and the history of God’s paradigmatic act of providence, the Incarnation. The parallel paths of recovery from the twofold Fall contained similar elements and events along the way. By examining these similarities we can clearly see that Bacon’s Sacred History could be formed into a coherent system by examining the recurring patterns and principles of divine action. For the convenience of presentation, the correspondences under consideration here have been arranged into a table which is included at the end of this section of chapter five, on pages 327-328.

We have already observed that the Fall was twofold for Bacon, entailing both the loss of human “innocency” (or the State of Grace) before God, and sovereignty, or dominion over the creatures. Immediately after the Fall God issued promises as well as curses. In the common Christian interpretation, Genesis 3:15 is the “protoevangelion,” or “first gospel,” as the words from God to the serpent regarding Eve’s offspring are regarded as the first prophecy of the Incarnation: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, And between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” As we have noted, Bacon also understood Genesis 3:19, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,” as a promise, and this was the first prophecy of the Instauration.

According to Christian interpretation, the Old Testament is saturated with other prophecies pertaining to the coming of God in the flesh. One of the most frequently cited examples, thanks to the Gospel of Matthew (1:23), is Isaiah 7:14, which the Authorized Version of 1611 rendered as: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The
Instauration also followed upon a sign presented in Daniel 12:4, which Bacon interpreted as “the opening of the world by navigation and commerce.” By comparison, Bacon’s prophetic support for the Instauration might seem rather scanty, putting as much weight as it does on Daniel 12:4. However, Bacon’s principle of the subtlety of divine action must inform our reading, as it is in keeping with the understanding of prophecy presented in the Gospels themselves. At the time of the Incarnation it was far from clear to the Jews even in Jesus’ home town that Isaiah 7:14 referred to the young rabbi whom they regarded as “Joseph’s Son.” It was only later, after the work of the Incarnation was completed through the Resurrection, that the meaning of this verse, and others, were “recognized” by the disciples for what they were. Similarly, Bacon felt “safe now after the event” to recognize the true meaning of Daniel 12:4, not to mention Genesis 3:19, and his 1625 publication, *Translation of Certaine Psalms into English Verse* suggests that he was seeing ever more prophetic evidence for the Instauration as time went on.

Bacon’s *Translation of Certaine Psalms* has received little scholarly attention, partly because scholars have been all too willing to interpret his words in his dedication to George Herbert that this work was “the poor exercise of my sickness,” to mean that it was an idle pastime and had little to do with his more weighty work. James Spedding did not regard this as one of Bacon’s more serious works, and wondered why he might have chosen to publish it when there was better material in his cabinet. Spedding also noted

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2 *Valerius Terminus*, WFB III, p. 221.


4 Thus the disciples of the Emmaus road learned what the Scriptures said about Jesus only when Jesus himself opened the Scriptures to them after the Resurrection. Luke 24:25 ff.

5 Cf. WFB VII, p. 274. Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart give more than usual coverage of this work when they say, “In December 1624, Bacon published his *Apophthegms, New and Old*, and his *Translation of Certain Psalms*, in which he englished six or seven Psalms of David.” (The correct number is seven.) (Jardine and Stewart, 493.)
that the verse into which Bacon rendered these seven Psalms has often been criticized as remarkably bad poetry. We may add that these “translations” actually translations into English from some other language, as Jardine and Stewart, as well as Charles Whitney, had assumed. There is no evidence that Bacon consulted any Latin, Greek, or Hebrew text for the production of this work, and in fact the language used for most of the versifications in this collection is entirely consistent with the Authorized, or “King James,” version of the Scriptures produced in 1611. In every case, when the texts of Bacon’s translations and the Authorized version diverged, Bacon’s text was not following any legitimate variant readings from another language, whether Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, but rather interpreting the sense of the King James text, and adjusting the wording for rhyme and meter. The word, “translation” in the title of the work is deceptive, according to our modern understanding of the term. Bacon’s Chaplain, William Rawley, recorded a variant title for this work in his biography of Bacon, which is informative on this point. In the Life of Bacon it is recorded as, “The Conversion of Certaine Psalmes into English Verse.” This text is an act of the versification of the already translated form of the Psalms, but it is also an act of Biblical interpretation, in which the Psalms Bacon has chosen have been presented in light of the themes of the Instauration.

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6 As Spedding puts it in regard to the quality of the poetry, “Of these verses of Bacon’s it has been usual to speak not only as a failure, but as a ridiculous failure.” Spedding’s subsequent attempt to rescue the public opinion of the poetry itself is anything but wholehearted. (WFB VII, pp. 265 & 267.)


8 In order to establish this I consulted the Septuagint, several versions of the Vulgate, and the critical edition of the Hebrew text in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia for each Psalm. It was clear in all cases that Bacon was not using any of them as a primary text, but that his reading always followed the basic ideas of the King James. It is reasonable that Bacon regarded the King James version as superior to anything he could have done from scratch.

9 WFB I, p. 10.
One example of Bacon’s reinterpretation of the Psalms in light of the Instauration event is found in Psalm 90: 13-17. A side-by-side comparison of Bacon’s verses with the Authorized version is helpful for recognizing what Bacon has done:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authorized Version</th>
<th>Bacon’s interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13: Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.</td>
<td>Return unto us, Lord, and balance now, With days of joy, our days of misery;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14: O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.</td>
<td>Help us right soon; our knees to thee we bow, Depending wholly on thy clemency;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15: Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.</td>
<td>Then shall thy servants, both with heart and voice, All the days of their life in thee rejoice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16: Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.</td>
<td>Begin thy work, O Lord, in this our age, Show it unto thy servants that now live;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17: And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.</td>
<td>But to our children raise it many a stage, that all the world to thee may glory give. Our handy work likewise, as fruitful tree Let it, O Lord, blessed not blasted be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The psalm has been carefully interpreted to fit the understanding of the Instauration event which we have already discussed. God’s work, which in Bacon’s version is more clearly associated with the giving of ‘days of joy’ to balance past ‘days of misery,’ is not merely to be established, but beginning in this Bacon’s own age to be increased for future generations. Also, in Bacon’s version, the works of human hands are directly connected with this special work of God, and the idea of human progress is added through the image of the blessed, fruitful tree which, as we have observed, was one of his standard metaphor for the Instauration. The original is a prayer for deliverance from hard times. Bacon’s

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10 Cf. WFB VII, p. 280.
interpretation is that this is a prayer for the final relief of man’s estate through progress not on God’s part only, but also in human endeavors.

The 104th Psalm, replete with images of the interaction of God and the natural world, is the centerpiece of Bacon’s *Translation of Certaine Psalms*. In Jerome’s edition of the Vulgate, as Charles Whitney has noted, verse 30 reads, “*Emittes spiritu tuo & creabuntur; et instaurabis faciem terrae,*” although the more common reading of the Vulgate here has “*renovabis*” in place of “*instaurabis.*”11 In the Authorized version this is rendered, “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.” Bacon’s interpretation of this verse was, “But when thy breath thou doth send forth again, Then all things do renew and spring amain; So that the earth lately desolate, Doth now return unto the former state.”12 Again, Bacon’s interpretation of this verse presents the renewal of the earth as a restoration of it to a “former” fruitful state, as a result of a second emanation of God’s creating breath, or His Word. The sense of the recapitulation of a prior condition comes across clearly in Bacon’s verse, though not in the original, and the image of a productive earth is foregrounded. Far more than a mere idle pastime, Bacon’s *Translation of Certaine Psalms* presents the Instauration event as clearly prefigured in the prophetic words of the Psalms, when they are understood as Bacon understood them.

Each event, Incarnation and Instauration, also had its own Forerunner who, as a result of God’s mercy, clearly understood and presented the actions of God for his own age. For the Incarnation this was John the Baptist, and for the Instauration it was Bacon who opened the way and pointed others to it. Both events came to pass in the fulness of God’s providential time, when all had been properly prepared, and not before. The

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12 WFB VII, p. 283.
forerunners arrived on the scene to inform others of what was already going on and to tell all people what was required from the human end in connection with the imminent apex of the course of providential history.

Each event also had its own Scripture, the Bible for the Incarnation, and the Book of Nature for the Instauration, which revealed the path of recovery from the Fall when properly read. The Bible revealed God’s will and pointed out the way of spiritual Salvation and the Book of Nature revealed God’s power and the path of material recovery. Both books were subject to being misread, and this would lead to idolatry and superstition in either case. Idolatry, in both cases, was setting up an alternative to divine truth based upon the inventions and misconceptions of the human mind.

In the Incarnation God’s mercy was shown to humanity through the divine action of the restoration of humankind to spiritual “innocency” through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The Instauration was also a time of the special mercy of God, but in this case it was the mercy of allowing humanity to recover mastery over nature, and consequently to be established in his rightful place in the cosmic order. With their spiritual estate restored by God through the special relationship of Christ and the Church, humans could once again act in cooperation with God for the governance of the world. Although the Kingdom of God, established by the coming of Christ according to the common interpretation of Luke 17:20 among other verses, was already present in Bacon’s third age in the Church, it would not be fully realized until the fourth age, when Christ would return and a New Heaven and a New Earth would be established. Similarly, the “Kingdom of Man” brought by the Instauration was coming even in the midst of the third age, but this also would give way to the final arrangement of things when humankind would surpass the Angels in the hierarchy of the New Heaven and the New Earth. (As
we have noted, according to *Valerius Terminus*, “vanity must be the end in all human effects, eternity being resumed”).

Bacon’s conviction that God operated in patterns had significant ramifications for his use and interpretation of the Scriptures. The Protestant principle of Biblical hermeneutics which insists that the literal sense of Scripture is the essential one, and that it is singular (*sensus literalis unus est*), may not have been fully operational in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, except among the Puritans. It was most certainly not observed by Bacon. Since God operated according to established patterns and principles in His providential interaction with the world, Bacon readily applied texts which clearly pertained to the Incarnation to the Instauration as well. Luke 17:20 and following is one example where the primary meaning of the text in its context referred to the Incarnation, but it extended to the Instauration. Similarly, Paul’s words regarding charity in I Corinthians 13 were also interpreted by Bacon as providing direct guidance for the proper subordination of earthly knowledge to moral ends in the Instauration. Again, although the words of Christ in Matthew 22:29 (“ye err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God”) were spoken specifically in response to the manifestation of “spiritual ignorance” among the Pharisees, Bacon has also applied this verse, without any sense of contradiction, to the general ignorance of natural philosophy which would only be overcome in the Instauration. In regard to Prophecy as well,

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13 Although this is often assumed, in Protestant circles, to be the central difference between Protestants and Catholics in regard to Biblical hermeneutics, it was never so clearly articulated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, except in the arguments of the Nonconformists which were reproduced by Bacon in his *Advertisement* (cf. chapter 2 of this essay), and Selden in his *Table Talk* (cf. chapter 3 of this essay). Even then, it was quite possibly never held so dogmatically, but was merely the result of the particular Biblical emphasis of the Nonconformists/Puritans in the course of debate. Although this hermeneutical principle had been ascribed to Luther in the nineteenth century, this is not compatible with the work the most meticulous recent Luther scholars such as Kenneth Hagen {*Luther’s Approach to Scripture as seen in his “Commentaries” on Galatians, 1519-1538*, (Tuebingen, J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1993)}. The consensus in the field is that this is ascribing later concerns to the Reformers. See also the absence of such elements in Jaroslav Pelikan’s treatment of the essential doctrines of Reformation Theology in *The Christain Tradition* vol. 3.
according to the *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Bacon regarded it as erroneous to draw a one-to-one correspondence between prophecies and their specific fulfillment, for “though the height or fulness of them is commonly referred to some one age or particular period, yet they have at the same time certain gradations and processes of accomplishment through divers ages of the world.”\(^{14}\) Furthermore, the reason which Bacon gives in the *De Augmentis* for such a diachronic understanding of prophecy, and hence the reason which he gives for this particular aspect of his Biblical hermeneutics, is rooted in his understanding of God and time. Therefore, when Bacon calls for a renovation of the History of Prophecy, it is with the understanding that Biblical interpretation, because it is an interaction with the transcendent God, cannot be conceived as simply as some would have it:

*Quapropter tale esse debet hujus operis institutum, ut cum singulis ex Scripturis prophetiis, eventuum veritas conjungatur; idque per omnes mundi aetas; tum ad confirmationem fidei, tum ad instituendum disciplinam quandam et peritiam in interpretatione propetiarum quae adhuc restant complendae. Attamen in hac re admittenda est illa latitudo, quae divinis vaticiniis propria est et familiaris; ut adimpletiones eorum fiant et continenter et punctualiter. Referunt enim Authoris sui naturam, Cui unus dies tanquam mille anni, et mille anni tanquam unus dies. [*therefore the plan of such a work ought to be, that every prophecy of Scripture be sorted with the event fulfilling the same, throughout all ages of the world; both for the better confirmation of faith, and for better instruction and skill in the interpretation of those parts of prophecies which are yet unfulfilled; allowing nevertheless that latitude which is agreeable and familiar to divine prophecies, that the fulfilsments of them are taking place continually, and not at the particular time only. For they are of the nature of their Author, “to whom a thousand years are but as one day, and one day as a thousand years;”*][^15]*

The application of these ideas can be seen in the preceding discussions of Bacon’s understanding of Sacred History. The Scriptures were never left to speak solely to

\(^{14}\) Translation, WFB IV, p. 313. Latin, WFB I, p. 515.

\(^{15}\) WFB I, p. 515; Translation WFB III, p. 312. It is interesting to note that the Scriptural quotation is from one of the Psalms which Bacon “translated,” specifically Psalm 90:4.
spiritual recovery, but were rather interpreted as the revelation of the Will of God for the complete work of restoration, which comprehended the recovery of human sovereignty over nature as well. The narrative of the Fall applied to the Incarnation, but the same narrative applied directly to the Instauration. Similarly, prophecies pertaining to restoration throughout the Old Testament were not to be rigorously limited to the Incarnation or the parousia, as if they were not part of a greater package which was occurring continually in God’s various acts of providence throughout time, all of which would only be ultimately fulfilled in the age yet to come. To his day, the significance of the Incarnation had been well established, but the Scriptures had not yet been read for their full message of the restoration of fallen humanity. This was what Bacon called for in the reformation of the Histories of Providence and Prophecy. The reformation of the reading of the Book of Scripture would not be complete until this was done. This is what he was undertaking in his own Biblical interpretation, and it is a principle which must guide our understanding of Bacon’s use of Scriptural passages throughout his Instauration writings.

