

The World's a Bubble:

Francis Bacon, Nature, and the Politics of Religion

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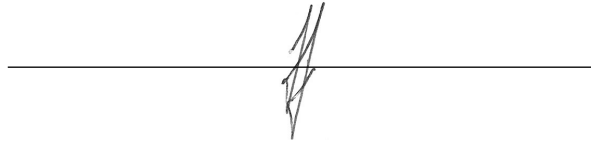
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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own

A horizontal line is drawn across the page. Overlapping the center of this line is a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "James A. T. Lancaster".

James A. T. Lancaster

The World's a Bubble, and the life of man / less than a span.

— Francis Bacon, 'The World's a Bubble'

Abstract

This thesis examines the development of Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) religious views and their impact on his programme for the advancement of learning. It aims to address the largely misguided body of scholarly literature on Bacon's beliefs by situating his understanding of religion within the complexity of its Elizabethan and Stuart contexts, and to show how Bacon steered his own considered course between the emergent pillars of Puritanism and Conformism. To the latter end, it evinces how he drew upon the Christian humanism of his parents, Nicholas and Anne Bacon, as well as the political thought of Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini, and Justus Lipsius. Guided by the same intellectual commitments, he subsequently came to develop his own ideas about the reform of knowledge and the character of nature within the broader context of Christian humanism, Florentine political thought, and the Magisterial Reformation in England.

It argues that, contrary to modern categories of thought, Bacon had no difficulty being both a Reformed Christian and a statesman for whom religion was often little more than a social or political currency. This he achieved through a position he set out early in his career; namely, that religion had two 'partes': an eternal and a temporal. Christianity could, in this way, be divided into the mysteries of faith, beyond time and the reach of human reason, and civil religion, temporal, political and, in its subjection to natural reason, entirely fair game. This allowed him to anticipate a number of positions that would become central to the religious climate of the later seventeenth-century, including irenicism, religious toleration, and civil religion.

It was also through this division that Bacon came to explain the relationship between God and Nature and, in turn, between religion and natural philosophy. In the 1610s, he would develop a theory of the universe which rested upon the division between the eternal and the temporal, the created and the creating. As a result, this thesis offers an examination and contextualization of the relationship between 'science' and 'religion' within Bacon's commitment to a twofold vision of religion.

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standing. For putting up with a grumpy bear, I say: 'Calling to mind my wife most dear / How oft you have in sorrows sad / With words full wise and pleasant cheer / My drooping looks turned into glad, / How oft you have my moods too bad / Borne patiently with a mild mind, / Assuaging them with words right kind.'

Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations from the Oxford Francis Bacon (OFB) edition has been retained across both the OFB and Spedding, Ellis, and Heath (SEH) editions.

ACE	<i>An Advertisement Touching the Controuersyes of the Church of England</i> (1589)
AdFG	<i>Letter of Advice to Fulke Greville</i> (c. 1589)
AdQ	<i>Letter of Advice to the Queen</i> (1584/5)
AL	<i>The Advancement of Learning</i> (1605)
ANN	<i>Abecedarium novum naturæ</i> (1622)
ArPN	<i>Argument in the Case of the Post-Nati</i> (1608)
CBP	<i>Certain Considerations Touching the Better Pacification and Edification of the Church of England</i> (1604)
CDNR	<i>Cogitationes de natura rerum</i>
CDSH	<i>Cogitationes de scientia humana</i>
CF	<i>A Confession of faith</i> (1603)
CGE	<i>Colours of Good and Evil</i> (1597)
DAS	<i>De augmentis scientiarum</i> (1623)
DGI	<i>Descriptio globi intellectualis</i> (c. 1611-1618)
DINP	<i>De interpretatione naturæ prooemium</i>
DPAO	<i>De principiis atque originibus</i> (c. 1611-1618)
DSV	<i>De sapientia veterum</i> (1609)
Ess	<i>Essayes</i> (1625)
HVM	<i>Historiae vitae et mortis</i> (1623)
MedS	<i>Meditatione sacræ</i> (1597)
NA	<i>New Atlantis</i> (1626)
NO	<i>Novum organum</i> (1620)
OL	<i>Certaine Obseruations vppon a Libell</i> (1592)
PhU	<i>Phænomena universi</i> (c. 1611-1618)
RPQ	<i>On the religious policies of the queen</i> or ‘Letter to Critoy’ (c. 1590)
SS	<i>Sylva sylvarum</i> (1626)
TC	<i>Thema cæli</i> (c. 1611-1618)
TPM	<i>Temporis partis masculus</i> (c. 1608)
VT	<i>Valerius terminus</i> (1603?)

WB ‘The World’s a Bubble’

The following abbreviations are used for editions of Bacon’s works (for full details of each publication within the editions listed below, please see the bibliography):

OFB *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, gen. ed. Graham Rees and Brian Vickers, 15 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996—.

SEH *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 7 vols. London, 1857-1874.

Vickers *Francis Bacon: a Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Introduction

The Temporal and the Eternal in the Thought of Francis Bacon

*Religion hath partes which belonge to eternity
and partes which pertayne to time*

— Francis Bacon
*An Advertisement Touching the Controversies
of the Church of Englande*

In a little known poem by Francis Bacon, there is to be found the image to which this thesis owes its title.¹ ‘The World’s a Bubble’ is supposed to have been composed by Bacon at some point between 1610 and 1615; a ditty of no particular importance which begins with the lines: ‘The World’s a Bubble, and the life of man / less than a span.’ It is a work for which there is extant little evidence of Bacon’s authorship, having first been printed posthumously in 1629, and yet it fits Bacon’s thought surprisingly well.² For, despite the question of authenticity, it attributes to Bacon’s comprehension of the world a characteristic implicit in most everything he wrote: its inherent duality. How, it might be asked, is a bubble a symbol of duality, though? For Bacon, a bubble was a strange thing: ‘bubbles,’ he wrote, ‘are in the form of a sphere; air within, and a little skin of water without: and it seemeth somewhat strange, that the air should rise so swiftly while it is in the water; and [yet] when it cometh to the top, should be stayed by such a weak cover as that of the bubble is.’³ The world, too, was a bubble, where that which existed on the inside was cordoned off from that which existed on the outside. Inside was the sphere of material nature and humans, where life lasted ‘less than a span.’ It was mutable, violent, and transient; a place which was ‘almost all tumult, conflict and disruption.’⁴ Outside was the domain of God and the

¹ SEH VII, ‘The World’s a Bubble’, pp. 271-2.

² This poem was first published and attributed to Bacon in Thomas Farnaby, *Florilegium epigrammatum Graecorum* (London, 1629). For the question of Bacon’s authorship, see Herbert J. C. Grierson, ‘Bacon’s Poem, “The World”: Its Date and Relation to certain other Poems’, *Modern Language Review* 6 (1911), pp. 145-56 (on p. 145). Bacon was also one of the first people to use the word ‘bubble’ in English.

³ SS, SEH II, p. 346.

⁴ DGI, OFB I, p. 149; TC, OFB VI, pp. 177-179.

eternal, from where the laws which governed all within had been imposed. This was the empyrean heaven (*cælum empyreum*), that ‘concave or circumference which enclosed all matter.’⁵ It was immutable, indestructible, and eternal, a place for the knowledge of which man had to ‘depend entirely on religion.’⁶ This notion of the world as an essentially twofold place dates from at least as far back as Aristotle, and yet Bacon’s bubble-like world was not, as we will see, derived from the ancient Greeks, but rather from a mix of the political, theological, and natural philosophical thought of the Renaissance.

More than anything else, though, Bacon’s twofold understanding of the world was the result of his immersion in the Christian humanism of his parents, and the religious and intellectual backdrop of sixteenth-century England. It was derived foremost from a theological distinction which centred around the division of religion into two ‘partes’: ‘*Habet religio quae sunt æternitatis, Habet quae sunt temporis*,’ Bacon wrote in 1589: ‘Religion hath partes which belonge to eternity and partes which pertayne to time.’⁷ In his later life, it would come to delineate the philosophical boundaries of his idea of the universe, but in his early years (c. 1584-1604), it was the keystone which supported his considerable engagement with the religious politics of late-Elizabethan England. It was, in this way, more a religious and political distinction for Bacon than a theological one. From its first use in his writings, it served to drive back the divine in order to carve out for humanity a more ample political and philosophical space in which to experiment with the world, in which to prove to God that humans could rule over creation once again: in the case of the political, to justify attempts to establish a godly commonwealth; in the case of the philosophical, to justify the convictions and beliefs of the natural philosopher. Bacon’s belief in a transcendent God was a position that he found justification for in this twofold division.

For Bacon, God intended humans to have freedom in this expansive domain in order that they might prove themselves capable of presiding over the world which he had created for them. The Christian Religion was like a game of chess: ‘after the Articles and principles of Religion are placed and exempted from examination of reason,’ Bacon explained in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605),

⁵ DSV, SEH VI, p. 649.

⁶ DGI, OFB VI, pp. 131-3.