The Significance of Human Agency

The Instauration, as Bacon conceived it, was both a divine action and the product of human effort. Guided by charity, humanity joined its maker in an event which would accomplish the divine end of mercy, relieving the suffering of all humankind. In his Confession of Faith Bacon stated, “God created man in his own image, in a reasonable soul in innocency, in free-will, and in sovereignty.” According to Bacon’s Sacred History humanity fell from exactly two of these in the Fall: innocency, and sovereignty. “Man” remained a reasonable soul, and he retained free will, both of which were essential for the part which man was to play in the Instauration, for he must, according to “sound reason,”

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16 WFB VII, p. 221.
Correspondences of the Double Fall and Double Recovery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incarnation</th>
<th>Path of Recovery</th>
<th>Instauration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Innocency”: State of Grace or “Right relationship with God”</td>
<td>What was lost?</td>
<td>Human Sovereignty, or Dominion over Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 3:15 (Protoevangelion): “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, And between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”</td>
<td>Promise Given after the Fall</td>
<td>Gen. 3:19: “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>(many, e.g. Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”)</td>
<td>Corroborated from the Prophets</td>
<td>Daniel 12:4: “multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia” (Bacon’s translation: “many shall pass to and fro and science shall be increased.) Also: Psalm104:30 “Emittes spiritu tuo &amp; creabuntur; et instaurabis (renovabis) faciem terrae” (KJV: Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. (Bacon’s interpretation: “But when thy breath thou doth send forth again, Then all things do renew and spring amain; So that the earth lately desolate, Doth now return unto the former state.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way of God is prepared by the Forerunner, John the Baptist, who turned people to the right path, and pointed them toward the spiritual solution to the Fall, Christ.</td>
<td>Forerunner</td>
<td>Francis Bacon opens up the way, points others to it, and provides an example of how to proceed by entering upon it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incarnation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instauration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The event of Incarnation: In the “fullness of time” God comes in the Flesh to restore the relationship between God and Man.</td>
<td>The event of the Instauration: God has providentially appointed a time after the restoration of “sound religion in the Reformation, when “right reason” and mastery over nature would be restored.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bible reveals God’s Will, and points the way to Salvation when properly read.</td>
<td><strong>Fulfillment of the Promise</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>In pride, man fashions God in human image. Leaving the proper reading of the Bible, man turns instead to his own fancy and inventions.</td>
<td>The Book of Nature reveals the “secrets” of God’s power, which will be learned by the “sweat of the brow.” Properly read, it reveals the means of material recovery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>God’s mercy is shown to the world through the restoration of man to a state of Innocency, and original Grace.</td>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eternal Kingdom of God in the New Heaven and New Earth. This is already present in the Church, but will come in its fulness in the next age (Bacon’s fourth age.)</td>
<td>In pride, man remains faithful to the “idols of the mind.” Man departs from the “oracle of God’s works” and recasts the universe according to the preconceptions of his own mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results of the Event</strong></td>
<td><strong>Culmination</strong></td>
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<td>God’s mercy is shown to the world through the relief of material suffering, or “man’s estate.” The proper cosmic hierarchy is established (with man at the top) and the cooperative sovereignty of God and man over the cosmos is reestablished.</td>
<td>Initially a temporary period of “The Kingdom of Man” when mastery of nature would be completely restored and human suffering would be overcome. This would give way to the final order, in which man would surpass the Angels in the hierarchy of the New Heaven and the New Earth.</td>
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“open and dilate his powers as he may” to recover his sovereignty over the created order. Humanity was to recover the original mastery, that which Adam exercised in Eden, which was a genuine sovereignty over lesser things, and this required genuine human agency, not the agency of puppets with actions controlled by the immediate providence of God.

From beginning to end the Instauration writings present man as the agent of his own recovery, if he would but choose to set out upon the new way which God had prepared and which Bacon was illuminating. This had not occurred before Bacon’s day because the human will had not been bent toward the proper ends, according to Aphorism 97 of the first book of the Novum Organum: “No one has yet been found so firm of mind and purpose as resolutely to compel himself to sweep away all theories and common notions, and to apply the understanding, thus made fair and even, to a fresh examination of particulars.”

Now God had removed the obstacles which had before derailed human efforts, but man must still have the fortitude to turn away from all previous notions and assumptions about the cosmos, and, by observation of the natural world, relearn the basic principles of nature. This required human labor -- the sweat of the brow. If God had opened the doors of the Instauration it was still for man to step through.

Bacon’s stress on human choice and agency were not only essential for explaining the Instauration in the context of his Sacred History, they were also necessary for his method of investigation. The investigation of nature proceeded according to the choices made by the investigators themselves, who decided what to investigate and determined what conclusions should be drawn. As Bacon interpreted Solomon’s words in Proverbs

17 WFB IV, p. 93. Latin, WFB I, p. 201. See also Aphorism 94, p. 200, Quod si in via ipsa erratum sit, atque hominum opera in is consumpta in quibus minime oportebat, sequitur ex eo, non in rebus ipsis difficultatem oriri, quae potestatis nostrae non sunt, sed in intellectu humano ejusque usu et applicatione, quae res remedium et medicinam suscipit. [But if the road itself has been mistaken, and men’s labour spent on unfit objects, it follows that the difficulty has its rise not in the things themselves, which are not in our power, but in the human understanding, and the use and application thereof, which admits of remedy and medicine.] Translation, WFB IV, p. 92.
25:2, the role of God was to conceal a thing, but the role of a “king,” or man, who was created for sovereignty, was to seek it out. Therefore, it is not at odds with the idea of the Instauration as an act of divine providence for Bacon to take it upon himself to construct the method by which his fellow laborers in the Instauration could come to understand the divinely established laws of nature. He was performing his proper role as a human. Similarly, to make the system work humans had to exercise agency over matter and systematically manipulate the things of creation themselves, for it was only through this type of experimentation, proceeding according to an orderly plan, that the rules and laws of nature could be discovered. Thus the twin assumptions of human agency and freedom of choice infuse all of Bacon’s discussions of method and procedure.

The ascription of agency and a cooperative role to humanity in the Instauration had the significant implication that something of the course and direction of Sacred History itself was placed in the hands of humans, even if God, in His omniscience, had already accounted for it. This is evident in the Valerius Terminus when Bacon, in acknowledging that vanity must be the ultimate end of all human works, also allows that the coming of the fourth age might be delayed through proper human effort: “vanity must be the end in all human effects, eternity being resumed, though the revolutions and periods may be delayed.”18 Bacon says no more of this possibility, but it is an idea which is entirely compatible with his belief in human free will. In the interactions between the free-willing God and His free-willing creatures it was not counter to the faith that human actions might actually have an effect upon outcomes, and, as this providential age was one of mercy, it was reasonable that if it were going well it might be prolonged.

However, the implications of human agency and choice in the Instauration could also be negative. After his impeachment in 1621, Bacon’s optimism about the imminence

18 WFB III, p. 222.
of the Instauration waned along with his political fortunes. He began speaking of the Instauration as something far off, even if it had a fitful beginning in his own age. Although Bacon had always expected the Instauration to take more than one man’s lifetime, after his impeachment his hopes and his intellectual bequest was more frequently placed in the hands of future generations, rather than his own. Thus, in his 1622 *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis*, dedicated not to the King but to his heir, Prince Charles, Bacon lamented that his own age preferred “to walk on in the old path, and not by the way of my Organum.”

The proper path had been opened to them, but they had chosen not to follow it. Bacon explained that in doing so they chose to repeat the act of hubris which caused the fall rather than recover from it:

Nimium primorum parentum peccatum et luimus et imitamur. Illi Dei similis esse velerunt, posteri eorum adhuc magis. Etenim mundos creamus, naturae praeimus et dominamur, omnia ita se habere volumus prout nostrae fatuitati consentaneum fore videtur, non prout Divinae Sapientiae, nec qualia inveniuntur in rebus ipsis; nec scio an res aut ingenia magis torqueamus; sed plane sigilla imaginis nostrae creaturis et operibus Dei imprimitus, non Creatoris sigilla cum cura inspicimus et agnoscimus. Itaque non immeritu iterum de imperio in creaturas decidimus, et cum post lapsum hominis nihilominus dominatio nonnulla in creaturas reluctantes relicta fuerit, ut per veras et solidas ars subigi et flecti possint, id ipsum ex insolentia nostra, et quia Dei similis esse volumus et propriae rationis dictimina sequi, maxima ex parte amittimus. [For we copy the sin of our first parents while we suffer for it. They wished to be like God, but their posterity wish to be even greater. For we create worlds, we direct and domineer over nature, we will have it that all things are as in our folly we think they should be, not as seems fittest to Divine wisdom, or as they are found to be in fact; and I know not whether we more distort the facts of nature or our own wits; but we clearly impress the stamp of our own image on the creatures and works of God, instead of carefully examining and recognizing in them the stamp of the

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19 Cf. Bacon’s discussion of the Instauration timetable in *Valerius Terminus*: “That although the period of one age cannot advance men to the furthest point of interpretation of nature, (except the work should be undertaken with greater helps than can be expected), yet it cannot fail in much less space of time to make return of many singular commodities towards the state and occasions of man’s life.” WFB III, p. 250.

Creator himself. Wherefore our dominion over creatures is a second time forfeited, not undeservedly; and whereas after the fall of man some power over the resistance of creatures was still left to him -- the power of subduing and managing them by toil and arts -- yet this too through our insolence, and because we desire to be like God and follow the dictates of our own reason, we in great part lose.[21]

Bacon goes on to encourage his readers to rethink, and make the right choice. After the Fall the freedom which Adam had to choose between the design of God and his own pride was still possessed by Adam’s heirs, though they had misused it so far. Bacon’s patristic turn on the issue of free will not only facilitated his explanation of Sacred History and possibly his method itself, but it also provided a mechanism for explaining why, if the Instauration had been decreed by God, it was failing to occur. Eventually God’s prophecy would win out, but by human will the times and seasons could be delayed.

**Apocalyptic Age, but not a Millennium**

Bacon’s belief in a providential age of Instauration was not, as some scholars have interpreted it, millennialism. The Instauration lacked any of the marks by which it could be identified with the genuinely millennial thought of Bacon’s day. It lacked any concern for a thousand year period, whether literal or figurative, and it had nothing to do with the eschatology of the Revelation of St. John, in which such a periodization was laid out. It was neither a reign of Christ nor of the saints, specifically, but an age in which people of godly motives would, through their own effort, recover control of wayward nature for the good and benefit of all. The second coming of Christ was neither included in the Instauration event, nor did the Instauration usher it in. It was, in fact, possible that the Instauration could delay the end of the third age. It was also possible for humanity to

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delay the Instauration event by choosing not to undertake it, and therefore it lacked the sense of a significant starting date on which a millennial epoch was usually expected to occur. It was not to be an era of rest, an earthly Sabbath, but a period of continual labor before the true rest of the fourth age.

If Bacon had envisioned the Instauration in terms of a millenarian age he would not have been without company, of a sort. John Napier, in 1593, had published *A Plaine Discovery of the whole Revelation of St. John*, in which he meticulously figured the dates for the start and close of the ages mentioned in the Apocalypse of John. Napier, like Bacon, believed that the Reformation had ushered in an era (Napier’s “seventh age”) in which, as Katherine Firth has summarized it, “knowledge of both divine and [possibly] material science would be completed,” and “all the secrets would become accessible to the human mind rightly directed.”

There is a manifest similarity on this particular point between Bacon and Napier, but this should not be allowed to suggest that Bacon necessarily followed Napier, or that he was even arguing for a modified version of Napier’s interpretation of the Apocalypse. Although Napier attempted to distance himself from the charge of millenarianism by adding a paragraph explaining the true errors of the millenarians, his work is still marked by the very typical elements of millennialism mentioned above and in chapter one which were notably absent in Bacon’s discussion of the Instauration. Most significantly, Napier’s conception of the progression of time, true to his Calvinist roots, possessed all

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24 Firth, 148. Firth notes that this idea is hinted-at by Napier, and it is certainly true that it is not fully developed, certainly not in the detail that Bacon developed the recovery of knowledge. In the passage which Firth cites, for example, Daniel 12:4 refers specifically to the recovery of the full meaning of the Scriptures, not necessarily human knowledge at all, and the book which is locked up until the appointed time is the Book of prophecy, not the book of Nature, as Bacon was most likely interpreting it. (see the discussion of the Two Books below.)

25 Firth, 149. Cf. Napier, 143.
the marks of divine determinism and necessity which Bacon had abandoned in his rejection of Calvinism. It is reasonable that Bacon and Napier both believed in an age when some kind of knowledge would be recovered because they were both concerned with the interpretation of Daniel 12:4 among their other Biblical source texts. Bacon issued a significant cautionary statement regarding the History of Prophecy in *The Advancement of Learning*, “This is a work which I find deficient; but is to be done with wisdom, sobriety, and reverence, or not at all.”26 Katherine Firth interpreted these words as pertaining to what Bacon regarded as abuses of the History of Prophecy in his day, and given the resurgence of millennial speculation at the time she is most likely right.27 Even if Napier is not specifically the target here, it is clear that Bacon could not have had a very high regard for Napier’s extensive analysis of Biblical prophecy, for twelve years after Napier’s book was published Bacon found that society was still lacking a wise, sober, and reverent treatment of the History of Prophecy. Bacon’s vision of the Instauration age had little in common with Napier, although it is possible that the fact that both Napier and Bacon used Daniel 12:4 as they did influenced the later convergence of Baconianism and millenarianism which Charles Webster documented.

The providential age of the Instauration was truly an apocalyptic age in the ancient Greek sense of an “apocalypsis” as a process of unveiling or revealing. In the Instauration event an important aspect of the divine plan which had been obscure was becoming manifest. Dark meanings that had been hidden in the Scriptures came to light, and the many twists of history which had seemed insignificant could now be recognized as the accomplishment of so many “divine counsels” leading toward this age. In his

26 WFB III, p. 341.
27 Firth, 205-06.
manner of interpreting prophecy and its fulfillment in time Bacon is in keeping with Irenaeus who noted:

\[\text{Omnis enim prophetia, priusquam habeat effectum, aenigmata et ambiguitates sunt hominibus. Cum autem venerit tempus, et evenerit quod prophetum est, tunc prophetiae habend liquidam et certam expositionem.} \]

[For every prophecy, before its fulfillment, is to men (full of) enigmas and ambiguities. But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition.]

As we have observed, there are numerous other similarities between Bacon’s theology and that of Irenaeus, suggesting that Bacon had formed his theology very much in the pattern of this second century church father. While this particular understanding of the interpretation of prophecy is certainly not unique to Irenaeus, it is worth noting here, because both Irenaeus and Bacon understood certain prophecies of the Old Testament to foretell a golden age of material prosperity and the restoration of human sovereignty over the earth.

In connection with what he called Bacon’s “millennialism” Charles Whitney noted that the recovery of the last chapters of Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* in the sixteenth century might have been influential upon Bacon’s thinking. However, Irenaeus’ discussion of an earthly “golden age” preceding the New Heaven and the New Earth was, to all appearances, a genuine millennium, if written in figurative language. It was to be an age when Christ would come and reign on earth for a thousand years, and in which the saints of all ages who had died would be raised to rest from their labors and reign with Him over creation. In spite of this obvious difference, Irenaeus’ millennium bears

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remarkable similarities to Bacon’s apocalyptic age, beginning with two of the scriptural texts chosen for support.

The reign of the saints over this earth, according to Irenaeus, was foretold by Christ in the verse which William Rawley had used for his sermon text, “The meek shall inherit the earth.” This would occur, according to Irenaeus, in conjunction with a time in which Christ himself would fulfill the prophecy of David in Psalm 104:30, “Qui renovavit faciem terrae,” and renew the face of the earth. Life in this renewed earth would be marked by a material prosperity in which grapes and grain would produce many thousandfold more than in ages before, and in which the animals would be returned to their edenic subjection to humanity. It is entirely possible that Bacon was following Irenaeus in these basic ideas, as he appears to have done in so many others, but that he was willing to differ with him as well, based on their mutual understanding of the nature of prophecy and fulfilment. For while Irenaeus was writing of the fulfillment of prophecies in the distant future, Bacon believed that he was currently witnessing the fulfillment, and, as Irenaeus himself had acknowledged, the meaning of prophecy was enigmatic and ambiguous until that time when it actually came to pass. Since Irenaeus’


33 This passage in Irenaeus is a more likely source for Bacon’s grape and grain imagery in the Feast of the Family in the New Atlantis than the pagan fertility cults to which David Innes assumed that it must refer. (Cf. David C. Innes, “Bacon’s New Atlantis: the Christian Hope and the Modern Hope,” In: Interpretation, Fall 1994, v. 22, n. 1 p. 22.) The grapes and grain also relate to the Eucharistic promise that the feast of Holy Thursday would be resumed in the earthly Kingdom of Christ (as Irenaeus interpreted it) when the accomplishments of the faithful would be celebrated (cf. Adversus Haereses Book V, cap. 33, 1.) In this too there is a relation to the Feast of the Family as Bacon presented it.

34 Adversus Haereses Book V, cap. 33, 3-4. (ed. W. Wigan Harvey, Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis Libros Quinque adversus Haereses, Cambridge, 1847. v. 2, pp. 418-19.)
day chiliasm had fallen out of favor with mainline Christians, and Bacon’s theology reflected that shift. Bacon’s age when man would inherit the earth was not a millennium but what Rawley had referred to as a foretaste of man’s final estate, and the temporal “instauration of his happiness,” which would have its ultimate fulfillment in the next age.