⁷ ACE, OFB I, pp. 162-3.

it is then permitted vnto vs to make deriuations and inferences from, and according to the Analogie of them, for our better direction... yet it holdeth not in Religion alone, but in many knowledges both of greater and smaller Nature, namely wherein there are not onely *Posita* but *Placita*, for in such there can be noe vse of absolute reason, we see it familiarly in Games of wit, as Chesse, or the like; The Draughts and first lawes of the Game are positieue, but how? meerely *ad placitum*, and not examinable by reason; But then how to direct our play thereupon with best aduantage to winne the game, is artificicall and reationall. So in Humane lawes, there be many groundes and Maximes, which are *Placita Iuris*, *Positiue* vpon authoritie and not vpon reason, and therefore not to be disputed: But what is most iust, not absolutely, but relatiue, and according to those Maximes, that afforteth a long field of disputation. Such therefore is that secundarie reason, which hath place in diuinite, which is grounded vpon the *Placets* of God.⁸

The temporal world inside the bubble was humanity's chess board. The eternal on the outside signified the laws, given by God *ad placitum*, within which humankind was meant to actively pursue the good—whether it be through education, politics, or religion—according to their reason. The natural philosopher, too, had to play within this religious distinction, within these rules, for they provided him with the crucial limitations which he needed to be successful in his investigations of the natural order. Religion dictated the limits, for Bacon, but also secured the intellectual space the natural philosopher required to hold what he would come to call an 'experimental faith' (*fide experimentalis*).⁹

In his religious views, as in his political views, Bacon followed in the footsteps of his father, Nicholas. A great deal of attention has been given to the religious impact of his mother, Anne Bacon, and though it can hardly be denied that she was influential, on the evidence furnished by Nicholas Bacon's life and career, it appears that the Lord Keeper was actually the more influential of the two.¹⁰ Nicholas's division of religion 'into two parts'—'one touching ... the setting forth of God's Honour and Glory, and the other concerning Policy, for the Common-Wealth'—formed the basis, not only of the 1559 Settlement, but also of Francis Bacon's convictions.¹¹ His

⁸ AL, OFB IV, p. 184.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.

¹⁰ The emphasis of Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart's *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon, 1561-1626* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998) is on Anne Bacon's influence on Francis. In fact, the general trend has been to contextualize Bacon's religious beliefs in relation to those of his mother. See also Steven Matthews, *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) and Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹¹ D'Ewes, Simonds. *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, both of the House of Lords and House of Commons* (London: John Starkey, 1682), May 1572, p. 192.

irenic, tolerant, and moderate view of the Christian religion would be preserved in the works of his youngest son. Nicholas and Anne Bacon were reformers bent on the cultivation of a truly godly England with its own English Church. Their belief in the need for an English religion—‘*our* religion’—would determine much of the character of their son’s early writings, as he emerged as a defender of the ‘received’ faith in the 1580s and 1590s. Even as Anne turned her back on the Church she had once helped to establish, her son stepped up to the plate to defend it against its many detractors. Although their efforts would be frustrated in the end, Nicholas and Anne Bacon’s dedication to the Magisterial Reformation in England eventually came to its zenith in Francis.

To posterity, Bacon would come to be known as the philosopher who took ‘all knowledge to be [his] province’; the great English reformer.¹² What he did not come to be known for was his pursuit—like that of his parents—of religious reform. This was because he did not pursue Luther’s Reformation on theological grounds, on account of his conviction that the true ends of Christian doctrine had already been achieved. From a political point of view, however, the first half of Bacon’s life was spent in the reform of religious policy, from the position of a ‘Christian politique Counsellor,’ and through the processes of magisterial reform.¹³ But, as we shall see, he also wrote and circulated clandestine manuscripts in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, for which he even earned a pseudonym: ‘the aduertiser.’ Bacon did, then, aim for religious reform, but he did it not as a theologian, but as a ‘godly statesman’, who based his views in the often-controversial theories of contemporary Italian thinkers, such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini.

To posterity, Bacon would likewise come to be known as the father of modern, empirical science. But his belief in the power of ancient fables to elucidate the fundamental characteristics of the universe; his development of a theory of the universe; and his reliance on theological and political, as much as philosophical, explanatory mechanisms, puts to rest any chance this view is right. For Bacon’s universe was not the dry, literal world of the positivists, but was alive with appetite, desire, and vitality; driven not by mathematical principles, but by the language of appetency and restraint. With recourse once again to his distinction between the temporal and eternal, Bacon

¹² Francis Bacon to William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1592) in SEH VIII, p. 109

¹³ OL, OFB I, p. 406.

posited a world where matter existed as an unruly, brutish mob and God was a distant, but nevertheless all-powerful lawgiver. William Harvey was not altogether incorrect when he said that Bacon ‘writes philosophy like a Lord Chancellor.’¹⁴ Bacon aspired to be his father’s son, the Lord Keeper’s son, and this is as evident in his natural philosophical writings as it is in his forays into the politics of religion.

* * * *

It is something of an understatement to say that this study is not intended to be the last word on Bacon’s view of religion, politics, nature, or their interrelations. Rather, it is intended to address a long-standing question in Bacon scholarship; namely, what were Bacon’s religious beliefs, but, more importantly, *what did he think of religion?* In this way, it has become equally an attempt to draw the religious, political, and natural in Bacon’s thought a little closer together. To what extent it succeeds in this task is up to the reader to decide. But the writings upon which this thesis rests deserve at least an equal amount of attention to those for which Bacon is better known, and in this sense, it unequivocally provides much needed exposure to what has been called the ‘before period’ of Francis Bacon’s life and thought.¹⁵

Where his personal faith is concerned, the fact that Bacon has been labelled an atheist, sincere Christian, and even a theologian in the four-hundred years or so since his death, should suffice to evidence the complexity of his relationship to religion.¹⁶ Bacon’s religious beliefs *were* complex, and his thinking about religion was even more so. But a good part of the problem has arisen as a result of the approaches of modern scholars to the question. It has become the mainstream to address the question of Bacon’s faith through an examination of his natural philosophical works. It almost goes without saying that this approach has resulted in a plethora of oversimplified and biased answers. Despite the wealth of Bacon’s writings on religion, works such as *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), *Novum organum* (1620) and *New Atlantis* (1626)—the classics—have continued to dominate the subject. This has not been a wholly negative thing: Bacon has, for one, been firmly placed back into the camp of the sincere

¹⁴ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), I, p. 299.

¹⁵ Jardine and Stuart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 19.

¹⁶ For these various attributions, see John Henry, *Knowledge is Power* (Duxford, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2002), p. 83; Steven Matthews, *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon*; Stephen A. McKnight, *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon’s Thought* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

believer; a view that is undoubtedly correct. But the pendulum, as usual, has swung too far in the other direction. He has, for instance, recently been labelled a theologian, with a fully fledged theological system to his credit.¹⁷ This is as equally untrue as the view of the anti-Enlightenment thinker Joseph de Maistre, who two hundred years ago perceived Bacon to be a secret atheist and materialist.¹⁸

While Bacon was neither an atheist nor theologian, he was a Christian, and he was sincere in his faith, holding Reformed beliefs as a conformist to what he called the ‘received’ religion of England. He was also a Machiavellian, deeply suspicious of religion, and his philosophy was, in general, based in political realism. Bacon did not, however, experience the problem of Orwellian ‘doublethink’: he was capable of being both a committed Christian and a politician for whom religion was often little more than political currency. He was not a secular thinker, as has been suggested at times. Rather, he achieved this duality through the adopting the ideas of his parents and the Christian humanists, as well as those of roughly contemporaneous political theorists. It is difficult for us to comprehend how Bacon could be both sincere and critical about religion, but this is largely the result of our post-Enlightenment way of thinking. Early moderns do not appear to have perceived their world in quite such binary terms. Even Machiavelli was a committed Christian of his own sort. Bacon was no different. He merely believed that God permitted the manipulation of the temporal aspects of religion in service to the betterment of humankind.

* * * *

This thesis adopts a rather different weighting of Bacon’s works: it places his writings between 1584 and 1603 squarely into view, where previously they have been largely ignored; it considers the historical method more important to understanding his religious views than the theological (though it does not discount their theological significance); and it emphasizes the continuum between Bacon’s mythographical studies and the emergence of his natural philosophy in order to paint a picture, not of his so-called ‘scientific method’, but of his understanding of nature, and its secrets. This study has,

¹⁷ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 21, 30, 41, 95, 105, 136: Bacon, in Matthew’s view, ‘develop[ed] his own theological system’ (on p. 30). Implicit in Matthew’s argument is the view that Bacon himself was a theologian, who was ‘setting himself against the opinions of many prominent theologians of his day’ (on p. 63).

¹⁸ Joseph de Maistre, *An Examination of the Philosophy of Francis Bacon*, ed. and trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998).

as such, benefitted immensely from the Oxford Francis Bacon critical editions, and particularly, to the recently published *Volume I: Early Writings, 1584-1596*, edited by Alan Stewart, as well as the all too often overlooked *Volume VI: Philosophical Studies c. 1611-1619* of the late Graham Rees. As this thesis endeavours to show, Bacon's religious views were formed almost entirely between 1579 and 1603, while his theory of the universe emerged between 1609 and 1619, which means that to disregard these writings is to disregard the most formative evidence we possess for the development of his ideas on two weighty subjects. This is not to claim that Bacon's views on religion did not evolve after 1603, nor that his natural philosophical views did not expand after 1619; but rather that it should be acknowledged that—after 1603 in the case of his religious beliefs, and 1619 in the case of his theory of the universe—both unfolded further, but neither received any essential alteration. This thesis does, at times, make reference to Bacon's works of the 1620s, but does this in order either to expand upon his ideas from the 1610s or to emphasize places of continuity between them.