Bacon’s belief that he was on the threshold of a providential age predicted in the Scriptures may appear to be one of the most eccentric aspects of his thought to later, more “rational,” eyes, but, as we have observed before, such apocalyptic speculations were not uncommon among the intellectuals of the early modern period. This was an age of rapid social and cultural changes associated with the Reformation, European exploration and expansion (including the discovery of an entirely “new world”), and the political upheaval of the breakup of Christendom into independent states. To people who believed in a real and active God and were guided by sacred texts which had much to say about the course of history and its culmination in the “end times,” it was entirely natural that such changes should be evidence that they were living in an age charged with eschatological significance. In this the Bacon circle was entirely typical.

George Herbert, for example, in his poem, *The Church Militant*, delivered a narrative of Sacred History of his own, which culminated in a discussion of the providential significance of the events of his own age, including the Reformation and the colonization of America.  

The poem traces the geographical journey of the Church, God’s chosen people, from the ancient East westward toward England in his own day.

As the Church progressed it was continually pursued by an animate spirit of evil named “Sinne:”

Both where and when the Church began her race,
Sinne did set out of Eastern Babylon,
And travell’d westward also: journeying on

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He chid the Church away, where e’er he came,
Breaking her peace, and tainting her good name.\(^{36}\)

From Egypt to Greece the Church went with Sinne following so that in every place from East to West the Church was established in purity but overtaken and corrupted by superstition. The Christian East was overcome with vanities and shrines, and “Mahometan Stupidities.” The West was harder to overcome, so the Devil became a churchman and wore a mitre. The purity of the true Church next appeared in Germany in the Reformation, but the Reformation era does not compare with the primitive Church, and darkness is, in Herbert’s day, rapidly overtaking the old world. From Germany the pure religion pushed Westward into England, where it still resided as he was writing the poem, but the darkness was about to hit England in force. (This interpretation is entirely consistent with the concerns of a dedicated Calvinist writing after the triumph of Arminianism.) Now, via the chosen instrument of England, the Church was poised to head still farther westward: “Religion stands on tip-toe in our land, Readie to passe to the American strand.”\(^{37}\) Eventually, when the Church has completely circled the globe, the day of judgment would come. Although this narrative is entirely different from Bacon’s, and considerably darker in mood, it is another example of the freedom with which the narrative of Sacred History was used and interpreted.

Lancelot Andrewes, as another example, could not be associated with any truly millenarian ideas, and quite appropriately he never made it onto the radar screen of Katherine Firth’s study of those who harbored apocalyptic expectations in early modern England. And yet, although he left no narrative of Sacred History, he saw the special activity of the hand of God all around him in his own age. The period of time after the

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 186-87.

Reformation was significant for Andrewes. Although he did not share Bacon’s belief in a golden age of human reason and material recovery, as we noted in chapter four, he did believe that he lived in an era when “the knowledge of the faith is as the morning light which groweth lighter.” The hand of God was very evidently at work in Andrewes’ own nation. After the failure of the Gunpowder Plot Andrewes called for a special day to be set aside on which it would be remembered that God, by a special act of Providence, had delivered England by foiling the evil intentions of the enemies of His people. Andrewes preached that the anniversary of this event to be kept as a day of deliverance, like the feasts of Passover and Purim. In a series of sermons preached on this anniversary Andrewes readily applied Scripture texts pertaining to God’s acts of deliverance in the Passover, the Esther narrative, and the Incarnation itself to the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, for this was just another example of the pattern of God’s continual deliverance of His people.

**Instauration as “Inaugurated Eschatology”**

Bacon’s understanding of how the Instauration event fit into the history of the end times is perhaps best understood in light of another main feature of Andrewes’ theology, the presence of the eastern patristic understanding of the nature of time itself after the Incarnation. Georges Florovsky has given this concept of time the label, “inaugurated eschatology.” Although this idea has very recently become popular among theologians in the West (largely as a result of the influence of Florovsky himself who

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41 Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: an Eastern Orthodox View*, (Belmont, Massachusetts: Noland Publishing Company, 1987), 36. This is the essay in which Florovsky actually introduces the term.
taught at Harvard and Princeton) it was not particularly common in Western Europe in
the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (although it was very noticeably present by virtue
of the recovery of the Eastern fathers as well as through a certain lingering tradition in the
West).

Inaugurated eschatology is commonly described as the tension between “even
now” and “not yet” in the life of the Church during the time between the Resurrection and
the Second Coming of Christ. The “end times” have already been inaugurated by Christ
when he was present in the flesh after the Incarnation, but the fulness of the benefits of
Heaven are not yet realized until the Second Coming. Behind this doctrine is the concept
that in the Church, through participation with Christ (who as God transcends time), past,
present, and future are to some degree transcended, and the normal barriers of time
become permeable. Because of the uniting of the time-bound creatures with the timeless
God, some of the benefits and blessings of the future life are realized even in this life,
though imperfectly. Thus the Eucharist, according to this understanding, is not a
“memorial” in the sense that it is merely a time for reflection on a past event, and neither
is it, as Calvin claimed, a pledge of the feast to come. Rather it is the feast itself. It is
exactly the same feast that Christ ate with his disciples on Holy Thursday, and it is
exactly the same feast which is underway eternally in Heaven. It is all one experience,
though the fulness of the experience, in which the feast is celebrated free from the taint of
sin and in the visible presence of the Savior Himself, only exists beyond time, in the “age
to come.”

A typical example of this doctrine is found in the sermon of the fourth

42 Cf. Institutes, Book 14, ch. 14, sec. 8 & 12.

43 These eastern patristic concepts in regard to the Sacraments are elaborated more fully by Florovsky in his
collection of essays on Creation and Redemption, (Belmont, Massachusetts: Noland Publishing Company,
1987.) See particularly the essays on “Redemption” (pp. 95ff.) and “The ‘Immortality’ of the Soul.” (pp.
213ff.) The distinctions between this Eastern and the more common Western views are clarified somewhat
in his final essay in this collection, “Eschatology.” (pp. 243ff.)
century father John Chrysostom which is read annually at the feast of Pascha in Eastern Churches to this day. Chrysostom invites his hearers to the eternal feast, taking place at that very moment in the liturgy, in time-transcendent language: “Enter ye all, therefore, into the joy of our Lord, and let both the first and those who come after partake of the reward.” 44 The implications of this Eastern patristic view of time were by no means limited to the Eucharist: The Church, though not yet perfect, is even now the Kingdom of God; man, though not yet sinless, even now is “freed from sin” and has been restored to his proper status before God; and even now something of the eternal peace and glory of God which pervades Heaven can be experienced by the believer, though the experience is fleeting.

Nicholas Lossky has demonstrated that the language of inaugurated eschatology is present throughout the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes. This can be clearly seen in the following passage from a sermon on the Resurrection based upon Colossians 3, which he takes particularly literally:

It is an error certainly, which runneth in men’s heads when they hear of the Resurrection, to conceive of it as of a matter merely future, and not to take place till the latter day. Not only ‘Christ is risen,’ but if all be as it should be, ‘We are already risen with Him,’ saith the Apostle, in the Epistle this day, the very first words of it; and even here now, saith St. John, is there a ‘first resurrection,’ and happy is he that ‘hath his part in it.’ 45

The words from St. John’s Apocalypse (20:5-6), are a source text for those millennialists who, like Irenaeus, believed that there would be a “first resurrection” in which the saints would be raised to rule on earth with Christ, before the second, general resurrection on the

44 See this section of the sermon in theological context of the idea that Christians enter into the “eighth” or timeless, “day of creation” in Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 247-249.

Last Day. Unlike the millennialists, Andrewes understood this first resurrection in terms of inaugurated eschatology: it was taking place already, in the Church, and the apocalyptic age of this first resurrection began with the Church. As Lossky summarizes Andrewes’ understanding of time, “Eschatology, for Andrewes, is in fact at once present and future. It is a reality existing, in some way, in tension between the full consummation that remains to come and participation already, now, in the risen Christ.”

One aspect of Bacon’s patristic shift, as we observed in chapter two, was his modification of the language of time and eternity. Another important aspect was his understanding that the Incarnation occurred primarily for the purpose of uniting God and creation mystically through the Mediator, Christ, and that in the Church Christ was already participating with creation through His flock. The key ingredients for an understanding of inaugurated eschatology were all present in his *Confession of Faith*. In *Valerius Terminus* Bacon presented the idea of the Instauration itself in terms of the essential tension of “even now” and “not yet.” Even now man could regain mastery over nature, though it would not yet be possible without continual labor. Even now humanity could be relieved from the physical suffering which had dominated human existence since the Fall, but this relief was not yet to be perfect and permanent. The benefits of the New Heaven and the New Earth were present though not fully realized. In the Church the restoration of spiritual “innocency” was already being accomplished, and, after the advent of the Instauration dominion over creatures was occurring as well. This understanding can profitably inform our reading of Bacon’s conclusion to the *Novum Organum* where he stated: “For man by the fall fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his

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46 Cf. the use of this verse by Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Book V, cap. 34, 2.

47 Nicholas Lossky, 328.
dominion over creation. Both of these losses however can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences.”

**Temple and Priesthood**

In aphorism 120 of the first book of the *Novum Organum* Bacon presented his intentions for his Instauration writings in terms which resonate strongly with Charles Whitney’s observation that *Instaurtatio*, in the text of the Vulgate Old Testament, was used specifically in connection with the rebuilding of Solomon’s Temple after the return from the Babylonian Captivity:

*Nos autem Capitolium aliquod aut Pyramiadem hominum superbiae dedicamus aut condimus, sed templum sanctum ad exemplar mundi in intellectu humano fundamus.* [And for myself, I am not raising a capitol or pyramid to the pride of man, but laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world.]

It is unfortunate that Bacon did not go into greater depth concerning his use of temple imagery anywhere in his Instauration writings. Clearly, the idea of the Instauration including the construction of a temple was an important theme for him. This was implicit in his use of the term “Instauration” itself, and the *New Atlantis* is saturated with concepts connected with Solomon’s Temple in the Old Testament. However, we have nothing more specific in this regard from his own pen than this statement from the *Novum Organum*.

William Rawley, in the introduction to Bacon’s posthumously published *Sylva Sylvarum*, used similar building imagery in describing his master’s work as “the erecting and building of a true philosophy.” Toward this end, Bacon had “set down the

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50 WFB II, pp. 335-36.
instruments and directions for the work” in the *Novum Organum*, and now, in the *Sylva Sylvarum*, he had collected the raw materials for the building itself (namely the “particulars” which are derived from the observation of natural things and processes).  

The contrast between the building project of Israel in the Temple and those of Egypt was also covered by Rawley when he remarked:

> I have heard his lordship speak complainingly, that his lordship (who thinketh he deserveth to be an architect in this building) should be forced to be a workman and a laborer, and to dig clay and burn brick; and more than that, (according to the hard condition of the Israelites in the latter end) to gather the straw and stubble over all the fields to burn the bricks withal.  

There is more to Bacon’s complaint here than merely the suggestion that he was not cut out for the menial end of the Instauration project. Rawley records that he compared his work to the work of the Israelites in their slavery, and hence there is included the suggestion that Bacon was concerned that his work would be turned to the ends of those who were not interested in his plan for a “holy temple” at all. Those who came afterward and used the material for which he had worked so hard could turn them to their own prideful ends. The contrast between the building projects of God’s people and the pagans was apparently a running theme for Bacon’s discussion of the Instauration project, at least in his latter years when Rawley worked with him.

The temple, according to the *Novum Organum* quotation, was to be constructed in the mind, and it would be a correct and proper representation of the material world itself. Although we have, again, nothing more to go on than this quotation, there are some curious resonances in this passage to some other ideas which were readily available in his day. The suggestion that the construction of the temple should be in the image of the

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51 WFB II, p. 336.

52 WFB II, p. 336.
world itself is similar to the interpretation of the Old Testament Temple presented by the Jesuits Hieronymo Prado and Juan Bautista Villapando in their widely read, *In Ezechiel explanationes et apparatus vrbis, ac templi Hierosolymitani.* The main argument of this work has been well summarized in the description of this text for an exhibition in the Bodleian Library:

> With God as architect, the design of the Temple will reflect his other creations: the macrocosm of the world and the microcosm of man. Thus Villalpando incorporates aspects of the harmony and order of the heavens into the Temple, while its proportions also encode those of the human body. All these hidden relationships are derived from Ezekiel and expounded in detail.

We cannot be sure that Bacon ever read this work, but there is a strong possibility that he was at least familiar with the ideas contained in it, given Tobie Matthew’s connections on the Continent, and particularly with the Jesuit Order. We also know that this work was available in the Bodleian Library by at least 1635. The connection with Bacon’s understanding of the works of God occurring in discernible patterns is certainly noteworthy.

The location for the temple which Bacon was building was the human intellect (*intellectu humano*). This might seem to render the “temple” merely a convenient metaphor, were it not for the prominence of this metaphor in Bacon’s thinking as well as in the title of his 1620 *Instauratio Magna* in which it is found. The concept itself is entirely consistent with the hierarchical understanding of the intellect over the material in *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies* of Pseudo-Dionysius. As Paul Rorem has explicated the

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53 (Rome, 1596-1605).


55 Ibid.
liturgical symbols of Dionysius, “the symbols of the ecclesiastical hierarchy bridge the
gap between the earlier and lowlier dependence upon sense perception (the hierarchy in
the days of the law) and the future and higher purity of conceptual contemplation (the
heavenly hierarchy).” It’s location in the intellect should not be taken to suggest that the
“temple” is imaginary. Even as the Old Testament Temple, as the location of the
presence of God, was replaced by the Incarnate Christ (according to the standard
interpretation of John 2:19-21), and later the believers themselves were described in the
Pauline Epistles as the “temple” (as in 1Cor. 3:16), so also the proper temple of the
Instauration was to be located within.

If we cannot be sure how Bacon conceived of the “temple” idea in connection with
the Instauration, we have much more to go on for his understanding of a new
“priesthood,” or at least a class of men whose vocation it was to be about the divine work
of the Instauration. Here as well, we have some evidence that Bacon was in the habit of
speaking about those who were applying themselves to the understanding of natural
philosophy as “priests.” In discussing the plan of his work in the Instauratio Magna
Bacon referred to himself in terms of religious office:

Quaere existimamus nos sensus (a quo omnia in naturalibus petenda sunt,
nisi forte libeat insanire) antistites religiosos, et oraculorum ejus non
imperitos interpretes, nos praestitisse: [And thus I conceive that I perform
the office of a true priest of the sense (from which all knowledge in nature
must be sought, unless men mean to go mad) and a not unskillful
interpreter of its oracles;]

Bacon may have shied away from using the term sacerdos itself in this passage
(preferring the basically synonymous antistites religiosos), but George Herbert did not in

56 Paul Rorem, Pseudo-Dionysius: a Commentary on the Texts, and an Introduction to Their Influence
(Oxford University Press, 1993), 108.

a poem which he wrote in Bacon’s honor. Among other titles, Herbert referred to Bacon as “the singular priest of the world and of souls” [mundiquae & Animarum, sacerdos unicus].

In the second book of The Advancement of Learning Bacon argued that there must necessarily be a fraternity of those dedicated to learning, as a consequence of its holy source:

And surely as nature createth brotherhood in families, and arts mechanical contract brotherhoods in communalties, and the anointment of God superinduceth a brotherhood in kings and bishops; so in like manner there cannot but be a fraternity in learning and illumination, relating to that paternity which is attributed to God, who is called the Father of illuminations or lights.

Although the specific goal of this section is to argue for greater cooperation across political boundaries for the advancement of the sciences, the justification which Bacon uses presents those engaged in the sciences as having a divine mandate for their activity. This was God’s work, as we have observed in the previous chapter, and those who did it did the work of God no less than kings and bishops. Thus also William Rawley wrote in the introduction to the Sylva Sylvarum, “and as for the baseness of many of the experiments; as long as they be God’s works, they are honourable enough,” signifying that experimentation was the work of God, so long as it was rightly done.

Bacon’s understanding of experimentation as a holy vocation, and no less than a work of a special holy order, is not as peculiar for his age as it might seem if viewed in isolation. We should recall that John Selden constructed a similar new religious order in blending priests and lawyers together for a ruling Sanhedrin in his vision for post-civil war

59 WFB III, p. 327.
60 WFB II, p. 336.
England. It is also in line with the doctrine of vocation, or ἁγιασμός, espoused by Lancelot Andrewes, as Nicholas Lossky has identified it from Andrewes’ sermons. According to Andrewes, all service to one’s fellow man, if done for godly reasons, could properly be understood as a holy ministry, or ἁγιασμός. As Lossky has summarized this theme: “The work of all, as is the task of each, being to serve Christ in the Holy Spirit for the good of all, it is not surprising that all is Ministry.”61 Bacon’s natural philosophers fit this definition of divine ministry as a class, for they were all to be about their business “for the Glory of the Creator and the relief of man’s estate.”62 If Andrewes gave the clergy precedence as the order which served the Church directly, he also recognized statesmanship as a genuine holy Ministry though on a second tier, for it was an office granted by God for the service of humanity. It is worth noting that the Erastianism to which Selden adhered has its roots not in an anticlerical or anti-ecclesial source, but in the theology of Conformists such as Andrewes and Hooker, who could conceive of kings and bishops both being in “Ministry” for “the body politic is one; the Church and the Commonwealth are coextensive in a Christian state.”63 Selden proposed not a secularization of the Church structure, but a sacralization of lawyers. In a similar way, Bacon was not interested in separating Religion and science (as we now conceive of

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61 Nicholas Lossky, 287. Andrewes’ doctrine should not be confused with the modern reconstruction of the so-called doctrine of the “Priesthood of all Believers,” in which reformation theology is credited with an anti-clericalism which was only found among the Radicals. Luther, Calvin, and men like Andrewes, never saw the clergy as less than a necessary, and divinely approved, class or office (ordo or ampt in the Latin and German respectively). What we see in Andrewes’ theology is the actual understanding that all believers had a “priesthood” or holy vocation, as this doctrine was held by the Reformers, and we may note by the Eastern Fathers as well, based upon 1 Peter 2:5.

62 As per book 1 of The Advancement of Learning, WFB III, p. 294.

63 Nicholas Lossky, 287. This idea is not necessarily far from the Divine Right of Kings as it was conceived in Catholic countries, with the exception that the distinction between the jurisdiction of the “two kingdoms” is necessarily blurred when the head of the state is the head of the Church. It is significant, in light of Barbour’s discussion of Selden and Selden’s friendship with Andrewes, that Andrewes saw the Old Testament Kingdom of Israel as the model for the proper Christian State. (ibid. pp. 286ff.)
such a separation, at least) but of recognizing in natural philosophy a genuine divine calling.

**The Two Books**

We have observed in chapter four that an essential element of the twofold recovery from the Fall was that each half of the recovery, the spiritual and the material, required the proper reading of one of God’s “books:” the Bible, for spiritual recovery, and the book of nature, for material recovery. Although Bacon took the doctrine of the two books in a unique direction by dividing the two books and applying them separately to the Incarnation and the Instauration, the concept that nature, like Scripture, was a book written by God in which He revealed something of Himself was of long standing in Christianity. Among other useful contributions of Peter Harrison in his book, *The Bible, Protestantism and the rise of Natural Science*, he has traced the development of the idea of nature as a divinely written book which could be “read” (if one knew the proper language) from the origins of the idea in the classical period, through its full development in medieval scholastic theology. Notably, in light of the fact that Bacon was familiar with Pseudo-Dionysius as well as his translator John Scotus Erigena, Harrison observed that Erigena held to the idea that “a literal reading of the natural world” would produce a proper understanding of the creatures and restore them to “the original unity which they had once possessed, in the human mind, and in the divine plan.” bacon may have been freely interpreting the ideas before him in his own formulation of the return to edenic mastery. But for Bacon the concept of coming to the divine through material things was strictly limited to making man aware of the power, not the will or identity, of God.

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Moreover, Bacon, unlike Dinonysius/Erigena, argued not merely that material things could assist in understanding the order and unity of the Cosmos, but that this understanding could be used, through an act of human will, to subdue and transform nature back into its original role as a servant providing for the needs of humanity. As it involves the manipulation of nature to return edenic order, this is a concept which has much more in common with the Corpus Hermeticum than with the particularly mystic understanding of nature forwarded by Erigena and the Christian East. We will revisit this idea in considering how Bacon’s theology may have facilitated his acceptance of Hermetic ideas and the development of a “semi-Paracelsian worldview.” For now, it is important to take a closer look at the dynamics of the doctrine of the two books as it functioned in Bacon’s system.

In The Advancement of Learning Bacon gave his most explicit interpretation of Matthew 22:29 which was, for him, the Scriptural proof text supporting his particular understanding of the doctrine of the two books:

For our Saviour saith, You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God; laying before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be secured from error; first the Scriptures, revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power; whereof the latter is a key unto the former; not only opening our understanding to conceive the true sense of the Scriptures, by the general notions of reason and rules of speech; but chiefly opening our belief, in drawing us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God, which is chiefly signed and engraven upon his works.66

There are a few details in this passage which are absolutely essential for understanding how this doctrine fit into Bacon’s system. The latter book, the book of nature or the “creatures” is “a key unto the former.” According to Bacon, natural philosophy must

66 WFB III, p. 301. See wording identical to the first lines of this passage in Valerius Terminus, WFB III, p. 221. See also Book 1, Novum Organum, Aphorism 89, WFB I, p. 197. This was a pivotal doctrine for Bacon’s exegesis throughout.
inform the reading of the Scriptures, because “the general notions of reason and rules of speech” which permit interpretation of the Bible are the stuff of natural philosophy. But Bacon also gives a more profound reason, namely that healthy belief requires “due meditation of the omnipotency of God, which is chiefly signed and engraven upon his works.” The Scriptures may tell about the power of God, but the power itself is to be learned, and directly witnessed, in the things of creation themselves. The more one understands about God’s power as revealed in creation the more one can appreciate the will of God, and His personal identity which are revealed in the Scriptures. In these ways natural philosophy, which is nothing other than “reading the book of nature,” informs the faith.

The Scriptures themselves tell the story of Salvation. Through them is revealed the will of God for the world. Through them God’s personal identity is revealed, for they explain the identity of God in the person of the mediator, Christ. The core doctrines of the Christian religion are to be found in the Scriptures and nowhere else. As Bacon described the role of Scripture in book 2 of *The Advancement of Learning*: “So then the doctrine of religion, as well moral as mystical, is not to be attained but by inspiration and revelation from God.”^67^ As the book which reveals the identity and the will of the Christian God, the Scriptures also necessarily inform the reading of the book of nature. First of all they reveal the personal identity of the Author of the book of nature. The Scriptures also provide the motivation for reading the book of nature and recovering edenic mastery, namely charity and the greater glory of a merciful God. Conversely, the Scriptures reveal the spiritual dangers of pride and the confusion of Creator and creature which led to the original Fall and continue to thwart human recovery. Thus religion limits

^67^ WFB III, p. 479.
and guides the Instauration project, for, as Bacon said in *Valerius Terminus*, “all knowledge is to be limited by religion and referred to use and action.” In the greater context of Bacon’s theology it is clear that “referred to use and action” is something of an epexegetical phrase, explaining one aspect of the function of religion. For “use and action,” as Bacon explained them, are nothing other than applying knowledge for the good of humanity, or “charity” as it is called in the Scriptures. As we have seen, the Scriptures also provide the historical and prophetical context for the reading of the book of nature by setting it within the greater narrative of Sacred History. We may note that even the idea of the *Deus Absconditus* which figures so prominently in Bacon’s theology is derived from the Scriptures, thus adding to the necessity of Scripture for revealing the limitations of reason.

The two books, then, function as part of a single interactive theological system, one informing the other, although Scripture retains its priority, even as spiritual recovery held priority over material. In matters of salvation as well as in material recovery, departing from these two sure guides would lead to error, as it had among the Scholastics who followed their own fancies and inventions rather than the Scriptures or the “oracle of God’s works.”

According to *The Advancement of Learning*:

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 endeavor 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 two together.

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68 WFB III, p. 218. Note also the interpretation of Paul’s words in Colossians 2:8 -- “That we be not seduced by vain philosophy.” In *The Advancement of Learning*, WFB III, p. 266.


70 WFB III, p. 268.
Nature, as well as Scripture, required the attention of faithful priests if it was to be read properly, and reformation was to occur. However, if the books were designed by their mutual author to interact, they were also intended not to be confused. They were not interchangeable. In distinguishing the volume of God’s revealed will from the volume of His power Bacon made a theological distinction which, if it were faithfully observed, would prevent another category of errors that had plagued humankind. It is this distinction which is often mistaken for a distinction between “faith and science” in Bacon.

“The Apotheosis of Error”

John Henry, in suspecting that there might be a misreading of Bacon in the common assumption that he separated religion and natural philosophy opined that “Bacon was not so much concerned that science and religion should not be mixed, but that they should not be mixed the wrong way.” In light of the Bacon’s theological arguments throughout the Instauration corpus, this is a very solid assessment. It is also supported by the way in which Lancelot Andrewes and Tobie Matthew freely incorporated natural philosophy into their theological writings. It is important, however, to consider exactly what, in Bacon’s writings, led his readers as early as Thomas Sprat to identify a distinction between matters of faith and matters of natural philosophy in Bacon. The most common of Bacon’s texts used to support such a distinction is Aphorism 65 of Book 1 of the Novum Organum which concludes with the often quoted words “Very meet it is therefore that we be sober-minded, and give to faith that only which is faith’s.” In order to clarify exactly what this Aphorism says, and exactly what it does not say, it is useful to set it forth here in toto:

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\textit{At corruptio philosophiae ex Superstitione et theologia admista, latius omnino patet, et plurimum mali infert, aut in philosophias integras aut in earum partes. Humanus enim intellectus non minus impressionibus phantasiae est obnoxius, quam impressionibus vulgarium notionum.}
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353

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\cite{John Henry, Knowledge is Power, p. 86.}
Pugnax enim genus philosophiae et Sophisticum illaquent intellectum: at illud alterum phantasticum et tumidum, et quasi Poeticum, magis blanditur intellectui. Inest enim homini quaedam intellectus ambitio, non minor quam voluntatis; praesertim in ingenis altis et elevatis.

Hujus autem generis exemplum inter Graecos illucescit, praecipue in Pythagora, sed com superstitione magis crassa et onerosa conjunctum; at periculosius et subtilius in Platone, atque ejus schola. Invenitur etiam hoc genus mali in partibus philosophiarum reliquarum, introducendo formas abstractas, et causas finales, et causas primas; omittendo saepissime medias, et hujusmodi. Huic autem rei summa adhibenda est cautio. Pessima enim res est errorum Apotheosis, et pro peste intellectus habenda est, si vanis accedat veneratio. Huic autem vanitati nonnulli ex modernis summa levitate ita indulserunt, ut in primo capitolo Geneseos et in libro Job et alis scripturis sacris, philosophiam naturalem fundare conati sint; inter viva quaerentes mortua. Tantoque magis haec vanitas inhibenda venit et coercenda, quia ex divinorum et humanorum malesana admistione non solum educitur philosophia phantastica, sed etiam religio haeretica. Itaque salutare admodum est, si mente sobria fidei tantum dentur quae fidei sunt.

[But the corruption of philosophy by superstition and an admixture of theology is far more widely spread, and does the greatest harm, whether to entire systems or to their parts. For the human understanding is obnoxious to the influence of the imagination no less than to the influence of common notions. For the contentious and sophistical kind of philosophy ensnares the understanding; but this kind, being fanciful and tumid and half poetical, misleads it more by flattery. For there is in man an ambition of the understanding, no less than of the will, especially in high and lofty spirits.

Of this kind we have among the Greeks a striking example in Pythagoras, though he united with it a coarser and more cumbrous superstition; another in Plato and his school, more dangerous and subtle. It shows itself likewise in parts of other philosophies, in the introduction of abstract forms and final causes and first causes, with the omission in most cases of causes intermediate, and the like. Upon this point the greatest caution should be used. For nothing is so mischievous as the apotheosis of error; and it is a very plague of the understanding for vanity to become the object of veneration. Yet in this vanity some of the moderns have with extreme levity indulged so far as to attempt to found a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, on the book of Job, and other parts of sacred writings; seeking for the dead among the living: which also makes the inhibition and repression of it the more
important, because from this unwholesome mixture of things human and
divine there arises not only a fantastic philosophy but also an heretical
religion. Very meet it is therefore that we be sober-minded, and give to
faith that only which is faith’s.\footnote{WFB I, pp. 175-76. Translation, WFB IV, pp. 65-66.}

It is important, before considering this text in the broader context which we have
established in the preceding chapters, to observe some aspects of the text itself which are
often passed-over, particularly by those who only consult the English translation.

First of all, it is important to recognize that Bacon is issuing his warning in
connection with very specific examples from the Greeks and from certain moderns.
Between the two sets of examples he denounces all such errors as “\textit{errorum Apotheosis},”
the “apotheosis of error,” or rather the \textit{divinization} of error. That to which Bacon is
objecting here is the error of idolatry which is for him a matter of replacing the truth with
fantasies of human construction, whether in religion or natural philosophy. The
condemnation here stands between two parallel structures, each beginning with \textit{Huic. . . ,}
but referring to different kinds of error as if they were essentially the same error. On the
first hand is the error of the Greeks, who used natural philosophy to construct religious
and metaphysical ideas, and on the second hand are certain theologians of his day who
attempt to derive natural philosophy out of the sources of spiritual truth. Either is
idolatry, by Bacon’s definition, and the errors, though on opposite sides, amount to a
confusion of the two books.

Second, it is significant that in the Aphorism in which he rejects those who have
mixed natural philosophy and religion Bacon employs two clear Scriptural references.
The first reference is a play on the words of Luke 24:5 where, in viewing the empty tomb
after Jesus’ resurrection, the women disciples are asked by an angel, “\textit{Quid quaeritis
viventem cum mortuis?}” or “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” Bacon accuses
those who look for keys to the material order among the Scriptures of “inter viva quae sunt Caesaris, Caesaris: et quae sunt Dei, Deo.” or seeking the dead among the living. In reversing the word order he makes it clear that he regards the Scriptures as the book which gives life, and is oriented toward the resurrection narrative of which this verse is a part, not toward the understanding of dead matter. The second Scriptural reference is at the end, when Bacon concludes that it is proper to “render unto faith that which is faith’s.” Bacon is here paraphrasing the response of Jesus to those among His enemies who challenged Him with the question of whether it was right to pay taxes to Ceasar (particularly given the assumption that Caesar was regarded as a god.) After making the point that Caesar’s image was on the coin before Him, Jesus responded, “Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris, Caesaris: et quae sunt Dei, Deo.” or, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, but unto God that which is God’s.” In this way Jesus demonstrated to His enemies that He was not what they had assumed -- a rebel against the civil authority. In the same way, Bacon, after criticizing those who misused the Scriptures, demonstrated that he was not what they would accuse him of being -- impious. In both cases those who would raise the charge would be missing a fundamental distinction between human and divine matters. Both Christ and Bacon were making the point that in keeping matters ordered according to their proper categories, idolatry could be avoided.