The goal of Chapter One is to explore the context in which Bacon would come to shape his religious beliefs and ideas. This was sixteenth-century England, from the reign of King Henry VIII through to the death of Queen Elizabeth I (1509-1603). It was a world in religious turmoil; a world in which the possibility of a new social order had been opened by England's split with the Church of Rome. Although Bacon's religious and political beliefs were formed almost entirely between 1579 and 1603—in effect, the 'second reign' of Elizabeth—to understand them requires a detailed knowledge of the pivotal seventy or so years before. Bacon's thought was not produced in a vacuum: it is almost entirely a response to either contemporary controversies or the thought of Renaissance intellectuals, both in England and the continent. In this sense, Chapter One has followed the lives of Bacon's parents, Nicholas and Anne, because it turns out that they provide the perfect skeleton upon which to graft the key contextual details required to understand Francis's religious and political works. Although there is extant little direct correspondence between Bacon and his parents, it is clear he was responding, in large part, to their ideas. How do we know this? We know this because Nicholas and Anne Bacon shaped the religious and political world of late-Elizabethan England almost as much as the Queen herself: Nicholas as Elizabeth's Lord Keeper, as co-author of the 1559 Settlement, and as the defender *par excellence* of religious moderation. The Bacons shaped the context in which Francis himself emerged as an

intellectual so much, in fact, that most of the boundaries between their direct and indirect influence upon him have since been lost to time. There are two vital instances of divergence, and these constitute part of the subject matter of the next chapter.

Chapter Two examines the emergence of Bacon's own ideas about religion and politics; how the years 1579-1601 provided him with the opportunity to respond, reject, and cement the values he had acquired through his education in Christian humanism and Reformed religion. But it also examines how he employed a twofold view of religion to address important differences in outlook between himself and his parents: in one instance, to dissociate himself from his mother's religious views, but on political grounds; and in the other, to advance his father's humanist beliefs in relation to the seminal influence Machiavelli and Guicciardini had upon him. Combined with an increasingly urgent need to clarify his stance on the politics of religion, Bacon made a number of choices in the final years of Elizabeth's reign that would effectively remain unaltered to the end of his life. It is possible to say, as a result, that Francis Bacon's religious views, although sown between 1561 and 1579, were cemented almost entirely between 1579 and 1601. This chapter reveals, as such, how Bacon chose to navigate the increasingly tumultuous waters between English Presbyterianism and the position of the Established Church; and how he came, in the end, to the defence of the Settlement, the Church, and the 'doctrine received generally in the Realme.'¹⁹

Chapter Three subsequently turns its attention to the eternal aspect of Bacon's religious thought, and its relationship to both his programme for the reform of human knowledge and his nascent ideas about the character of the natural world. It looks first to his only explicitly theological writing, *A Confession of Faith* (1603), and argues that Bacon may have originally intended it as a *preparatio* to his better-known publication of two years later: *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). It then goes on to investigate the relationship between religion and the natural through Bacon's preoccupation with the 'light of nature' (*lumen naturae*), revealing his indebtedness to both the Stoics and Calvin. In conclusion, it demonstrates how he perceived the eternal—the 'misteries of faith'—as a kind of 'broken knowledge.'²⁰

Chapter Four, finally, investigates Bacon's idea of nature, and how it followed closely from his mythographical work in the *De sapientia veterum* (1609); how, once

¹⁹ AdQ, OFB I, p. 28.

²⁰ AL, OFB IV, p. 8.

more, it was the influence of humanism and religion that contributed much of the substance and boundaries to Bacon's 'theory of the heavens' (*thema cœli*). It reveals how, despite the received view of Bacon as a naïve empiricist, he developed his own cosmogony and cosmology founded in ancient wisdom, biblical narrative, and the natural philosophy of Renaissance thinkers, such as Bernardino Telesio and Petrus Severinus, as well as the political theories Guicciardini, Machiavelli, and Justus Lipsius. In the end, it argues that in much the same way that Bacon made room for the manipulation of religion through affording it an expansive temporal dimension, he likewise made room for the natural philosopher to investigate nature through pushing God outside of the universe, and making him a transcendent lawgiver.

* * * *

This thesis ultimately draws short of Bacon's philosophical writings in the 1620s, but it does so on the understanding that: first, his religious beliefs, and thus the subject with which it is chiefly concerned, had already been fixed by 1603, and also that his ideas about the relationship between nature and religion were likewise largely established; and, second, because there is already extant a substantial body of literature on Bacon's so-called 'science and religion', based around analyses of theological themes in these works.²¹ The central aim of this dissertation is, after all, to argue for Bacon's indebtedness to the religious and political beliefs of his parents, and in particular those of Nicholas Bacon; to settle the question of his faith; to demonstrate how his distinction between the eternal and the temporal transitioned from his writings on the politics of religion into his natural philosophical thought—and to do so in order to better situate him within the complexity of the Elizabethan and Stuart contexts in which he lived and wrote.

²¹ Examples include John C. Briggs, 'Bacon's Science and Religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 172-99; Matthews, *Theology and Science* and McKnight, *The Religious Foundations*.

1 *'Impes of Thine Own Blode':*

Christian Humanism and the Bacon Family

*What then remains, but that we still should cry
For being born, or, being born, to die?*

— Francis Bacon
'The World's a Bubble'

Francis Bacon was born the last child of Protestant reformers. He too would grow up to be a reformer, though the object of his own reforms—'the province of all knowledge,' as he would later claim—would come to encompass more than the godly reformation so desired by his parents.¹ Despite such lofty goals, the influence of Lord and Lady Bacon's Christian beliefs left an indelible mark on their son; both upon his faith and upon the reform of knowledge to which he would later dedicate his life. Any account of Francis Bacon's religious inclinations, and of those found in his writings, must begin, consequently, with those of his parents; for his later views bear a great many of the hallmarks of his godly upbringing. In Bacon's parents we find both the pious and the political, the eternal and the temporal; and hence the roots of what would become the principle tenet of his understanding of religion and its place in his thought: namely, that it has two 'partes'.²

This twofold view of religion as including both the eternal and the political does not map neatly, the one to Anne Bacon and the other to Nicholas, however.³ Although the popular image of Francis Bacon's mother has been that of 'an obstinate, determined, and headstrong' Puritan who held 'openly controversial beliefs,' and that of his father as the level-headed Elizabethan statesman who held the preservation of the state above all else, neither is strictly correct.⁴ For both held strong religious convictions and both were politically savvy enough to hide these convictions when the

¹ Francis Bacon to William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1592) in SEH VIII, p. 109: 'I have taken all knowledge to be my province.'

² ACE, OFB I, p. 162: 'Religion hath partes which belonge to eternity and partes which pertayne to time.'

³ Nicholas and Anne Bacon are referred to by their first names throughout for the sake of clarity.

⁴ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 14.

need arose. Both were devout Protestants, reformed in their private lives, and both thought it their duty to sow the same godliness in their fellow countrymen. Above all else, though, the Bacons desired to cultivate godliness and the virtues of Christian humanism in their children. To understand Francis Bacon’s views about religion thus requires us to understand the religious views of Nicholas and Anne Bacon; parents whose beliefs, education, and political station helped to shape not only the spiritual lives of their children, but the religious climate of the sixteenth century.

Educating Nicholas Bacon: Christian Humanism from Bury to Cambridge

The story of Nicholas Bacon’s (1510-1579) life begins with a curious episode.⁵ As the son of a sheep-reeve from the town of Drinkstone near Bury St Edmonds, Nicholas had been headed for a monastic life, but, on account of his distaste for the customary tonsure, decided to abscond instead:

Being sent to be made a priest and perceiving that his crown must be shaven, rather than he would abide that which he so much misliked, he ran away and after he had hid himself a great while, at the length by an uncle (on the other side) of his that was a rich tailor, he was sent and maintained at the Inns of Court from whence he was admitted to the dignity which after he came into.⁶

It is very unlikely that Nicholas Bacon ever fled the tonsure, and thus very likely that this joyful tale, like so many of history’s most poetic moments, is too good to be true. The young Nicholas had indeed been sent by his father, Robert Bacon (d. 1548), to the abbey school at Bury to become a monk, but rather than flee religious instruction, he had revelled in it; so much so, in fact, that he would later depart for the University of Cambridge with a Bible scholarship to his credit. No, it was not for any lack of zeal that Nicholas forswore the ascetic life. What altered his course was the education he received. It was the Christian humanism of Erasmus, with its emphasis on the utility of the classics to the Christian life, and his encounter with the reformist vision of Luther, that led to his change of heart. In their light, the monastery appeared not religious enough, the contemplative less righteous than the active, and the urgency for

⁵ On the life and career of Nicholas Bacon, see Robert Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon: The Making of a Tudor Statesman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976); Derek Wilson, *Elizabethan Society: High and Low Life, 1558-1603* (London: Robinson, 2014), pp. 1-17; and Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 23-4, 25, 26, 28-31, 38, 56-60, 65-6, 67-9, 503.

⁶ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 23.

reform all too real for life in the cloister. Education thus achieved that for which the tonsure is credited: from Erasmus and Luther, Nicholas discovered what it meant to be a true Christian; and, through the cultivation of Quintilian’s *ars rhetorica*, Cicero’s *virtus civilis*, and Seneca’s *cultura animi*, how a truly godly society might one day be erected in England.

The abbey school at Bury where Nicholas received his first instruction was a unique place in the early-sixteenth century. While the library of the university to which he would soon matriculate housed some three hundred books, the abbey library could lay claim to more than two thousand volumes. The size of its collection alone is remarkable. But it was the abbey’s imported commentaries and writings by Erasmus, Vives, and other continental humanists—evidence often taken to demonstrate the inclusiveness of Benedictine pedagogy in England—that truly distinguished Bury as a forerunner of Tudor humanist education.⁷ It was also, consequently, amongst these texts, editions, and commentaries, the founts of a nascent English reformism, that Nicholas received his earliest tuition.

In 1523, at thirteen years of age, Nicholas was sent with scholarship in hand to Bene’t College (now Corpus Christi), Cambridge. It was here that would he embrace the classicism of Erasmus, and here that his belief in the need for religious reform really took root. The Cambridge to which he arrived in the 1520s was home to a thriving coterie of students, scholars, and clerics with a shared interest in the works of Erasmus and Luther. Despite the publication of Henry VIII’s 1521 condemnation of Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), the group had continued to meet regularly at the local White Horse Inn, where Nicholas no doubt first encountered them.⁸ Although there is no direct testimony to his involvement with the coterie, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that Nicholas was at least peripherally involved.⁹ Two of his friends at Bene’t, Thomas Dugate (d. 1532) and Matthew Parker (1504-1575), were frequenters of the group, and his prior exposure to Christian humanism at Bury would undoubtedly have made him sympathetic to the ideas stumbling out of the inn at this

⁷ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 19; Ernest G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 11-2.

⁸ Henry VIII, *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum* (London: Pynson, 1521). The meetings of the Cambridge coterie took place informally within the university before 1521.

⁹ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 20. After the formal condemnation of Pope Leo X in 1521, Bishop John Fisher (1469-1535), in May of the same year, organized a public burning of Luther’s writings in London. This may help to account for the paucity of evidence surrounding Bacon’s involvement with the (by then) clandestine White Horse meetings, as any association with the Cambridge coterie now entailed heresy.

time. With Parker in particular (Dusgate left Cambridge in 1524 in order to consult with Luther), a close and lasting friendship was formed around a common concern for reform.¹⁰

Although the initial reason for the gatherings of the Cambridge coterie had been scriptural exegesis informed by Erasmian commentaries, the arrival of a number of Martin Luther’s (1483-1546) writings eventually led them, like their counterparts in Saxony, down the path towards partisanship. The sentiment of Luther’s early tracts—and hence of those potentially available to the coterie—was overwhelmingly one of the urgent need for a renewal, or ‘Christianization’, of late-Medieval society.¹¹ In the years leading up to 1517, Luther had arrived at the view that Europe was beset with idols, ‘almost completely pagan,’ and, consequently, ‘only Christian in name.’¹² The Church lay at the heart of the problem; worship of saints and pecuniary idols its principal business, and the principal cause, in Luther’s eyes, of the deterioration of Christendom. Luther’s call to return Europe to the religion of Christ thus aimed for a reformation of society through a reform of the individual: through his doctrine of *sola fide*, he liberated the laity from the salvific mediation of the Church and, in this way, effectively legitimated ‘the reform of Christendom by the lay Christian.’¹³

One imagines that it was in some poorly lit corner of the White Horse Inn that Nicholas first weighed these ideas. Luther’s *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen* (1520) had already been made available in a 1521 Latin translation, which, although printed in Basel, could easily have found its way to Cambridge before 1523.¹⁴ Indeed, Nicholas’s future religious reflections offer grounds for thinking that it was from the 1521 *De libertate Christiana* that he came to his view of what it meant to be a ‘true Christian’. In this work, Luther had argued that to lead a ‘truly Christian life’ (*vere*

¹⁰ Thomas Dusgate appears to have struggled at this time from a ‘*concupiscentia of the fleshe*’ which led him both to marry and (presumably when that was not sufficient) to travel to Germany in 1524, where Martin Luther would advise him to leave the priesthood altogether. See Thomas S. Freeman, ‘Dusgate, Thomas (d. 1532)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, online ed., 2004/2008): <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/article/8329>>.

¹¹ ‘Christianization’ is used here in the sense defined in Scott H. Hendrix in his *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville, K.Y.: Westminster John Know Press, 2004).

¹² Translation from Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard*, p. 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *De libertate Christiana dissertatio* (Basel: Adam Petri, 1521), sig. E ii^r. Luther’s writings arrived in England as early as 1519. See Alec Ryrie, ‘The Strange Death of Lutheran England’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 1 (2002), pp. 64-92. I would like to thank Arnold Hunt for his advice on this issue. A number of members of the White Horse coterie ended their lives as Protestant martyrs in the 1530s, including Bacon’s friend at Bene’t College, Thomas Dusgate.

Christiana vita) one must work freely for the benefit of others.¹⁵ The true Christian was free by the grace of God to serve others through faith; he need not toil under the pretence that his salvation depended either upon his works or the *priesterbetrug* of the Church. The real genius of Luther’s definition of the true Christian, then, was that it aligned so neatly with his reformism: the true Christian was *ipso facto* a reformer, for to be truly religious meant the Christian must be actively committed to the betterment of Christendom. That Bacon was theologically indebted to Luther there can be little doubt, but it was Luther’s vision of reform, encompassed as it was within his definition of the true Christian, that influenced him most. Although it would not be until 1535—after the arrival of the Reformation in England could no longer be denied—that Nicholas’s convictions became public, he had accepted the central message of Luther’s reformism from at least his days at Cambridge.

* * * *

When Nicholas graduated in 1527, it was third amongst his peers.¹⁶ Such success reflected not his religious formation, however, but his aptitude for grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Although sequentially that of the medieval trivium and quadrivium, the content of the BA curriculum at Cambridge was far from a mirror image of scholastic pedagogy; older courses of lectures had been abolished in 1488, and, by the time Nicholas arrived in 1523, the first two years of instruction consisted entirely in classical literature.¹⁷ This did not preclude students from reading Aristotle and his medieval commentators (as Francis would later discover), but it had shifted the focus of tuition away from the scholastic commentary tradition and towards the political, rhetorical, and historical wellsprings of antiquity.

A large part of these changes had come about from Erasmus (1466-1536). His time at Cambridge (1510-1515) had elevated humanist biblicism to new heights, as well as impressed upon students and teachers alike the belief that it was the classics, rather than the glosses of the schoolmen, that were best suited to serve Christianity.¹⁸ With his departure, Erasmian educational reform had continued, if not intensified,

¹⁵ Luther, *De libertate Christiana*, sig. E ii^r.

¹⁶ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 20, who cites J. R. Tanner (ed.), *The Historical Register of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1917), p. 367.

¹⁷ See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 19.

¹⁸ Erasmus was the Lady Margaret’s Professor of Divinity at Cambridge between 1510-1515.

both within and outside of the university, including Nicholas’s own Bene’t College. Robert Barnes (c. 1495-1540), a classicist at the university from the early 1520s, and an active member of the White Horse coterie, was among those who had continued to carry the Dutch humanist’s banner. But Barnes and others, although heavily indebted to the Catholic Erasmus, soon came to differ by virtue of their identification of classicism with the Protestant cause. For Erasmus, the Church of Rome could still be renewed if the counsel of the Roman Stoics and Church Fathers was heeded. For an increasing number of the English, however, Luther was right; the Church of Rome was a lost cause, the ancient wisdom extolled by Erasmus better applied elsewhere. Like virtually all English Protestants of the early sixteenth century, then, Nicholas’s belief that the practical problems of Christian life were best illuminated in the light of the pagan classics was derived principally from Erasmus, even if his Protestantism was not.¹⁹

Of the classical writings Nicholas encountered, a number proved particularly formative: these included Cicero’s *De officiis*, Seneca’s *Epistulae morales*, as well as the *De institutione oratoria* of Quintilian. Even after he had left Cambridge, Nicholas continued to learn from these works. The rhetorician George Puttenham would later record in his *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), for instance, how he had come upon ‘Bacon and found him sitting in his gallery alone with the works of Quintilian before him.’²⁰ Indeed, as Elizabeth’s Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas, ‘that arch-piece of Wit and Wisdom,’ came to be widely considered a master of the *ars oratoria*.²¹ Part of this reputation was no doubt a result of his penchant for ‘jocular retorts’; a reflection of the nimbleness of mind he cultivated through a lifelong study of classical rhetoric and oratory.²² But the true source of Nicholas’s public pre-eminence, and a sizeable part of his extraordinary success in Tudor government, came from his categorical acceptance of Quintilian’s paean to civic virtue.

¹⁹ Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 26-7.

²⁰ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), p. 122.

²¹ Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta regalia* (London: E. Arber, 1870), p. 38.

²² The following anecdote is told of Nicholas Bacon: ‘[While on circuit] a convicted felon named Hog appealed for remission of his sentence on the ground that he was related to his lordship. “Nay, my friend,” replied the judge, “you and I cannot be kindred except you be hanged, for hog is not bacon until it be well hung.”’ George A. Morton and Donald M. Malloch, *Law and Laughter* (London: T. N. Fowles, 1913), p. 6. I would like to thank Anthony Ossa-Richardson for bringing this anecdote to my attention.