Third, particularly in the Latin, Bacon is concerned with avoiding “vanity,” or that which is empty, devoid of substance. This is a charged word to those who regularly read the Scriptures. In Ecclesiastes it is the word of the wisest King, Solomon, (who was regarded as the author in Bacon’s day) in describing those forms of knowledge and those pursuits which do not lead to holy ends, but distract the individual from proper, godly knowledge. The biblical book directed against vanity ends with the concluding judgment: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:
for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecc. 12:13) Bacon was also arguing for what he recognized as godly knowledge, both of nature and of Scripture, as opposed to the misleading knowledge that resulted from the confusion of the two books. We must recall that for Bacon, as well as Andrewes, keeping the commands of God was not averse to experiment and knowledge, which was Adam’s activity in Eden. One of the earliest commandments of God to man was to “subdue the earth,” which was precisely what the Instauration was about, for Bacon. What Bacon is rejecting here is no different than that which he rejected in *The Advancement of Learning* when he sided with St. Paul in the rejection of “vain philosophy” in favor of that which was fruitful, and produced a godly end. 73 In connection with this point, it is significant that in the Latin Bacon’s concluding statement is clearly not against any form of the union of faith and natural philosophy whatsoever, but specifically against “huic vanitas” this particular type of error which he has been addressing. From this particular error, or idolatry, arises the twin sin against the truth, a “fantastical philosophy” and “an heretical religion.”

**Aphorism 65 in the Broader Context of the Instauration Corpus: Confession of Faith, The Advancement of Learning, and Cogitata et Visa**

In order to understand the distinction which Bacon is actually making in Aphorism 65 is helpful to return to Bacon’s *Confession of Faith*, where the theological root for the concern for mixing different types of knowledge is found. Bacon wrote that there were separate divine laws placed upon nature and upon spiritual beings, such as angels and humans:

> That notwithstanding God hath rested and ceased from creating since the first Sabbath, yet nevertheless he doth accomplish and fulfill his divine will in all things great and small, singular and general, as fully and exactly by providence, as he could by miracle and new creation, though his working be not immediate and direct, but by compass; not violating Nature, which is his own law upon the creature.

73 Cf. WFB III, p. 266.
That at the first the soul of Man was not produced by heaven or earth, but was breathed immediately from God; so that the ways and proceedings of God with spirits are not included in Nature, that is, in the laws of heaven and earth; but are reserved to the law of his secret will and grace; wherein God worketh still, and resteth not from the work of redemption, as he resteth from the work of creation: but continueth working till the end of the world; what time that work also shall be accomplished, and an eternal sabbath shall ensue. Likewise that whenever God doth break the law of nature by miracles, (which are ever new creations,) he never cometh to that point or pass, but in regard of the work of redemption, which is the greater, and whereto all God’s signs and miracles refer.74

God’s dealings with humankind are according to a different set of rules than His dealings with other creatures. As these rules inhere in his “secret will and grace” they can only be known by direct revelation, not by the labor of reading the book of nature and learning its laws. Hence the errors of the Greeks, who would derive religious truths from the observation of nature, are dangerous and idolatrous, confusing the will of the Creator concerning human beings for the laws which govern lesser creatures. There is also an inherent danger in using the Bible, which reveals the special way in which God deals with humankind as opposed to His laws of nature, as a key to interpreting the regular course of nature. In arranging for human salvation the normal rules of nature do not necessarily apply, and the book which is dedicated to this special arrangement may easily mislead those who are looking for the ordinary laws of creation. The Scriptures were never intended to reveal the “power” of God in His natural law, but the secret will and grace of God in saving humankind. The laws of nature are sufficiently revealed in the other book, the creatures themselves.

Another critical difference between the two books which is reflected in aphorism 65 is that nature presented the natural laws of God literally, exactly as they were, while

74 WFB III, p. 221.
the Scriptures only referred to natural principles for the sake of illustrating otherwise unintelligible truths. In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon concisely stated why the Scriptures were necessarily different from all other books:

Notwithstanding thus much must be confessed, that the Scriptures, being given by inspiration and not by human reason, do differ from all other books in the author; which by consequence doth draw on some difference to be used by the expositor. For the inditer of them did know four things which no man attains to know; which are, the mysteries of the kingdom of glory; the perfection of the laws of nature, the secrets of the heart of man, and the future succession of all ages.  

There was a significant discrepancy between the perspective of the all-transcendent God who revealed His will in the Scriptures, and the perspective of finite humans. The book of nature, as we have observed, was fitted to the human mind, according to Bacon’s interpretation of Ecclesiastes 3:11, and thus it could be easily read and comprehended by human beings. The identity and will of God was not fitted to the human mind. It could only be grasped in revelation, and according to the manner in which God chose to reveal it. The incommensurability of these two types of knowledge also set the Scriptures apart in the manner in which they conveyed information. While in the book of nature all things could be read exactly as they were, the Scriptures were written in a way that adapted the unknowable to human capacity:

In the former [i.e. in revelation] we see God vouchsafeth to descend to our capacity, in the expressing of his mysteries in sort as may be sensible unto us; and doth grift [graft] his revelations and holy doctrine upon the notions of our reason.  

This principle, which has sometimes been referred to as a doctrine of “accommodation,” for it represents God’s accommodation of human finitude, had been part of the basic

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75 WFB III, pp. 484-85.

76 WFB III, pp. 479-80.
furniture in Western theology since Augustine. It had particular application for Bacon’s concern regarding why the two books should not be confused. In addition to not being concerned with revealing God’s power in creation, the Scriptures also presented many things in a manner which was suited to the common opinions and figures of speech of their audience, imperfect as they were and are in a sinful world, rather than to solid principles of natural philosophy:

And again, the scope or purpose of the Spirit of God is not to express matters of nature in the Scriptures, otherwise than in passage, and for application to man’s capacity and to matters moral or divine. And it is a true rule, Authoris aliud agentis parva authoritas; [what a man says incidentally about matters which are not in question has little authority:] for it were a strange conclusion, if a man should use a similitude for ornament or illustration sake, borrowed from nature or history according to vulgar conceit, as of a Basilisk, an Unicorn, a Centaur, a Briareus, an Hydra, or the like, that therefore he must needs be thought to affirm the matter thereof positively to be true.

The Bible was not a book meant to be understood according to its literal sense in natural philosophy. What is being presented here is a fairly common idea in early modern Europe, thanks to the ubiquity of Augustine, though at times, it appears, this basic principle was conveniently forgotten, as among the accusers of Galileo in 1616.77

In Aphorism 65 Bacon is going after very specific categories of errorists, among whom were the Paracelsians, who sought to “found a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, on the book of Job, and other parts of sacred writings.” In doing so, the Paracelsians ignored the fact that much of what God had caused to be written in the Scriptures was written to accommodate human limitations, and meant to explain spiritual, not physical, matters. In The Advancement of Learning Bacon presented it this way:

Galileo, in his “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina,” used this same principle to fend off his accusers, as it was expressed by Cardinal Baronio: “the intention of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how one goes to heaven, and not how the heavens go.” The Galileo Affair: a Documentary History, ed. Maurice A. Finocchiaro, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 96.
But for the latter [the philosophical understanding of the Scriptures], it hath been extremely set on foot of late time by the school of Paracelseus, and some others, that have pretended to find the truth of all natural philosophy in the Scriptures; scandalizing and traducing all other philosophy as heathenish and profane. But there is no such enmity between God’s word and his works. Neither do they give honour to the Scriptures, as they suppose, but much imbase them. For to seek heaven and earth in the Word of God, whereof it is said, Heaven and earth shall pass, but my word shall not pass, is to seek temporary things amongst the eternal: and as to seek divinity in philosophy is to seek the living amongst the dead, so to seek philosophy in divinity is to seek the dead amongst the living: neither are the pots or lavers whose place was in the outward part of the temple to be sought in the holiest place of all, where the ark of the testimony was seated.\(^{78}\)

We will return to this condemnation below in discussing the Paracelsians and Bacon’s adherence to a semi-Paracelsian cosmology despite his condemnation of Paracelsians. For now, it is worth observing that one of the main points of aphorism 65 can be placed in its proper context by looking to The Advancement of Learning. First of all, the Scriptural reference to Luke 24:5 is set forth here in a manner which makes it clear that Bacon is primarily interested in preserving the proper priority of divinity over philosophy. Second, the reference to the structure of the Old Testament temple sheds important light on how Bacon regarded natural philosophy and divinity as both necessarily parts of a single priestly service. The distinction between the subject matter of the two books, as it is here set forth, is clearly not a distinction of the sacred and the secular, but a distinction between degrees of holiness. The subject of the book of nature is equated with the outer parts of the temple, and divinity is equated with the Holiest Place, the place of the mysterious dwelling of God in unapproachable cloud, seated upon the Ark. The study of Nature is still sacred, but it deals with those things which are approachable, while the study of divinity deals with things unapproachable by human reason, but revealed. The

\(^{78}\) WFB III, p.
clergy of the Church attended to the holiest part of the temple, while Bacon’s new order of natural philosophers were given care of the outer courts. The system was interactive, for although natural philosophy could not pass into the mysteries of God, it could lead the mind up to the point where the mysteries of God could be properly contemplated. This passage is consistent with Bacon’s belief that natural philosophy entailed a quasi-mystical ascent of the mind, for, as he said in Book 1 of The Advancement of Learning that natural philosophy leads back to religion, for a the human mind passes from the things of nature to Providence, to meditation on that which is beyond second causes.79

Aphorism 65 is just one of many places in Bacon’s writing where the essential distinction between the subject matter of the two books is set forth, and many of the other locations are far more explicit, though they are not as commonly cited in secondary literature. (We must remember that Bacon’s Novum Organum was a succinct form of presenting very complex arguments which he had made elsewhere -- “digested into aphorisms.”) One of the places where part of this argument is addressed is in the passage from The Advancement of Learning just discussed. Another locus, where this argument is spelled out in much more detail, is in his Cogitata et Visa. As we will recall, this is the work which Bodley observed in draft form and to which he so vehemently objected. Andrewes was asked to proof a later draft, and ultimately Isaac Gruter published a draft of this work in 1653 which had been rather unceremoniously dumped on him by Bacon’s de jure literary executor Sir William Boswell.80 The argument of aphorism 65 is found here with a significant amount of explanatory material which ties Bacon’s concerns regarding the admixture of theology and philosophy very clearly to his Sacred History, as

79 CF. WFB III, p. 268.

80 For the history of how the miscellaneous papers which Boswell gathered from Bacon’s closet wound up being published only five or six years after Boswell’s death see WFB III, preface.
well as to the doctrine of the two books. Bacon expressed his basic concern here as follows:

quam molestum ac in omni genere difficilem adversarium naeta sit
Philosophia naturalis, Superstitionem nimirium et zelum religionis caecum
et immoderatum. [In Superstition and in blind immoderate religious zeal,
Natural Philosophy has found a troublesome and intractable enemy.]

Clearly religion itself is not the target, but its abuse. It is not surprising that in preparing his argument for the broader audience of the *Novum Organum* he would soften his wording here. In the history of Christianity it had happened before that a few Christian Fathers had fettered natural philosophy by insisting that it conform to their private interpretations of the Scriptures. As we noted in chapter four, this was reiterated by Bacon in aphorism 89 of book 1 of the *Novum Organum*. The Scholastics were a special case of the confusion of the two books, as we also observed in chapter four. In *Cogitata et Visa* they embody both sides of the error, and demonstrate how Bacon regarded it as a single error:

Quin et duriorem (ut nunc sunt res) conditionem sermonum de Natura
effectam ex temeritate Theologorum Scholasticorum et eorum clientelis, qui
cum Tehologiam (satis pro potestate) in ordinem redegerint et in artis
fabricam effinxerint, hoc insuper ausi sunt, ut contentiosam et
tumultuariam Aristotelis Philosophiam corpori religionis insuererint. [In
our own days discussions concerning nature have been subjected to even
harsher constraint by reason of the boldness of the Scholastics and their
followers. They have not only done their best to reduce Theology into the
form of a manual but have had the temerity to incorporate the disputations
and contentious philosophy of Aristotle into the body of religion.]

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81 WFB III, pp. 595-96, Translation, Benjamin Farrington in, *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, (University of Chicago Press, 1964), 77. Farrington’s work did a service to Bacon scholars by translating the entirety of this tract, along with two others, into an English form which captures the stress and vigor of the original Latin quite well.

Whether mixing spiritual truth with the Aristotelian canons of debate and human reason, or constraining discussions of nature by what they took for systematic theology, the Scholastics followed their own fancies rather than what God had set forth.

After the Scholastics, Bacon turned his pen to those in his contemporary society who followed the fashionable opinion that theology and natural philosophy could be combined, or “married,” as if they were one form of knowledge, and as if “faith and the evidence of the senses” could be combined and used for a single end. First of all, this would violate the principle presented in the *Confession of Faith* that the law of nature and the “proceedings of God with spirits” are not the same, and might even contradict (in which case God would bend nature for the greater end of redemption). Second, the tendency of those who followed the opinion that faith and the evidence of the senses could be married was to subject developments in natural philosophy to the same suspicion that accompanied innovations in religion. The shadow of the objections which Bodley made to the *Cogitata et Visa* seems to hover over this section, though we cannot be sure if this draft was written before or after Bodley saw it:

> Revera autem si quis diligentius animum advertat, non minus periculi Naturali Philosophiae ex istiusmodi fallaci et iniquo foedere, quam ex apertis inimicitii imminere. Tali enim foedere et societate, recepta in Philosophia tantum comprehendi: aucta autem, vel addita, vel in melius mutata, etiam severius et pertinacius excludi. Deinque versus incrementa, et novas veluti oras et regiones philosophiae, omnia ex parte religionis pravarum suspicionum et importentis fastidii plena esse. [The careful inquirer will find that there is more danger to Natural Philosophy from this specious and ill-matched union than from open hostility. For in this intimate contract only what is already received in Natural Philosophy is included; all fresh growth, additions, improvements are excluded more strictly and obstinately than ever before. In fine every development of

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83 Farrington, 78.

84 Cf. Chapter 3.
philosophy, every new frontier and direction, is regarded by religion with unworthy suspicion and violent contempt.]85

Thomas Bodley, who had responded that Bacon’s innovations would lead to the loss even of that knowledge which his society did have, may not have been openly hostile, but he was dismissive of Bacon’s suggestions as unworthy because untried. Even if Bacon’s ideas were put into practice they could not improve upon the benchmark of human knowledge in classical antiquity, “For still the same defects that Antiquity found will reside in Mankind.”86 Bodley’s position reflected the “unworthy suspicion” common to so many Calvinists when considering the capacity of human reason after the Fall. For Bodley, the doctrine of total depravity, by which sin had corrupted every aspect of human nature, trumped Bacon’s argument for hope. Bodley’s argument appears to fit the condemnations of this text, though, as we have noted, the same principle was used to condemn the Paracelsians. It is significant to note that this one principle, the confusion of the message of the two authoritative books, could be used to explain the error of a wide variety of people with whom Bacon disagreed, even if these groups would not have recognized much similarity in each other.