Through reading *De institutione oratoria* as a student at Cambridge, Nicholas had come to accept Quintilian’s dictum that ‘no man can be an orator unless he is a good man.’²³ In these words, he discerned both the purpose and the true source of the power of rhetoric. As an instrument for the dissemination of virtue, Quintilian taught him that the *ars rhetorica* was powerless without the prior cultivation of individual virtue: he who lacked in Wisdom (*Sapientia*), Temperance (*Temperantia*), Fortitude (*Fortitudo*), and Justice (*Iustitia*) could never be an orator. If, however, he embodied these Stoic virtues, the orator could move others to great acts of civic virtue, and, in this way, work towards the establishment of a prosperous state. This was the reason Quintilian had named Cicero ‘the perfect orator’, and why for Bacon, too, Cicero was not to be imitated chiefly for his style, but for his ability to fuse the virtues (*honestia*) with practicality (*utile*).²⁴

To exercise virtue in the public sphere thus required that the orator possess a constant mind fortified, as the model of Cicero suggested, with the four Stoic virtues. Erasmus had enshrined this Ciceronian ideal in the metaphor of the *quadratus homo*, the ‘foursquare man’, whose equality of mind, and whose ability to defy fortune’s blows, neatly reflected Quintilian’s earlier appraisal. It was precisely this persona that Nicholas’s studies in rhetoric led him to aspire the most.²⁵ If the playwright Ben Jonson can be trusted, ‘Sir *Nico. Bacon*’ realized this and then some: the equal of Cicero and Thomas More in eloquence, wit, and virtue, he fashioned himself into the perfect orator; a man ‘singular and almost alone in the beginning of Queene *Elizabeths* time.’²⁶

Years later, the ideal of the *quadratus homo* would be enshrined on the walls of the estate Nicholas built at St Albans, where, through the provision of instances of classical virtue, it served him as a mnemonic.²⁷ Of the sixty or so *sententiae* (classical proverbs) he had painted in the long gallery at Gorhambury, no fewer than fifteen are

²³ Quintilian, *De institutio oratoria*, XII. i. 3, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1922), Vol. IV, pp. 356-7.

²⁴ Ibid. Quoted from Patrick Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan *via media*’, *The Historical Journal* 23 (1980), pp. 255-73 (p. 259). Bacon’s house at Gorhambury included 12 *sententiae* drawn from Cicero’s *De officiis*. See Elizabeth McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1977), p. 31.

²⁵ See McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 58; Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan *Via Media*’, p. 259.

²⁶ ‘Ben Jonson’, in *Literary Criticism of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Edward Taylor (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 108.

²⁷ Bacon’s Gorhambury estate, where Francis would later live, was built between 1563-1568.

derived from Cicero. Hand-picked largely from Erasmus’s 1501 edition of *De officiis*, they present a consistent portrait of Nicholas’s commitment to ethical statesmanship. Under the commonplace heading ‘DE INIVSTITIA’, for instance, he elected to have painted: ‘Every injustice happens either by fraud or force; the former is characteristic of the little fox, the latter of the lion, neither of man.’²⁸ The Machiavellian *vulpecula* that would come to characterize much of the political counsel of Francis is nowhere to be found amongst the collected wisdom of his father. Nicholas’s collection, quite to the contrary, makes plain his rejection of the principles of Machiavellian political thought. He is at pains to remind himself that, ‘of all forms of injustice, none is more flagrant than that of the hypocrite who, at the very moment when he is most false, makes it his business to appear virtuous.’²⁹ His response to Machiavelli’s view that it is better for the common people to fear than to love the prince likewise reveals the committed Ciceronian: it is not fear, he believes, but the ‘services of generosity, and friendliness and courtesy in conversation’ that ‘win the love of the multitude.’³⁰

Together, the Ciceronian *sententiae* at Gorhambury reflect a civic virtue that is entirely compatible with the truly Christian life. In the prefatorial letter to his edition of *De officiis*, Erasmus had indicated as much when he wrote that, as ‘virtue is mortal man’s mightiest weapon,’ so Cicero’s ‘enchiridion’ (ἐγχειρίδιον) should be ‘learnt by heart.’³¹ The *De officiis*, he continued, was a ‘divine fountain of honour,’ which, next to the Bible, supplied the guidance requisite for social reform.³² Nicholas drank deep. He agreed wholeheartedly with Erasmus that a commitment to the common good was better equipped through the cultivation of the civic virtues of the Romans Stoics—virtues best exemplified in Cicero’s ‘books of gold’—than with those of the medieval Church (i.e. Faith, Hope, and Charity).³³ The former were virtues of the active life

²⁸ Cicero, *De officiis*, I. xiii, trans. Walter Miller (London: Heinemann, 1913), p. 45. Bacon’s Latin inscription reads: ‘OMNIS INIVSTITIA: AVT FRAVDE, AVT VI FIT, HOC PROPRIUM / LEONIS, ILLVD VVLPECVLAE NEVTRVM HOMINIS’ (copied from McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 80).

²⁹ Cicero, *De officiis*, I. xiii, p. 47. Bacon’s Latin inscription reads: ‘NVLLA INIVSTITIA CAPITALIOR, QVAM ILLORVM QVI CVM MAXIME FALLVNT, TAMEN ITA AGVNT, VT VIRI VIDERI VEL-LENT’ (copied from McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 82).

³⁰ Cicero, *De officiis*, II. ix, p. 201. Bacon’s Latin inscription reads: ‘AMOREM MVLTTITVDINIS: CAPTANT: LIBERALITATIS OFFICIA. AC COMITAS AFFABILITASQUE SERMONIS’ (copied from McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 74. See also, pp. 31-2).

³¹ The Greek word for ‘enchiridion’ (ἐγχειρίδιον) can mean either a ‘handbook’ or a ‘dagger’.

³² *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 142-297 (1501-1514)*, trans. and ed. Douglas F. S. Thomson and Roger A. B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 30-2.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

(*vita activa*); the latter of the contemplative (*vita contemplativa*). Cicero, accordingly, could be embraced as a guide to the active, social reformism required of the godly: for the best way for a true Christian to fulfil his duty, as Nicholas’s *sententiae* attest, was through the application of the worldly wisdom of the Stoics to the practical problems facing Christendom.

* * * *

If the writings of Luther and Erasmus provided him with a sense of purpose, and those of Cicero and Quintilian taught him to cultivate civic virtue for the sake of the common good, it was ‘my Senecke’ who gave Nicholas the compass he needed to steer a course to ‘Safty, Quiette and Libertye’ through ‘everye storme.’³⁴ Tudor England’s appetite for Seneca was still some years away, the comprehensive editions of Muret and Lipsius not printed until 1585 and 1604, respectively, but the Roman’s writings were readily available to the inquisitive, English reader: an *editio princeps* of his philosophical works, along with separate editions of the *Epistulae morales*, had been published in 1485. Sixteenth-century commonplace books likewise contained accessible selections of Seneca, and even Calvin had published a commentary on *De clementia* (1531) prior to his flight to Geneva. Not surprisingly, though, it was from Erasmus’s 1515 edition that Nicholas became familiar with Seneca’s moral letters.³⁵ Although his first contact with the *Epistulae morales* was thus with the 1515 edition at Cambridge, by the time Gorhambury was under construction, Nicholas’s Senecan *sententiae* were drawn from a much more impressive volume of Erasmus’s editorial hand: the *Flores Lucii Annaei Senecae Cordybensis* (1534).³⁶

In the *Epistulae*, Nicholas met with a counterbalance to the somewhat quixotic advice of Quintilian, Cicero, and Erasmus. Seneca counselled a political realism with which Nicholas could temper the dangers that accompanied a blind adherence to the lofty ideals embodied in the *quadratus homo*. Like Quintilian and Cicero, Seneca had praised the pursuit of virtue. But he was also keen to point out that virtue and reality

³⁴ Forty-three of the Latin mottos that were inscribed at the Bacon home in Gorhambury were from Seneca or a Senecan source (see McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, pp. 36–44. Nicholas Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ed. S. Daniel (Oxford: Daniel Press, [1903] 1919), ‘In commendacion of the meane estate’, pp. 5–8 and ‘Made at Wymbleton in his Lo: greate sicknes in the laste yere of Quene Marye’, p. 27.

³⁵ Erasmus’ second edition of the *Epistulae morales* (1529) proved especially popular.

³⁶ See McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, pp. 37–8.

seldom met as one. More often than not, humans wore a mask of virtue where there was only vice. Lamenting ‘this mime of human life’ (*hic humanae vitae mimus*), as he called it, Seneca cautioned that one must be prepared to look beyond the appearance of virtue to the reality that lay beneath. His example, ‘the games’, called attention to the ease with which people could make themselves appear virtuous: in the arena, gladiators put on great acts of virtue, yet, at the end of the day, they were merely slaves who received ‘a daily pittance and slep[t] on rags.’ Their fortitude was ‘put on like an actor’s mask.’ ‘Tear it off,’ wrote Seneca, and rather than cheer for them, ‘you will scorn them.’³⁷

Nicholas would later draw upon this *topos* in his poem ‘The Prologe to the maske of myndes’, where he stressed the fact that humans often saw just what they wanted to, mistaking the ‘semblance’ of virtue for virtue itself.³⁸ Unlike Seneca, however, his emphasis was ‘the moral and perceptual blindness of the beholders,’ rather than any dissimulation on the part of the actor.³⁹ For Nicholas, the beholders were themselves the maskers; the spectator put the mask on the slave and beheld the great gladiator. If this were true of the arena, then he felt it was undoubtedly true of the court, where the rewards were high, and the risks even higher.⁴⁰ Seneca had made it clear that the orator must seek to strip the masks from men’s minds; a task which required that he first subject himself to reason. Nicholas agreed. In order to thrive in the political arena, the statesman must first cultivate his mind (*cultura animi*); must pull the blindfold from his eyes before he could learn to distinguish between real virtue and a mere façade. This was a lesson worthy of the long gallery, thus from the *Epistulae morales* Nicholas had painted: ‘If you want to make everything subject to you, subject yourself to reason.’⁴¹ A life lived in accordance with reason, in which truth

³⁷ Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, LXXX.7-8, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London: Heinemann, 1989): ‘hic humanae vitae mimus, qui nobis partes quas male agamus adsignat.’

³⁸ Nicholas Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘The Prologe to the maske of myndes’, pp. 15-17: ‘But manye blynde beholders of this maske there bee, / Whoe see the but perceyues not the maskers syne sectes: / Eache masker a beholder, soe maye you ofte see: / And all this at one tyme to seuerall respectes / Of error and ignorance, such are the effectes / Which beinge cleane banished oute of eache manns mynde / Would make eache thinge appeare accordinge to his kynde’ (pp. 16-17).

³⁹ McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Nicholas’s rendition of Horace’s ode to the golden mean: ‘The golden meane wosoe loues well / Shall safe and free thereby eschewe / The lothesome howse with filthe and smelle / And envious spighte the which is due / To suche as in the Pallace dwell’ (Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘An Ode of Horace turned at the desier of my Ladye his Lo: wyfe’, p. 14).

⁴¹ Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, XXXVI.4: ‘SI VIS TIBI OMNIA SVBIICERE, SVBIICE TE RATIONI’ (copied from McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, pp. 68-9).

became discernible from pretence, was most fundamental to one’s survival in the world of politics.

It was Seneca’s *Oedipus*, however, that furnished Nicholas with the *sententia* most pivotal to his political outlook and, consequently, with the Bacon family motto: *mediocria firma* (‘moderate things endure’).⁴² For Nicholas, it epitomized the realism, the hard-headedness he had come to admire most in Seneca’s appraisal of the world as tragic theatre. In its prescription of temperance, Nicholas meant to remind himself of the political realism (*moderatio mundi*) needed to mediate the dangers of an active life.⁴³ It consequently served as a reflection of his indebtedness to Stoic ethics; and, in particular, of the belief that virtue had its origins in the desire for self-preservation.⁴⁴ That Nicholas placed *Temperantia* first amongst the virtues was an endorsement of the view that, in truth, preservation required compromise, not an easily praiseworthy, but equally naïve idealism. The latter could get one into trouble: if not rooted in self-preservation, civic virtues were not really virtues, but prospective perils. The middle course (*via media*) was almost always the safer, and hence the more virtuous option, even though it might not always appear so at first. In so far as virtue was measurable in relation to self-preservation, then, moderation, thought Nicholas, was that which would offer him the best path to ‘Saftye, Quiette and Libertye.’⁴⁵

Where this belief in moderation found its principal expression was in matters of religion. In its most elemental form, *moderatio* gave shape to Nicholas’s view that true religion (*vera religio*) was always situated somewhere between too much religion (superstition) and too little (atheism). Plutarch had most famously expressed this idea, a variant of the Aristotelian view that deficiency and excess were the roots of vice, in his *De superstitione*.⁴⁶ As Nicholas later waxed lyrical, ‘Bene twooe extremes, and

⁴² Seneca, *Four Tragedies and Octavia*, trans. E. F. Watling (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 245.

⁴³ McCutcheon argues that Seneca provided Nicholas Bacon with ‘a more private and secular view of moral philosophy’, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 42.

⁴⁴ See Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006), p. 122. Nicholas could have found the idea of *oikeiosis* in either Diogenes Laertius, VII.84-131, trans. R. D. Hicks, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, [1925] 2005), Vol. 2, pp. 193-235; or Cicero, *De finibus*, III.16-17, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, [1914] 1931), pp. 233-235.

⁴⁵ In addition to his motto, *mediocria firma*, Nicholas wrote a poem entitled ‘In commendacion of the meane estate’ (Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, pp. 5-8).

⁴⁶ The belief that true religion is positioned between superstition and atheism was most succinctly expressed in Plutarch’s *De superstitione* (Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank C. Babbitt, 14 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1927), Vol. 2, pp. 466-9. See also Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, II.5, trans. Michael Woods (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 19-20. There is no way to know whether Nicholas encountered it here, however. It seems more likely that he knew it as a general *topos*, as it was quite common in other Classical and Renaissance works.

extremes all / ffrom vertues bowndes to vyce doe fall. / fflye them therefore as poyson strong / And singe the meane as moste swete songe.⁴⁷ By the late-sixteenth century, numerous apologies for the establishment of an English Church had taken up this idea—though usually in terms of the distinction between ‘Rome’ and ‘Geneva’. Nicholas did not employ the latter language. His frequent attempts to apply the rule of moderation to religion were, as we shall see, thoroughly political, thoroughly secular. His aim was irenic; political stability and social cohesion. It was never theological; the balance of theological *minutiae* far less of a concern to him than the welfare of the state. To regard true religion as a median was, for Nicholas, to allow for a greater amount of ambiguity, and therefore to advance a more inclusive, and less unsettled, Christianity.⁴⁸ It was not an attempt to specify belief, but a recognition that religious toleration was the best means to political stability. Preciseness in matters of religion was not the path to *sana religio*.

Nor was this Neostoicism: Nicholas made no attempt to merge Stoic principles with Christian beliefs, as would become popular towards the end of the century. To the contrary, in so far as self-preservation required the preservation of social order, and the preservation of social order called for a moderate rule in religion, Nicholas accepted that a truly godly society could only be erected at the expense of traditional Christian values.⁴⁹ Despite first appearances, this was neither a particularly radical position, nor a truly irreligious one, either. Italian political theorists had prized ancient virtue above medieval, Christian values for the previous two centuries, and, closer to home, Christian humanists had followed suit.⁵⁰ The architects of Tudor Protestantism—men such as Ascham, Cheke, and Cecil—were often guided more by classical than by biblical teachings. Indeed, the veneration of ancient wisdom (*sapientia prima*) was, without exception, one point of agreement between all Christians. Nicholas was thus far from alone in subjecting the Christian religion to the rule of classical virtue. If he differed, it was only because he, unlike the majority of those

⁴⁷ Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘In commendacion of the meane estate’, pp. 5-8.

⁴⁸ See Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan Via Media’, p. 261.

⁴⁹ On the theme of *philanthropia*, see Cicero, *De finibus*, III.63, pp. 283-5. See also McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 42, who argues that unlike later Neostoics (e.g. Lipsius), who tried to Christianize Stoicism, Nicholas Bacon linked Seneca ‘to a more private and secular view of moral philosophy and Stoic consolation, paralleling and supplementing, even at times substituting for, traditional Christian values.’

⁵⁰ For instance, the Florentines Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, Francesco Guicciardini, and Niccolò Machiavelli, each attempted to reinstate the values of Roman republicanism. In the north, Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives argued for the use of the classics to the Christian life in practical matters.

with whom he shared a reformist vision for society, eventually came to wield the power necessary to see the classical ideals behind Erasmus’s social reformism brought into action.

* * * *

By 1527, Nicholas Bacon had come a long way. From Drinkstone to the abbey at Bury to Bene’t College, Cambridge, the education he had received had decided him against a cloistered life, ignited in him the spirit of reform, and ultimately steered him in the direction of civic engagement. From Luther, he had learnt what it meant to be a true Christian. Through Seneca, Cicero, and Quintilian—mediated in no small part by Erasmus—he had come to clothe himself in the attire of the Christian humanist. As a result, by the time he had left Cambridge, Nicholas was confident that it was ‘Civill orders’ which were ‘besemeigne for this worke of thy handes.’⁵¹ This was his *vocatio*. God, he felt, had called upon him to live and act for the common good.⁵² The only question that remained now was how to achieve the godly society that his education had taught him to seek. Although he did not have an answer as yet, Nicholas was convinced that the commitment he had made to an active life needed to be placed in the service of the emergent Protestant cause in England.

Nicholas Bacon and the Reformation: from Gray’s Inn to the Court of Edward VI

Little is known, unfortunately, of Nicholas Bacon’s whereabouts until five years after he left Bene’t College, Cambridge. But by 1532 he had been admitted to Gray’s Inn in Holborn, where he was to commence his legal studies in earnest. As Robert Tittler, Nicholas’s most recent biographer, has suggested, it was routine for students of Gray’s to be admitted only after they had received preparatory instruction at Barnard’s or the Staple Inn—the most probable explanation for his activities between 1527 and 1532.⁵³ Gray’s was one of four Inns of Court located at the very western edge of the City of London. Founded as a ‘hostel’ (*hospitium*) for the tuition and confraternity of lawyers in the fourteenth century, it was, by the time Nicholas arrived, sufficiently established to be considered one of the premier training grounds for office in Tudor government.

⁵¹ Bacon, *The Recreations of his Age*, ‘Prayer’, p. 38.

⁵² Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 33 uses the Latin word *vocatus* instead of *vocatio*.

⁵³ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 21-23.

Gray’s was also a haven of progressivist activity in the sixteenth century, offering a home to individuals with a similar penchant for religious and social reform to that of Cambridge. In short, Gray’s could not have been a better fit for Nicholas.

In the immediate years after his admittance, Nicholas would acquire the legal and clerical skills requisite for either a position in government or the practice of law, and would subsequently be brought—largely as a result of his place at the Inn—to the attention of the highest ministers in the country. A combination of skill, intelligence, and the right theological leanings would see him advance swiftly through the ranks of Ancient (1536), Bencher (1550), and ultimately Treasurer (1552); the latter of which enabled him to renovate the Inn to the benefit of his sons.⁵⁴ Such progression inside the hierarchy of the Inns was remarkable. But it was his progress within Henry VIII’s government—first in the Court of Augmentations, and then as Attorney of the Court of Wards and Liveries—that offered him the opportunity to foster the Erasmian social ideology he subscribed to beyond the immediate vicinity of Holborn. Through these positions, Nicholas would accomplish a number of judicial and educational reforms, before eventually finding himself within the innermost circles of the young King Edward VI, where his humanistic interests were to prove most beneficial.