Next Bacon turned to the errors which he perceived in a more rigorous class of Calvinist theologians: those who were concerned that natural philosophy would transgress the divinely established boundaries of knowledge. Bacon’s argument here is nearly identical to that found in the Valerius Terminus and The Advancement of Learning which was discussed in chapter four. These were those who sought to “please God by a lie,”87 and in extreme cases might even believe that “in the enquiry into nature something

85 WFB III, p. 596, Translation, Benjamin Farrington, 78.

86 The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam. . . . (London, 1648), 83.

87 Farrington, 78.
may come to light which will overthrow religion.” This latter position, and perhaps he has William Perkins in mind, “cannot be entertained without impiety.\textsuperscript{88}

Bacon’s conclusion of this section of the \textit{Cogitata et Visa} is particularly enlightening, for he presented his position with a degree of detail that is entirely lacking in aphorism 65. In this section he specifically connected the error under discussion with the fundamental distinction of the matter of the two books:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Quare satis constabat ei, in hujusmodi opinionibus multum infirmitatis, quin et invidiae et fermenti non parum subesse. Naturalem enim Philosophiam post verbum Dei certissimam superstitionis medicinam, eandem probatissimum fidei alimentum esse. Itaque merito religioni tanquam fidissimam et acceptissimam ancillam attribui: cum altera voluntatem Dei, altera potestatem manifestet: Neque errasse eum qui dixerit, erratis nescientes scripturas et potestatem Dei; informationem de voluntate, et meditationem de potestate, nexu individuo copulantem. Quae licet verissima sint, nihilominus illud manet; in potentissimus Naturalis Philosophiae impedimentis, ea quae de zelo imperito et superstitione dicta sunt, citra controversiam numerari.} [The conclusion of this meditation is that in opinions of this sort there is much evidence of weakness, malice and instability. Next to the word of God Natural Philosophy is the most certain cure for superstition and the most approved nutriment of faith. Its rightful station is as the accepted and loyal handmaid of religion, for religion reveals the will of God, Natural Philosophy His power. He was not wrong who said: Ye err being ignorant of the Scriptures and of the Power of God, thus linking together knowledge of God’s will and meditation on His power by an indissoluble bond. But though this be so, the analysis given above stands unshaken. Among present obstacles to Natural Philosophy zeal without knowledge and blind superstition stand supreme.]\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

This section clearly sets forth John Henry’s position that Bacon himself was not opposed to mixing theology and natural philosophy, for Christ Himself had associated the two in an “indissoluble bond.” But they must not be mixed the wrong way, as those whom Bacon had just discussed had done. One problem with the task of interpreting

\textsuperscript{88} Farrington, 78.

\textsuperscript{89} WFB III, p. 597, Translation, Benjamin Farrington, 78-79.
aphorism 65, is that when it is read in isolation it is extremely flexible, potentially condemning Bacon himself for the admixture of theology and natural philosophy. It is clear from the discussion in *Cogitata et Visa*, however, that under the heading of this error Bacon placed those with whom he was at odds anyway: Scholastics, Calvinists, the ancient Greeks, and the Paracelsians. He himself was not guilty of mixing religion and philosophy improperly, for he adhered rigorously to the distinction between the will of God revealed in the Scriptures and the power of God revealed in Nature.

A potential stumbling block for those who read aphorism 65 in isolation is Bacon’s use of the word “theological” to denote the field of spiritual knowledge as opposed to natural philosophy. A better choice of terms might be that which he used in *The Advancement of Learning* where he juxtaposed divinity and natural philosophy, both of which are theologically conceived. It is evident throughout Bacon’s writings that natural philosophy, as the study of the book of God’s power, is nothing less than a theological category according to the common usage of “theology.” The distinction made in aphorism 65 is itself theological, and it divides two inherently theological categories: the mystery of the will of God, which cannot be discovered but has been *revealed* in Scripture, and the study of the *power of God*, which is written in the Book of Nature, and in which humanity was designed to participate. Each of these is a theological category, but they are not to be confused. The reading of both books is part of God’s plan for human recovery: the first is essential to the Incarnation, and the second to the Instauration, and neither can be separated from God’s salvific activity. It is important that they not be confounded for only God’s revealed grace can restore what Bacon “man’s innocency” according to the end of the second Book of the Novum Organum, and only proper scientific method can restore man’s “dominion over creation.” Confusion of the two would be a disastrous heresy, or “the apotheosis of error.”
The gravity of the error involved can only be understood in light of the understanding which Bacon and Andrewes shared of the nature of the sin involved in the Fall. Between the two men, Andrewes had explained the Genesis text in the most detail in the lectures of the *Apospasmatia Sacra*. To recapitulate the discussion of chapter four: in discussing the state of Adam prior to the Fall, Andrewes ascribes to him both types of knowledge, Adam knew the revealed will of God because God had told it to him, and Adam also had a perfect experimental knowledge, for the moment he encountered any creature he immediately understood its name, its use, its intended place within the cosmic order. (These are answers which we must work hard to discover now that creation has rebelled.) But these two forms of knowledge had to remain distinct, for the mystery of the eternal will of God had to be taken on faith, it was beyond experimental comprehension. God had revealed to Adam that the tree was prohibited, and Adam understood the prohibition according to his faith in God’s command: it was a command beyond human reasoning. But then, Andrewes says, Adam “could not see why God should forbid him, and therefore the Tempter taking occasion by it, made him make an experiment of it.” Thus Andrewes sheds important light on Bacon’s statement that we must render unto faith the things that are faiths, or we will commit the apotheosis of error. Confusion of revealed and experimental knowledge was the very substance of the original sin. Thus also, when Bacon lamented that his generation was missing their role in the Instauration event in the previously cited passage from the introduction to the *Natural and Experimental History*, he accused his generation of nothing less than repeating the sin of Adam.

In light of the discussion of the *Deus Absconditus* in chapter four, it is noteworthy that Bacon’s distinction between the different types of knowledge revealed in the two
books, and the nature of their interaction, cannot be separated from his specific doctrine of the *Deus Absconditus*. This is particularly evident from the *Valerius Terminus* where the original of the phrase, “render unto faith only the things that are faith’s” is found:

Nay further, as it was aptly said by one of Plato’s school the sense of man resembles the sun, which openeth and revealeth the terrestrial globe, but obscureth and concealeth the celestial; so doth the sense discover natural things, but darken and shut up divine. And this appeareth sufficiently in that there is no proceeding in invention of knowledge but by similitude: and God is only self-like, having nothing in common with any creature, otherwise as in shadow and trope. Therefore attend his will as himself openeth it, and give unto faith that which unto faith belongeth; 91

The will of God was secret and could not be known unless it was directly revealed. This belonged to faith. The study of the natural world could add nothing to human understanding of the hidden things of God, for it was impossible that nature could reveal anything of God’s essence or will, it only revealed His power and the pattern in which that power operated. As Bacon explained the same concept in *The Advancement of Learning*, the knowledge of nature could produce nothing but wonder in regard to the knowledge of God. 92 It is important to note in regard to this statement that Bacon meant by the knowledge of God the knowledge of God’s secret will, and his transcendent identity, for, of course, knowledge of God’s power did come through nature, and the witnessing of this power drew the mind of man upward through the chain of causes until the dependence of all things upon God is recognized. 93

**Natural Theology**

The role of the study of nature for theology, according to the distinction we have been discussing, is clearly laid-out in book three of the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* of

91 WFB III, p. 218.

92 WFB III, p. 267.

93 WFB III, p. 268.
1623, under the heading of “Natural Theology” [Theologia Naturalis]. As with most of the De Augmentis, this section is essentially a translation and a refinement of ideas presented before in The Advancement of Learning, but in this case it is particularly helpful for the argument to consult the later version, as this demonstrates that these concepts were not merely held by Bacon in his early writings, but restated and refined in his last productions pertaining to the Instauration event.\footnote{The original discussion from The Advancement of Learning, Book 2, is less precise in its language, and I do not believe that this is due entirely to the presentation of these ideas in more formal Latin in the later work, but rather an expansion of the ideas themselves as Bacon discussed them with his various assistants on the project. Cf. the original in WFB III, pp. 349ff.} Read carefully, this section summarizes all that we have so far discussed concerning the interaction of the two books to form a single theological system:

\begin{quote}
Nam Theologia Naturalis, Philosophia etiam Divina recte appellatur. Diffinitur autem haec, ut sit talis scientia, seu potius scientiae scintilla, qualis de Deo haberi potest per lumen naturae et contemplationem rerum creatarum; et ratione objecti, sane divina, ratione informationis, naturalis censeri potest. Hujus scientiae limites ita vere signantur, ut ad atheismum confutandum et convincendum, et ad legem naturae informandam, se extendant; ad religionem autem astruendam non proferantur. [For Natural Theology is also rightly called Divine Philosophy. It is defined as that knowledge, concerning God, which may be obtained by the light of nature and the contemplation of his creatures; and it may truly be termed divine in respect of the object and natural in respect of the light. The bounds of this knowledge, truly drawn, are that it suffices to refute and convince Atheism, and to give information as to the law of nature; but not to establish religion.]\footnote{WFB I, p. 544. Translation, WFB IV, p. 341.}
\end{quote}

Bacon continued, in this section, by revisiting the error of the heathen in this regard and then listing what can and cannot be known according to Natural Theology, thus elucidating the boundaries of his distinction:

\begin{quote}
Atque hac in re ethnicorum opinio a sacra veritate recedit. Illi siquidem mundum imaginem Dei statuebant, hominem mundi. At Sacrae Literae
\end{quote}
haud tali honore mundum dignantur, ut Dei uspiam imago dicatur, sed
solummodo opus manuum ejus; hominem vero imaginem Dei immediate
substituunt. Quocirca, quod sit Deus, quod rerum habenas tractet, quod
summe potens, quod sapiens et praescius, quod bonus, quod remuneratur,
quod vindex, quod adorandum, etiam ex operibus ejus demonstrari et evinci
potest; et admirabilia complura secreta circa attributa ejus, et multo magis
circa regimen et dispensationem super universum, etiam sobrie ex iisdem
elicti et manifestatique sunt; estque istud argumentum a nonnullis utiliter
pertractatum. Verum ex intuitu rerum naturalium atque humanae rationis
principiis, de fidei mysteriis vel ratiocinari vel etiam suadere vehementius,
ae rursus ea curiosius introspicere et ventilare et de modo mysterii
inquirere, haud tutum meo judicio fuerit. Da Fidei quae Fidei sunt. [And
therefore therein the Heathen opinion differs from the sacred truth; for
they supposed the world to be the image of God, and man the image of the
world; whereas the Scriptures never vouchsafe to attribute to the world
such honour as anywhere to call it the image of God, but only the work of
his hands; but man they directly term the image of God. Wherefore that
God exists, that he governs the world, that he is supremely powerful, that
he is wise and prescient, that he is good, that he is a rewarder, that he is an
avenger, that he is an object of adoration -- all this may be demonstrated
from his works alone; and there are many other wonderful mysteries
concerning his attributes, and much more touching his regulations and
dispensations over the universe, which may likewise be reasonably elicited
and manifested from the same; and this is an argument that has by some
been excellently handled. But on the other side, out of the contemplation
of nature and elements of human knowledge to induce any conclusion of
reason or even any strong persuasion concerning the mysteries of faith,
yea, or to inspect and sift them too curiously and search out the manner of
the mystery, is in my opinion not safe. “Give unto faith the things which
are faith’s.”]96

It is evident that Bacon had no small role for the study of nature in matters of the faith,
and he has also clearly laid-out, here, just what came under the heading of the “power of
God.” In regard to this section Ellis noted that, for all of Bacon’s objection to “the
abusive employment of final causes” he was more than willing to retain the Scholastic
category of Natural Theology.97 Although it is not the concern of this essay, it might be

96 WFB I, p. 245. Translation, WFB IV, pp. 341-42.

97 WFB I, p. 245. fn. 2.
profitable at some future point to compare Bacon and the Scholastics on this topic. For now, it is significant that these boundaries are what he was concerned with preserving in aphorism 65, rather than establishing a distinction between faith and science. That this passage is analogous to aphorism 65 is clear not only from the use of the phrase, “Give unto faith the things which are faith’s,” but also from his conclusion that if the boundary is crossed what will result is “at once an heretical religion and an imaginary and fabulous philosophy” [religionem haereticam. . . , et philosophiam phantasticam et superstitionem].98

Capitulation: The Two Books and Aphorism 65 in Light of Sacred History

Bacon’s theology can be recognized as a coherent system of its own, but the Instauration corpus must be read together, and Bacon must be allowed to interpret Bacon, where possible. The usefulness of such a reading is manifested especially in its ability to reconcile what has for too long been taken to signify a separation of faith and science with other passages in which Bacon addressed theological issues.

The argument presented in aphorism 65 of book 1 of the Novum Organum was chronologically situated between the De Augmentis and a series of earlier arguments all of which are made to essentially the same effect. The distinction between that which can be known through reason and the human study of nature and that which cannot is made theologically, along the lines prescribed by Bacon’s doctrine of the Deus Absconditus and the particular understanding of the original sin which was espoused by both Bacon and Andrewes. Rather than a distinction between science and faith, Bacon was forwarding a caution, in aphorism 65, against what he regarded as the specific abuses of the past both among the heathen, and among Paracelsians and theologians who did not have their categories straight. As an aphorism it is a summary, and reflects a much broader

conceptual distinction found throughout Bacon’s writings in which natural philosophy and religion share the parallel tasks of interpreting the two books for the twin theological ends of Instauration and Salvation respectively.

Bacon always held that divinity and natural philosophy should interact, but in order for them to interact properly, the boundaries of each must be clearly recognized. The errors in this regard were being cleared up in his own day, according to his interpretation of Sacred History, through what might be legitimately called a ‘twofold reformation.’ Before the Second Coming the first world could and would be transformed, but humanity had to move forward in this project, and not be misled through pride into confusing the boundaries of the two types of knowledge. This confusion was the very substance of the original sin, and as long as humankind kept repeating that sin, the seeds of the Instauration planted by Bacon and God would never bear their appointed fruit. If humankind attempted to construct an image of God out of knowledge obtained through the study of creation rather than revelation, assuming that the veil of the Deus Absconditus can be breached through human effort, the result would be idolatry. Adam had done just this in committing the first sin, when he trusted the promise of knowledge in the created tree over the genuine knowledge of God’s Word. Similarly, if natural knowledge were sought in the Scriptures the result would be idolatry. The proper image of God’s power cannot be constructed out of texts where it is not to be found. An artificial image of the world would follow, preventing the recovery of mastery through knowledge of the divinely instituted laws of nature. While these ideas are most clearly presented in Bacon’s later Instauration writings, the way was prepared for this distinction already in the Meditationes Sacrae where Bacon argued that the two sources of heresy were denial of God’s will and denial of His power.
However, if the two books were read properly, each informing the other but not being confused, the result would be recovery of humanity’s full edenic relationship with God. Spiritually, the innocence of Eden was available through the Church, even if the struggle with sin, the rebellious part of man, would be constant. Materially, humanity’s cooperation with God in the Garden, as the viceregent of the cosmos, could also be recovered, though it entailed perpetual labor, the cooperation of many, and a struggle against the rebelliousness in nature. Recovery would be temporary and a matter of perpetual labor, but in Bacon’s understanding it was nowhere precluded. In this way, when viewed from a distance, Bacon’s theological system forms an interesting symmetry: within the third age, that which was lost by humanity at the beginning of the age would be recovered after a period of loss, so that the fulness of the fourth age, when Spiritual and material recovery would be perfected in the New Heaven and the New Earth, would be foreshadowed by a period in which both innocence and mastery would appear in incomplete form.

**Facilitating Hermeticism and a “Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology”**

As Paolo Rossi and many others following him have demonstrated, Bacon’s thought owed much to his willingness to give a fair hearing to the alchemical and magical traditions of the Renaissance. An understanding of the basic features of Bacon’s Christian theology has much to contribute to the ongoing discussion of Hermetic and alchemical influences on Bacon’s thought. Bacon’s particular interpretation of Scripture and his narrative of Sacred History easily accommodated, and even facilitated, an incorporation of many aspects of Hermetic philosophy. The focus of this study has been to examine the contours of Bacon’s Christian theology, and a detailed discussion of the overlap between Hermeticism and his theology is beyond the scope of this project. However, given the prominence of the topic of Hermeticism and the *prisca theologia*
tradition in discussions relating to Bacon, it is important to recognize that this overlap did exist, and that Bacon’s reliance upon Hermetic ideas is congruent with his theology.