Nicholas’s decision to enter Gray’s Inn in the first instance had no doubt been helped somewhat by Luther. Luther’s assertion in *Von Weltlicher Oberkeit* (1523) that civil magistrates were equal in faith to clergy, but ‘possessed both the divine mandate *and* the power to accomplish reform,’ may very well have provided Nicholas with the grounds he needed to break free from the prospect of the tonsure once and for all.⁵⁵ Luther’s increasing preference for magisterial reform was also, of course, similar to that already espoused by Erasmus; though with an added theological justification that proved attractive to Nicholas, as we shall shortly see. In his *Moriae encomium* (1511), Erasmus had earlier expressed scepticism about the priority of clerical claims to piety, and elsewhere spoken of the irreducibility of magisterial and educational reform to the

⁵⁴ Robert Tittler, ‘Bacon, Sir Nicholas (1510–1579)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1002>>.

⁵⁵ Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard*, p. 43. Emphasis added. It is not clear whether Nicholas had made the decision to abandon the cloistered life during or after his time at Cambridge. Luther addresses this question of reform and civil authority in the prefatorial letter *Von Weltlicher Oberkeit* (1523). See, for instance, Luther, *On Secular Authority*, ed. and trans. Harro Höpfl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 15: ‘And therefore if you see that there is a lack of hangmen, court officials, judges, lords or princes, and you find that you have the necessary skills, then you should offer your services and seek office, so that authority, which is so greatly needed, will never come to be held in contempt, become powerless, or perish. The world cannot get by without it.’

renewal of the Christian religion.⁵⁶ Though both Erasmus and Luther thus made it clear that one need not adhere to the clerical or monastic life in order to deepen one’s faith, it was Luther alone who presented Nicholas with the model of a monk who left the monastery, and had done so with the understanding that a godly life was possible anywhere, even in service to the Crown.

It was six years until Nicholas’s promise beyond the profession of the law was first noted. Although he had been employed periodically as a solicitor by his old *alma mater*, it was not at Cambridge, but within the quad of Gray’s Inn that he attracted the notice of a powerful patron. In 1538, Nicholas’s name was brought to the attention of Henry VIII’s Principal Secretary Thomas Cromwell (c. 1484-1540) by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), who recommended him for the town clerkship of Calais; a French city then under English jurisdiction.⁵⁷ In mentioning him to Cromwell, Cranmer made one point in particular worth elaborating here: namely, that Nicholas was a man ‘of so good judgment touching Christ’s religion.’⁵⁸ Such an adjudication of his beliefs at this time suggests that Nicholas had chosen to conform to a broadly Lutheran—or, at the very least, very much evangelical—confession, as Cranmer himself had done.⁵⁹ For, although initially hostile to the German reformer, by the mid-1530s Cranmer had embraced an evangelical theology which was, in its broadest outlines, close to that of Luther.⁶⁰

Unfortunately for us most of Nicholas’s personal papers are lost to time. There remain records of his parliamentary speeches, as well as sundry official documents, but very little in the way of private reflections. Vestiges of his theological preferences do survive in a small collection of poetry, to which he gave the title *The Recreations*

⁵⁶ The first English edition of *The Praise of Folly* was translated and published by Thomas Chaloner in London in 1549: there is no reason to think that Nicholas would not have read the Latin edition, though, as it was readily available in England well before this date. In this work, Erasmus had quipped that sailors and waggoners (i.e., those not ‘segregated from civil life’) were more likely to fair well on judgment day. See Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp, 1515*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 167.

⁵⁷ See Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection and the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1980), p. 66; Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Tittler, ‘Bacon, Sir Nicholas (1510-1579)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1002>>.

⁵⁹ Cranmer himself had reacted with hostility to Luther’s rejection of the Papacy in the 1520s. As Diarmaid McCulloch has shown, Cranmer’s marginalia on Bishop John Fisher’s *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio* (London, 1523) reveal his distaste for both Luther and Fisher at the time. McCulloch suggests that this proves that Cranmer was not a member of the Whitehorse Coterie, and thus would not have shared Nicholas Bacon’s religious sympathies when both men were at Cambridge. See McCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 26-30.

⁶⁰ See McCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 613.

of his Age, but these offer only glimpses into what must otherwise have been a well-developed set of private commitments. Of the thirty-five poems and one prayer Nicholas composed, only the latter is datable; though all appear to have been written sometime between Elizabeth’s accession in 1558 and his own death in 1579. Six of the poems are religious in nature, however it is the ‘Prayer made by Sir N. Bacon knighte Lorde keeper of the greate Seale of Engelande’ (1558) that offers us the best evidence of his theological views.⁶¹

In its offer of gratitude for the benefits that God has bestowed upon him and his second wife (‘AB uxor’), Nicholas’s prayer betrays a evangelicalism that owes its central tenets to Luther.⁶² Nicholas was not, nor ever had been, a ‘Lutheran’. But the presence of certain theological keystones, and the total paucity of others, suggests the influence of the German reformer was, at the very least, greater than that of other, contemporary theologians. Reference is made to the doctrines of the Fall (‘Adams fall and the iniquityes of my conceptyon’), to the two natures of Christ (‘thy onely sonne beinge equall with thee in godhede’), and, most signally, to justification by faith (‘of grace whiche thou geueste free’).⁶³ Though the latter of Luther’s doctrines had been adopted by Jean Calvin (1509-1564), none of the more distinctive doctrines (e.g., election and predestination), or stresses often associated with Calvinism (e.g., self-examination), are present here, or anywhere else in Nicholas’s writings. There is no evidence, for instance, that the reformed theology imported from Geneva by, amongst others, ‘AB uxor’, made much of an impact on his theological views.⁶⁴ If Nicholas was indebted to any theologian, then, it was to Luther.

The reason that Cranmer had thought Nicholas a fitting choice for Calais was precisely on account of these theological views. Cranmer wanted a deputy who would reinforce the Crown’s official position, and deal with anyone who sought to restore

⁶¹ Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘Prayer’, pp. 37-40.

⁶² There are some peculiar English ideas here: for instance, Bacon believes that if one is already ‘iustified’ by grace, the ‘Sacramente of Baptisme’ will complete one’s membership in the ‘misticall bodye’ of the church. This reflects a mixture of Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith and the Roman Catholic view that the sacrament of baptism involves a joining of the believer to the mystical body of the church.

⁶³ Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘Prayer’, p. 37. Bacon stress is placed largely upon the Fall and its effects and God’s ‘freelye geven’ grace. It is ultimately, though, in Bacon’s insistence on the radical nature of ‘synne’, as evidenced by the emphasis he places on himself as a ceaseless ‘penytente’, that the influence of Luther becomes certain beyond any shadow of a doubt. Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘Prayer’, p. 39; see also the substantial, ‘A prayer of a Penytente’, pp. 20-3 in the same work. See Markus Wriedt, ‘Luther’s Theology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donal K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 86-119 (on p. 95): Luther came to view penitence as nearly synonymous with faith.

⁶⁴ Bacon’s prayer is datable to 1558, before Calvinism had made much of an impact in England.

the Roman rites.⁶⁵ It was not to be, however. Cromwell had other plans. Instead of Calais, Nicholas was appointed to a minor position in the Court of Augmentations; an equally suitable, if less prestigious, office for a lawyer ‘of so good judgment touching Christ’s religion.’ The Court of Augmentations had been established by Cromwell in 1536 to attend to the windfall which had come to the Crown from the dissolution of the monasteries. It was, in other words, at the vanguard of the English reformation, an office delegated the task of reclaiming monastic land-holdings (a number of which Nicholas himself was quick to purchase).⁶⁶ Although it is uncertain what his initial role was at the Court, by 1540 Nicholas had been awarded the patent to the Solicitor’s office, and with it the not insubstantial salary of £70 per annum.⁶⁷

The solicitorship was under the direct observation of the king, and Henry was quick to take note of Nicholas’s flair for legal reform, shortly thereafter tasking him with the compilation of a report on the education on offer at the Inns. A precise date for the commission of what would subsequently come to be known as the ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’ is not known; though it was probably not much later than January 1540.⁶⁸ As the title suggests, moreover, the report was jointly authored, with Thomas Denton and Robert Cary equal, if not greater, contributors.⁶⁹ What is most interesting from our point of view, however, is the fact that the report provides the first tangible instance of Nicholas’s efforts to reform the Inns along humanist lines, and for ‘godly’ purposes: in its recommendations for the reformation of the education of students of the law, it departs substantially from conventional ideas of professional instruction, even going so far as to propose the establishment of a fifth Inn.⁷⁰ Although the recommendations of the ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’ were never implemented, it is worth pointing out the most prominent features of the report’s ‘fifth Inn’, as it offers insight into Nicholas’s active attempts at reform.

Unlike the four established Inns of Court, where readers were required to pay for their tuition, the proposed, fifth Inn was to be comprised of students selected and

⁶⁵ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 204, n. 7.

⁶⁶ This included his first estate at Redgrave in Suffolk.

⁶⁷ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 25-6. Nicholas replaced Walter Henley.

⁶⁸ For a summary account of the report, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 29-32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30 writes: ‘Although his fellow commissioners are more obscure to us, there is no reason to think that they were not even better known than Bacon in their own time. Nor should we infer that Bacon dominated the trio.’ Even if he was not the sole, or principal author, the ideas presented in the report were certainly shared by Nicholas, who later went on to implement them alone.