In proposing that mechanical arts and natural philosophy were an essential part of recovery from the Fall, Bacon himself recognized that he was introducing a new theme into Christian theology. According to Bacon’s own Sacred History, previous generations of Christians, from the Church Fathers through the reformers, had been concerned with the central doctrine of spiritual recovery through the Incarnation of Christ. They were not concerned with the question of material recovery, and so, as with all acts of Providence, the Instauration, although clearly prophesied, had gone unnoticed until the age of Instauration itself was at hand. Now the prophecies and preparations pertaining to the Instauration could be properly interpreted. Before Bacon, Christian thinkers had not recognized the potential of the mechanical arts and natural philosophy to undo the loss of dominion which had occurred in the Fall. Before Bacon, the twofold nature of the Fall had not been fully realized, and so its symmetrical resolution through the Church and through science in the “autumn of the world” was not to be properly understood until the providential actions of God had made it undeniable.

Bacon was entirely correct in observing that in traditional Christian thinking, at least prior to the Renaissance, such material recovery was not to be expected in the midst of a sinful world. Andrewes’ pessimism concerning matters outside the Church, Aquinas’ belief that sin would foil the best of attempts at significant improvement, and Calvin’s doctrine of total depravity were the typical positions, and apart from spiritual transformation recovery was not to be expected. Although monastics could speak of transformation, both of themselves and of the desert places in which they established their monasteries, they regarded themselves as living in an age oriented toward the deliverance of an age to come, and the bottom line in a sinful age was always the
corruption of sin. Any recovery in this world, even in the monastery, was local if not entirely individual, and a function of prayer and sacred meditation not rigorous scientific method. Although the idea of material recovery through mechanical arts and the earth-bound knowledge of natural philosophy was not native to Christianity, it was a central theme in the Corpus Hermeticum, and it is here, in the potential of humanity to effect its own recovery, that the influence of Hermeticism most clearly intersects Bacon’s theology.99

The similarities between the Corpus Hermeticum and Bacon’s system of theology are manifest, beginning with the reason for which humanity was created in the first place, to contemplate God and nature. According to Corpus Hermeticum, book III, man was created to:

- contemplate heaven the course of the heavenly gods, the works of god and the working of nature;
- to examine things that are good;
- to know divine power;
- to know the whirling changes of fair and foul;
- and to discover every means of working skillfully with things that are good.100

In the vocation of contemplation and investigation of nature, there was no knowledge which was barred to humankind, according to the discussion of the Hermetic text, Asclepius:

99 In connection with the points of this paragraph, I find Peter Harrison’s attempt to conflate Hermetic ideas with those of Hugh of St. Victor, Hildegard of Bingen, Erigena and others to be far overreaching the bounds of the texts of these medieval thinkers, and it is significant that he does not cite the texts themselves in making his points. Harrison’s account is otherwise very useful, however, as it reinforces the connection between Platonic/Patristic perspective and Bacon’s thought which I have made elsewhere in this study. The recovery of which these thinkers wrote was primarily a matter of spiritual perspective, however, and, as Harrison noted, it took place in the mind, not in actuality, though it was aided by such activities as gardening and observing the natural world for signs of the divine. Even in Hugh of St. Victor and Erigena, Harrison’s star and his earliest example respectively, the restoration was the product of meditating rightly on the things of creation, not a program of systematically manipulating them, and certainly not experimentation, and no genuine recovery could be achieved except in the life and personal experience of the individual. The idea of actual recovery (apart from right contemplation) is not to be predicated of Christians prior to the Renaissance. Cf. Peter Harrison, The Bible, Protestantism and the rise of Natural Science, Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp. 58-61.

He [man] cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind. Everything is permitted him: heaven itself seems not too high, for he measures it in his clever thinking as if it were nearby. No misty air dims the concentration of his thought; no thick earth obstructs his work; no abysmal deep of water blocks his lofty view.\[^{101}\]

The end of human existence, according to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, was a state of deification much like that of Bacon’s *Confession of Faith*, in which human beings would enter directly into the presence of God:

They rise up to the father in order and surrender themselves to the powers, and, having become powers, they enter into god. This is the final good for those who have received knowledge: to be made god.\[^{102}\]

In all of these points, however, Bacon could also turn to the authority of the ancient Christian Fathers. Nyssa presented man’s vocation as the investigation of the things of nature, Bacon’s understanding of the knowable and the unknowable in creation is tied to the distinction as it was made in the writings of Irenaeus, and the deification language of the final passage is similar not only to Bacon but to the standard doctrines of the Christian East. This is a reminder that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was a product of the very same late classical thought world which produced the Church Fathers themselves, and that its doctrines were developed with the same Neoplatonic language and categories guiding, as well as sharing a certain dependency upon the Jewish creation myth of Genesis.\[^{103}\] Bacon’s turn toward patristic theology was inherently a turn toward a theology more compatible with Hermetic ideas than was the theology of Calvin or Aquinas.

\[^{101}\] Ibid., 70.

\[^{102}\] Ibid., 6.

However, the Hermetic emphasis on mechanical arts and natural philosophy as a means of obtaining the mastery over nature for which man was created, as well as the sense that the investigation of nature is an essential part of God’s plan of salvation, are not typical of the Fathers. In the quotation from *Corpus Hermeticum*, III, above, the former idea is evident, and in *Corpus Hermeticum*, XI the latter is set forward:

Having conceived that nothing is impossible to you, consider yourself immortal and able to understand everything, all art, all learning, the temper of every living thing. Go higher than every height and lower than every depth. Collect in yourself all the sensations of what has been made, of fire and water, dry and wet; be everywhere at once, on land, in the sea, in heaven; be not yet born, be in the womb, be young, old, dead, beyond death. And when you have understood all these at once -- times, places, things qualities, quantities -- then you can understand god.\(^\text{104}\)

Of course, this is not exactly how Bacon presented the idea of the salvific significance of the investigation of nature. Bacon’s presentation fits entirely within the theology and Sacred History of his Christian faith. For example, in keeping with Bacon’s Christian understanding of the *Deus Absconditus*, God Himself cannot be known via natural philosophy, but His power and attributes can. This raises an important question: If Bacon was dependent upon the early modern manifestations of Hermetic philosophy, is there any way to reconcile this with his prior commitment to the truth of Christianity? The answer, of course, is that there must have been a certain syncretism of Hermetic and Christian ideas in Bacon, even as there was in the Christian champion of Hermeticism, Ficino. Whereas Ficino assumed that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was the ancient source that it claimed to be, however, Bacon did not, and he did not need to. The answer for Bacon lies in his understanding that truth is not found in the Bible alone, balanced by his belief in the normative role of God’s two books.

\(^{104}\) Copenhaver, 41.
In discrediting the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Isaac Casaubon (whom we may recall was a friend of Lancelot Andrewes) could only demonstrate that the texts were not the ancient authorities which they claimed to be. He could not render them sterile by demonstrating that they were devoid of all truth. He also did not prove that they were at odds with Christianity, for there were obvious congruences between the Hermetic texts and Christian patristic thought. The most that Casaubon could do, and what he did do, was add a serious *caveat lector* to the *Corpus Hermeticum*.105 We do not know what Bacon thought of Casaubon’s findings when they were published in 1614. We can be sure, however, that Casaubon’s work did not mean that Bacon would have found it necessary to abandon or even rethink his use of the texts. Bacon did not regard that which was imperfect as useless, as he made clear in his interpretations of the meanings of Greek myths in *De Sapientia Veterum*. In regard to the transmission of knowledge Bacon held that the myths of the Greeks were worthy of study because they held truths from an earlier time which, though they came down imperfectly, still had application for the present day: “as sacred relics and light airs breathing out of better times, that were caught from the traditions of more ancient nations and so received into the flutes and trumpets of the Greeks.”106 Therefore ancient texts may always be useful as bearers of truth, but they must be thoroughly winnowed, and measured against better sources. Bacon’s two main measures, or, in the most literal sense, canons, of truth were the books written directly by God: the Scriptures and the book of nature.

When weighed against either book the tenets of Hermeticism would have been in need of qualification, but Bacon did not need to dismiss them. Bacon saw the theme of material recovery as present throughout the Christian Scriptures, and further

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demonstrated by the visible acts of Providence in his own day. If the Hermetic writings, or their Renaissance interpreter Ficino, also recognized this potential in human beings they were simply congruent with that which was known to be true. Certainly the manifold congruence of Hermetic ideas with patristic theology would have added to the case that there was something in Hermeticism worthy of rescuing from the flotsam and jetsam which the “river of time” had borne down. We have no way of knowing whether Bacon went to the Scriptures specifically to test these ideas, which would suggest that there was a ghost of credulity already haunting his exegetical machine. However, by virtue of his patristic turn in theology, it is only reasonable that Bacon should have approached Hermeticism with something of the ambiguity which the Church Fathers of the first centuries themselves had in regard to the Hermetic texts. The Hermetic texts were used by the Fathers and condemned by the Fathers to varying degrees, depending upon the points under consideration, and the predisposition of that particular Church Father.  

Graham Rees’ identification of Bacon’s cosmology as “semi-Paracelsian” bears-out the idea that Bacon approached the Hermetic tradition of his own day with ambiguity. When checked against the book of nature, the cosmology of the Paracelsians had much to offer which Bacon adopted and significantly revised. What he did not adopt, Rees argued, was the divinization of the cosmos, and (as we noted above) the idea that a coherent cosmology could be founded upon Biblical accounts in Genesis or Job.  

As we have seen, these ideas were in conflict with his prior theological commitments, including


his adherence to a non-divine Biblical cosmos, and his belief in the necessary division of
the subject matter of the two books.

Bacon’s Christianity qualified as well as facilitated his Hermeticism, and it is not
necessary to set up an artificial tension between the Hermetic and Christian trends of
Bacon’s thought. His own Christianity is exactly that which qualified his reading of the
Hermetic tradition and his adoption of it. However, it is also his particular Christian
theology which, by virtue of its incorporation of concepts and categories of the
Christianity of classical antiquity, facilitated a sympathetic reception of particular
Hermetic ideas.

Stephen McKnight has identified one of the principal contributions of
Hermeticism to early modern thought as an “immanentist” theology, which affirmed “the
goodness of the world and the dignity of man as a co-creator with God.”109 “Immanence” is
a mutivalent term in McKnight’s treatment, including both the traditional theological
category of the immanence of God Himself in His active cooperation with humanity, as
well as the lack of a dualistic distinction between the realm of the mundane and the sacred.
For Bacon, there was no such dualistic distinction, any more than there was for John
Selden, Lancelot Andrewes, or so many others for whom humanity was in constant
interaction with God, and for whom there simply was no truly mundane category.
Creation had not become evil in the Fall, only rebellious, and it remained the theater of
God’s interaction with humankind, both for Salvation and for the provision of earthly
blessings demonstrating God’s mercy for “the relief of man’s estate.” Bacon’s logos
theology ensured that God was always interacting with His creatures through the
hypostatic union by which the Second Person of the Godhead was joined with humanity,
the representative of God and ruler of Creation. The result of this union was for Bacon

109 McKnight, 3.
precisely what it was for Irenaeus, or the Cappadocian Fathers and Maximus the Confessor: the establishment of the proper human place in the Cosmos by virtue of deification, or participation in the divine. Bacon’s theology was among those which McKnight has described as “compatible with and receptive to the immanentist elements of the Ancient Wisdom revived by Ficino and the Platonic Academy.”

Humankind was cooperating with an immanent and interactive God. Nature, though rebellious, retained its potential for what God had created it to be, the subject and servant of the human reign as God’s viceregent. It is a short step, given the early modern revival of the hermetic tradition, from the eschatological pessimism of Andrewes and the Eastern Fathers to a fully “immanentist” theology in which, by cooperation with the Creator, humanity could will its own recovery. It is a short step, but a complicated one, requiring the support of a coherent theology and a unique interpretation of the narrative of sacred history.

CHAPTER 6:  
CONCLUSIONS

Plotting the Line of Best Fit

At the heart of this study were two questions: What did Francis Bacon believe? and, How did his beliefs affect his work? The goal has been to establish the contours of the theology and religious thought which lie behind the numerous theological statements and Biblical quotations supporting his idea of a providential age of renewal, or Instauration. In sum, one desired effect of this study has been to establish a viable profile of Bacon as an adherent of the Christian faith, and another has been to examine how the particular contours of his belief played-out in his Instauration writings, which he regarded as his life’s work and his special mission. By its very nature, such an historical investigation cannot produce unimpeachable answers, but only, if it is successful, the least impeachable ones. It is an attempt to establish an intellectual line of best fit. As much as anything, the establishment of such a line is dependent upon those points which are chosen as significant. For any line of best fit the choices are not entirely arbitrary. There are points which are more and points which are less appropriate for establishing the line. Previous studies of Bacon’s thought, to the extent that they have given any attention to his religious disposition at all, have often focused on points which are not particularly appropriate when viewed in light of the larger context of Bacon’s work, and often less appropriate in light of the larger contexts of his literary circle and society.

One very common example of such a choice is the attention which has been given to Bacon’s affinity for the writings and thought of Machiavelli. This is often used as a
means of addressing the question of his belief. It is a popular theme in the writings of Weinberger, White, and others who would portray Bacon as essentially an atheist or deist, or a Christian only in so far as it was politically expedient. There can be no denying that Bacon had a special affinity for Machiavelli, or that this is evident in the often ruthless choices which he made in his political career. However, this must always be kept in perspective. In the Tudor and Stuart courts Bacon had no monopoly on ruthless and self-serving political choices, and, in fact, he was far surpassed in this category by some very devout bishops and Archbishops in his day and shortly after. For a great many people politics was a path of twisted and complex means which could only be justified by the higher ends involved, and the political game could not become more noble simply by the wishes of the players. For Bacon, the higher end of his political aspirations was, as he often said himself, the advancement of learning for the relief of humanity’s estate and the greater glory of God.

Of course, those who interpret Bacon as an atheist or deist claim that the Christian statements which he made throughout his writings are merely exemplary of how well he played his Machiavellian game. He was willing to do what was necessary to advance his fortunes, and in his day it was necessary to appear as a good Christian. If we may take Bacon at his own words, however, he had a much different interpretation of his own Machiavellianism. In the second book of The Advancement of Learning he wrote:

So that we are much beholden to Machiavel and others, that write what men do and not what they ought to do. For it is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine innocency, except men know exactly all the conditions of the serpent; his baseness and going upon his belly, his volubility and lubricity, his envy and sting, and the rest; that is, all forms and natures of evil. For without this, virtue lieth open and unfenced. Nay an honest man can do no good upon those that are wicked to reclaim them, without the help of the knowledge of evil.\footnote{\textit{WFB III}, pp. 430-431.}
We may still ask how such an opinion squares with Bacon’s own political actions, for turning against his patron Essex and assisting in his prosecution can hardly be justified as an act of doing good upon the wicked to reclaim them. Nevertheless, that opinion of Bacon is our interpretation of his actions, not his own, and significantly for the point of this study, not that of his chaplain, the doctor of divinity William Rawley, who regarded Bacon as epitomizing virtue and meekness in a corrupt world. It is also significant that the study of Machiavelli is presented by Bacon as acceptable precisely because such knowledge is sanctioned by the teachings of Christ in Matthew 10:16: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” There is good reason, according to the material presented in this study to read this passage honestly and take Bacon at his word here, for it squares both with Bacon’s membership in a theologically oriented society and subgroup, and with his emphasis throughout his writings on the normative role of the faith.

It is also possible that the points which have been chosen as a means of establishing Bacon’s religious disposition are not valid, given the religious climate of sixteenth and seventeenth century England. One example of this is the argument that Bacon was anything but a sincere Christian because his statements about Christianity and his interpretation of Scripture are at odds with genuine Christian doctrine. As we observed in the introduction, this was a key element of the arguments of Weinberger and Innes. However, as the first part of this study has shown, when the historiography of the English Reformation is considered, and the actual historical positions of such undeniably Christian figures as Lancelot Andrewes, Tobie Matthew, William Rawley, and John Selden are considered, Bacon is clearly the product, and not an opponent, of the Christianity of his own day. Part of the problem (and this is clearly the case with the interpretation of Innes, as noted in the introduction) is that these scholars are measuring
Bacon by a simple dogmatic standard which defines Protestant “Christianity,” but which was established much later than the seventeenth century, and they have not accounted for the remarkable complexity of Christian thought in Bacon’s time. Gerald Bray, who is himself an Evangelical Protestant scholar, has complained that the theology of modern Protestantism is debased and shallow by comparison with its historical antecedents, and that to survive in the modern world it must recover the tremendous depth and intellectual rigor of its own past. Whatever the state or the future of Protestantism, it is clear from contemporary Reformation scholarship, as well as primary sources such as Lancelot Andrewes and John Selden, that Bray’s claim for a remarkable depth and complexity in the past is justified. Francis Bacon fits comfortably in the midst of it. However, this complexity has seldom been acknowledged in scholarship which has not dealt directly with the Reformation. When it is included in a study of Bacon it quickly becomes evident that he was not at odds with the Christianity of his day at all, though he was a proponent of ideas which were not part of the Calvinist mainstream.

Sometimes points of reference have been chosen, then, under the assumption that they were actually operative in Bacon’s day, when they were not. The example just considered is one in which either Christianity itself is misjudged, or it is a matter of anachronism in which the features of a later Christianity are read backward into the seventeenth century. A similar problem arises with the reading of Bacon as a Calvinist, or a Reformed Christian, as per Jardine and Stewart or Benjamin Milner. Reformed theology was an important aspect of Bacon’s earlier years, but not of the adult Bacon who produced the writings pertaining to the Instauration. The attempt to interpret Bacon’s theological statements in the Instauration corpus in light of his Calvinism is an attempt to draw the line through a point which Bacon himself had clearly abandoned. This is clear

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2 Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils, and Christ*, chapter one.
from a comparison of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism and Bacon’s theological writings of the late sixteenth century.

In choosing points for a line of best fit, breadth is always important. Breadth has been a particular concern of this study. Previous treatments of Bacon’s thought have often been confined to a fairly narrow list of sources, and often their conclusions concerning Bacon’s thoughts on religion and faith have been drawn from only a few choice quotations. This was the case with the long-standing assumption of Bacon’s strict separation of science and faith which John Channing Briggs and John Henry have so properly challenged based upon their broader readings of Bacon. Aphorism 65 of book one of the Novum Organum can be read that way, and a few other loci can be marshaled for support, but the image of Bacon which emerges is incongruent with the whole of Bacon’s writing. Moreover, in the study of the religious disposition of individuals there is far more to go on than an exegesis of their writings. Particularly if these individuals were not theologians and their writings not strictly theological, it is important to examine other evidence from their lives, as David L. Smith did in his study of Bacon’s younger contemporary, Edward Sackville. For this reason this study has looked first to the evidence from Bacon’s own life and society.

The first chapter established, very broadly, the complexity and variety of theological options which faced the intellectuals of the Tudor and Stuart eras. The second chapter demonstrated that Bacon moved in his adult years from one set of authorities within this field of theological options to another, a turn which was evident not only in his own writings, but also in the concerns of his Nonconformist mother. The third chapter decentered Bacon again, and established that the shift which Bacon had undergone was entirely congruent with the theological concerns and emphases of those who assisted him most in producing his philosophical writings. The Bacon circle was marked by a
rejection of Calvinism, particularly of the “severer sort” which marked the
Nonconformists, and a common interest in the paramount authority of Christian history
and tradition, as well as a common concern for tolerance within the official church, among
other points noted in chapter three. The fourth chapter forwarded the idea that the
theological shift which was described in chapter two facilitated a theology which provided
the Instauration writings with the support of a coherent theological system, and justified
Bacon’s belief that he was on the cusp of a remarkable and largely unforeseen providential
age. The fifth chapter examined the repercussions of Bacon’s Sacred History discussed in
chapter four, and reconsidered some of the standard themes of Bacon scholarship such as
his alleged separation of faith and science, and the reliance upon magic and alchemy for
the development of his method, which has been observed by Paolo Rossi, Graham Rees
and others. Throughout the discussion the image of Bacon’s faith has been clarified, but it
has not had to be modified, regardless of which aspects of his life and writings are
considered. It is a profile of Bacon’s Christianity in context which functions at multiple
levels.

The advantage of the profile of Bacon’s Christianity presented here is that it not
only reveals a coherent system in the theological statements which he made, but it is also
consistent with the rest of Bacon’s life as a citizen of his own time and place. The image
of Bacon presented in this study is substantiated by his field of literary associates, and is
consistent with the theological trends of his own day. A significant disadvantage is that
Bacon and his circle were eclectic and diverse thinkers, who, in spite of their common
interests theologically, defy easy categorization. With common concerns for patristics,
liturgy, tradition, and a general bent toward the minority position of anti-Calvinism, the
Bacon literary circle can be seen to represent an ideal which could be characterized as
“proto-Anglican,” but if so they also represent the remarkable freedom and diversity of
thought from which Anglicanism grew. Bacon’s own ideas of a double fall, the potential of the human mind, and the dawning of a providential age, while not at odds with the trends of theology in his day were also not defining doctrines for anyone but himself. Bacon was a product of his age, but not a partisan, and, according to chapter three, in this he was not alone.

The Significance of Theology and Personal Faith in Seventeenth Century Thought

In his introduction to the 1971 Clark Library Seminar papers entitled, *Theology in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, Lynn White observed that academia tended to ignore the fact that “Theology was the dominant concern of Europe in the sixteenth century, and it continued to permeate every aspect of the seventeenth as well.” As a result of what White termed the “cultural myopia” of assuming that past eras were as unconcerned with theology as we are ourselves, White concluded that academics “normally view theologically minded periods of the past with a warped vision, and their interpretations of those eras tell us more about the twentieth, than about earlier centuries.” A great deal of valuable writing has been produced since Lynn White’s criticism. Scholars of the English Reformation Era have increasingly connected important doctrinal developments, such as anti-Calvinism, apocalypticism, and millennialism, to the elements of political and cultural history which were influenced by them. Yet what White aptly called “cultural myopia” remains, and dominates some fields entirely. This study is a contribution to the continuing project of rectifying that myopia.

In the field of Bacon scholarship conditions are improving, as the work of Briggs, Henry, Milner, and many others attests. Questions pertaining to Bacon’s religion and theological statements are being routinely included in more recent scholarship. Yet there is a persistent tendency to regard matters of faith as something tangential, and other than

3 (Los Angeles, UCLA, Clark Library, 1971), p. iii.
a central concern for Bacon. This is lingering cultural myopia, for it is clear that theology was anything but tangential in his own life, or in his life’s work, the Instauration corpus. Theology had a significant impact upon Bacon’s thought and upon the development of his method for the reform of learning. It provided both the motivation and the justification for his program, establishing the recovery of Edenic mastery itself as a divinely appointed event, and natural philosophy as a divinely sanctioned vocation. As we have seen, twentieth century concepts of the separation of the sacred and secular were not operative for Bacon, and we cannot get beyond ourselves to a study of Bacon until we acknowledge the full force which theology can have on life and thought when it is considered (as Bacon considered it) to be absolutely normative.

Theology in Bacon’s day was a realm of absolute truth. It was both absolute and absolutely true because it emanated from the omniscient and omnipotent Creator. If religious experiences could be relative or subjective, theology could not. This did not mean that everyone agreed on what was true, but none denied that objective truth did exist, that it had been revealed to humanity, or that it should norm and govern human thought and activity. It was not arbitrary or shifting. It functioned much as a mold or a mandril for the shaping of metal at the forge. It was the cool reality around which the hot metal of human thought must be shaped. It was not the hammer, nor the metal itself, nor usually the finished product, but its unyielding influence on the product is undeniable.

Theology was not arbitrary or shifting, but it could get off track, and it could be refined, in God’s time, particularly when God’s will for the world became clearer, as in the Incarnation. If error entered into theology it would have to be carefully and reverently adjusted to fit the original form, that is, the shape and contours which God had intended it to have. This was the justification for religious Reformation. With the reformation of theology, Bacon believed, a refinement was also taking place, and this justified Bacon’s
continued reinterpretation of Scriptural interpretation and Sacred History, for the will of
God for the world was becoming clearer in the Instauration, even as it had at the time of
the Incarnation. Yet this did not mean that Bacon believed that he was adding to
theology. Rather he was seeing what had been there all along, but was only now, with the
coming of the Instauration, capable of being properly interpreted. A period of
reformation may have been a time in which theological interpretation was in flux, but it
never lost its normative, or absolute, status. This is evident throughout the Instauration
writings of Bacon, where he is true to his own rule that the human activity of recovery
through method should be “limited by religion.” However, it was not merely limited by
religion as religion had been received in Bacon’s day, but particularly according to the new
understanding of the will of God which Bacon believed he was observing in the ancient
prophecies and in the constellation of earthly changes leading to the Instauration.

Implications for the Reading of Bacon

The recognition of the theological system of the Instauration, as well as the
contours of the patristically informed theology which preceded and facilitated it, can
contribute greatly to the reintegration of the various “Bacons” for which Martin called in
1992. As Benjamin Milner qualified Martin, this reintegration must not only reunite
Bacon as a political man and a man of science, but also as a “religious man.” As a
religious man his beliefs took a specific form, both derived from the trends of his society,
and differing from them in ways which were significant for the Instauration. Bacon’s
theology adds an important dimension to the scholarly reading of Bacon’s works, for
there are many aspects of the Instauration, and Bacon’s method itself, which are
incomprehensible apart from an understanding of his theological presuppositions, and
there are other points which may be very profitably informed by an understanding of his

2 Milner, 253.
theology. In addition to providing the basic motivation and justification for the
Instauration the following are also significant results of a theologically informed reading of
Bacon:

It is noteworthy that Bacon’s belief in an orderly universe, governed by natural
laws which were so regular that they could be discovered and mastered through a process
of experimentation, was dependent upon his belief in an orderly and consistent God as
presented in the Genesis narrative. It was not by striking out on their own that human
beings would hold up their end in the Instauration event, but by embracing their divine
destiny, and rising to a level of cooperation with God, which had become possible
through the Incarnation. The Instauration was to be a period of human agency, but the
paradigm for human action was the divine action of creation itself. Similarly, the
motivation for this activity was Charity, itself the imitation of the ultimate act of Charity
which God had effected in the Incarnation. Throughout the Instauration writings there is
a typology of divine action guiding human action, and spiritual recovery facilitating the
material, which is a logical extension of the correspondences between the Instauration and
the Incarnation in Sacred History. Far from separating faith and science, Bacon’s
proposal for a new age of scientific inquiry and invention was dependent upon their
continual interaction.

It is also significant that Bacon’s understanding of matter itself, and how it should
be understood and manipulated, was dependent upon the doctrine of the Fall that he
shared with Lancelot Andrewes: namely, that matter and the lesser creatures were in a
state of rebellion against the domination of humanity since the time when humanity had
rebelled against God. Hence he described Nature as existing in three possible states based
upon his doctrine of the Fall: nature is either free to follow the decrees of God, as it was
created to do, or she is “driven out of her ordinary course by the perverseness and
forwardness of matter,” in its rebellious state, or she is constrained and molded by human
art, (which is also a purpose for which nature was created, according to Bacon’s
understanding of humankind in Eden). The very fabric of the universe was given moral
value by Bacon. Nature itself could do the will of its master (whether God or His
viceregent, the human being) or it could rebel with violent and negative effect. The natural
philosopher, then, worked within such a world for greater order. This began with the
recognition of the philosopher’s own relationship to God, for nature could be mastered if
the pride which had made it unruly in the first place was absent.

An understanding of the central role of theology for Bacon can also open up new
possibilities for explaining old questions in Bacon scholarship, such as that of his
apparently obsolete natural philosophy. In his patristic shift Bacon was not adjusting his
faith to fit the findings of natural philosophy. If so, he could have done better. As
Gaukroger and others have noted, Bacon’s natural philosophy was simply neither very
developed nor very correct even by the standards of his own day. Rather, he was
adjusting his entire way of thinking and moving from what he regarded as error, in reading
either of God’s books, to what he regarded as truth. As discussed in chapter five, Bacon
saw faith and natural philosophy as part of a single interactive system for understanding
the will and the power of God. It is possible that this integrated view of faith and natural
philosophy can help explain why Bacon’s natural philosophy itself was not what it could
have been: he was interested primarily in establishing a way of knowing and mastering
the cosmos which fit his own preconceptions about the significance of natural philosophy
in God’s plan. That which could not be reconciled with the whole, as Bacon conceived it,
was problematic. For example, this may be one explanation for why he firmly advocated
a semi-Paracelsian cosmology even if, from the standpoint of natural philosophy alone,

\footnote{Cf. WFB IV, p. 294.}
there might be cosmological models in his own day superior in explanatory power to his own. A cosmology not only had to account for the natural phenomena, it also had to square with the clear purpose of the universe being created the way that it was according to Bacon’s reading of Genesis, and it had to be compatible with the role of humankind in the cosmic hierarchy. For God, by divine decree, had made humanity master of all, and capable of freely manipulating the power of nature for their own better understanding and benefit. This was a belief he shared with the proponents of natural magic, the alchemists, Hermeticists and the Paracelsians, and the cosmos of which he conceived had to be equally manipulatable.

Another area for further investigation which has been highlighted by this study is the interaction between theology and natural philosophy. The importance of this interaction is nothing foreign to the history of science, for theses about “Protestant,” “Catholic,” and especially “Puritan” science have not been wanting. However, the discussion has usually been very broad, arguing for differences in methodological approach based upon church polity, or alleged differences in work ethic or the reading of the Scriptures, and has seldom engaged theology at the nuts and bolts level of specific doctrines held by specific people. There were a wide variety of beliefs, even within the major divisions of the Reformation era, regarding how God related to His creation. Isaac Newton’s Arianism has been explored by Richard Westfall, Betty Jo Dobbs, and others, with the result that a tremendous amount of insight has been gained into Newton, his society, and the significance of his belief for his view of the natural world. Bacon’s patristic/neoplatonic doctrine of the Second Person of the Trinity as Mediator is another prime example, and it has a host of implications which have not been explored here.

One clear implication of the recovery of the Church Fathers for the West was the reintroduction of a theology which was far more in line with classical platonism and
neoplatonism than that which had been inherited from the Aristotelian scholastics. For Ficino, this meant that he had a ready arsenal of Christian theologians who, by careful reading at least, could be made to support his *Platonic Theology* and bolster his claims for the validity of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. For others, such as Bacon (and possibly Andrewes as well) the recovery of patristic writings provided them with a cast of mind which was simply more sympathetic to similar ideas. This may have facilitated the “fair hearing” which Rossi and Linden noted that Bacon had given to alchemy and magic. It certainly ensured that he was thinking in similar patterns. Again, this subject has only been raised for consideration by this study. The greater implications of a socially acceptable “soft” or “quasi” platonism in England a generation before the Cambridge Platonists, could be profitably explored at many levels, and its significance for Bacon alone could fill another dissertation.

Likewise, this study has drawn attention to the significance of “non-scientists” like Lancelot Andrewes for the development of the “scientific” thought of an individual such as Bacon. Andrewes was first and last a theologian with a distinctive theology that is, in many points, reflected in the writings of Bacon. The curious intersections of thought between Andrewes and Bacon have only begun to be examined in this study. One profitable offshoot of this examination would be the study of the use of natural philosophy by Andrewes (or other theologians) in explicating theological points.

To a great degree the process of stitching the various Bacons back into a single person which Martin has described is, as David Burnett has suggested, a matter of recognizing that the distinctions between fields which have arisen since Bacon are often occluding our view of how Bacon naturally integrated these subjects. The role of his theology in his thinking, if not perfectly defined, and if its implications are not fully

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6 Burnett, 129-135.
explored, is unquestionable. It was constantly present, interacting with and supporting, qualifying and limiting the work of the natural philosopher, even if his specific theology has not remained in focus in his various popular images which have developed during the centuries.
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