⁷⁰ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 30.

paid for entirely by the king himself, and hence known as the ‘King’s Students’.⁷¹ His ‘Graces House of Students’ was to instruct its fellows in both ‘*the pure French and Latine tongues,*’ and attempt, in turn, ‘to banish the corruption of both tongues,’ so as to render the law less ambiguous in all possible respects.⁷² The ultimate goal of such language training was to prepare students to ‘wait upon Embassadors’ sent into ‘any foreign Realm’ (presumably Latin would suffice in most places).⁷³ This, in addition to various apprenticeships in parliament and even in the Privy Counsel, would provide the practical training necessary for the next generation of statesmen. At the Inn itself, students were to read ‘some Orator or book of rhetoric,’ both Latin and Greek, as well as authors ‘which treateth of the Government of a Common-Wealth.’ Nicholas no doubt had in mind Quintilian and Cicero; the latter of whom is cited multiple times in the report.⁷⁴ This unique blend of humanism and apprenticeship was meant to replace traditional legal education, ‘rooted and seasoned’ as it was ‘in barbarous Authours’, the ‘very Enemies to good learning.’ The Inn’s ultimate aim was to produce statesmen who possessed *maturitas aetatis* (‘the maturity of a lifetime’): in other words, those endowed with ‘all the advantages that art, nature, and experience can contribute to [their] production.’ Being as ‘perfect as nature can bear or arrive at,’ these statesmen would subsequently serve the king as Privy Counsellors.⁷⁵

Here was a clearly progressive vision of legal training. Indeed, Nicholas must have been acutely aware of the differences between the proposed reforms and his own experience at Gray’s, for the report is paradigmatic of contemporary efforts to realize ideals of Christian humanism which had thus far remained a distant reality. Although progressivist ideas were certainly in circulation at the Inns of Court, little, if anything, had been done to see them realized. The ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’ thus presented a unique opportunity to tender such changes before the one person with the power to actually execute them. Its selling points were both religious and civic. In order to be a ‘godly Enterprise,’ education must produce ‘good fruit’. For precisely this reason, the best harvest would be achieved through the establishment of a fifth Inn according to

⁷¹ The ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’ does not exist in its original form. The version available to the modern historian was edited by the antiquary Edward Waterhouse in his *Fortescutus Illustratus* (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1663), pp. 539-46 (on p. 539).

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 539, 540.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Waterhouse, *Fortescutus Illustratus*, pp. 543-544, 549. Cicero uses ‘*maturitas aetatis*’ in *Ad familiares*, VI.18.4, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 293.

the ‘Lawes of God and nature.’⁷⁶ And such an institution, erected with ‘Godly zeal’, would precipitate ‘the advancement of the Common-wealth.’⁷⁷ This optimistic social ideology, so essential to Christian humanism, is what legitimizes the entire report; an underlying belief that the English ‘in short time shall not be equal with other [nations] but far excell them, whereby not onely we that are in this present Age, but the whole Realm for ever.’⁷⁸ Although his proposals for a godly fifth Inn were never heeded, in the end Nicholas was nevertheless able, once elected Treasurer of Gray’s, to sell off most of the clerical vestments and other paraphernalia of the old religion; and thus bring the Inn closer in line with his own religious sympathies.⁷⁹

Now at thirty-two years of age, Nicholas entered parliament, sitting as MP for Westmorland in 1542.⁸⁰ This was another big step in his career, though arguably less so than his appointment to Attorney of the Court of Wards and Liveries in the winter of 1547 (only a matter of days before the King’s death). Although recently created, in principal the function of the Court of Wards and Liveries was far older: it had been established in 1540 to oversee the inheritance of the land and wardship of the heirs of deceased members of the gentry; a requisite of medieval feudalism in desperate need of systematization. What happened to the children of deceased landholders until they reached the age of maturity was an important, though often neglected, aspect of Tudor governance. Naturally, Nicholas gave priority to the education of wards. Although not composed until the reign of Queen Mary, Nicholas drew up a proposal for improving their lot. Entitled ‘Articles devised for the bringine up in vertue and lerninge of the Quenes Majesties Wardes’, the proposal contended that ‘the chiefe thing, and most of

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 542, 549.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 539.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 549.

⁷⁹ Although this does not help us to settle the question of his contribution to the report, Nicholas would subsequently go on to make many of the same proposals in his later attempts at reform. On the selling off of the vestments, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 48-9.

⁸⁰ Nicholas sat in parliament again in 1545, this time either for Sir Thomas Arundel, with whom he worked at the Court of Augmentations, or his friend, and possibly patron, Lord John Russell. Unfortunately, no records remain from these Henrician parliaments, meaning that we have no way of knowing Nicholas’s contribution(s). See Tittler, ‘Bacon, Sir Nicholas (1510-1579)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1002>>, and *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 39-41.

price, in wardeship is the wardes mynde.’⁸¹ The articles exhibit Nicholas’s humanist belief in the education of the whole person; with ‘divine service’ in the early morning, followed by study in Latin, Greek, and French, then ‘study with the music-master,’ and finally ‘evening prayers’.⁸² Once the wards reached the age of sixteen, they were to attend lectures in ‘civil law’, as well as in *disciplina militaris*.⁸³ These proposals are much the same as those put forth in the ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’, and exhibit Nicholas’s shared interest in social reform through education with Erasmus, More, Starkey, Elyot, and perhaps even Castiglioni.⁸⁴

In practical terms, Nicholas planned to set up an Academy of Wards—but this never saw the light of day. His active efforts at educational reform were a success in other places, though: the construction of the Redgrave Grammar School (1576) was effected on his orders; with his help the Grammar (no longer abbey) School at Bury-St-Edmunds was re-founded; and he later oversaw plans for a new grammar school at St Albans.⁸⁵ He endowed his old Cambridge college with six scholarships, provided funds for the construction of the College chapel, and donated seventy volumes to the library—most likely at the urging of his old friend Matthew Parker.⁸⁶ Nicholas also found time to fund geometry. The astronomer Thomas Digges (c. 1546-1595) would later recall how the ‘Lord Keper’ had supported the efforts of his father, the geometer

⁸¹ British Library, Add. MS. 32479, ff. 26-33. The date we have for the ‘Articles’ is 1561, when Elizabeth was Queen, but we know Nicholas resubmitted it to Cecil; having previously devised it under Mary’s reign. Quoted from J. Payne Collier, ‘XXXI. On Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper; with extracts from some of his unprinted Papers and Speeches’, *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity, 1770-1992*, 36 (1855), pp. 339-348 (on p. 343): ‘That the proceeding hath bin proposterous appeareth by this: the chiefe thing, and most of price, in wardeship is the wardes mynde; the next to that, his bodie; the last and meanest, his land. Nowe, hitherto the chiefe care of governaunce hath bin had to the land, being the meaneste; and to the bodies, being the better, very small; but to the mynde, being the best, none at all, which methinks is playnely to sett the carte before the horse.’ See also Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 59-61.

⁸² Though the ‘Articles’ do not spell out the precise nature of religious worship, it is interesting to note that Nicholas’s recommendations for morning (Matins) and evening prayers (Evensong) follow the prescription of Archbishop Cranmer, as set out in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer; and thus do away with the practice of daily Mass (see Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485-1603* (London: Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 132.

⁸³ Collier, ‘On Sir Nicholas Bacon’, p. 344.

⁸⁴ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 211, n. 14 has suggested that Castiglione’s *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528) may have been a source for the ‘Articles’, as Nicholas’s brother-in-law Thomas Hoby published an English edition in 1561.

⁸⁵ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 212, n. 17: the 1576 document is the later, revised plans for Redgrave; the original orders do not survive. Tittler notes that ‘Bacon’s orders for the establishment of the Redgrave Grammar School differed considerably from his plans for an academy of wards.’ I have not been able to view this document, which is held in the public record office in Norfolk (on p. 60).

⁸⁶ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 58, 60-61: According to Tittler, Nicholas Bacon was the first person in England to have a personal bookplate designed, bearing the inscription: ‘N. Bacon eques auratus & magni sigilli Angliae Custos librum hunc bibliothecae Catabrig dicavit, 1574.’

Leonard Digges (c. 1515-1559).⁸⁷ The dedicatory epistle to his father’s posthumously published *Pantometria* (1571) hints, for instance, that Nicholas’s patronage of ‘experimentes’ rather than ‘Sophistrie’ was also afforded to Thomas; though perhaps not to the same degree.⁸⁸

While he could not be said to have possessed any gift for natural philosophy, Nicholas’s widespread concern for the advancement of the commonwealth through educational and social reform therefore never excluded the study of God’s Creation. He continued to press the Christian humanism of Erasmus, Vives and More forward as one of England’s star ‘commonwealth men’—a lay intellectual, whose pursuit of charity, social betterment, and civic virtue was grounded in the classics and a fast evangelical faith.⁸⁹ Together, Nicholas’s efforts at social reform as a means to the advancement of a godly English society had, by mid-century, earned him a reputation as a force for reformed religion.

* * * *

When Henry VIII died in January 1547, Protestant hopes for further reform were once again rekindled. Many had been disappointed with the King’s failure to carry through a full reformation in England: Henry’s idiosyncratic approach to religion in his realm—his authoritarianism, his acceptance of justification both by works and by faith, and his traditionalist stance on the sacraments—had dismayed, and indubitably baffled, a sizeable proportion of his government and court.⁹⁰ There had been a growing feeling of impatience among many reformed Christians, Nicholas Bacon included, that Henry

⁸⁷ Leonard Digges, ‘Epistle’, in *A Geometrical Practise, Named Pantometria Diuided into Three Bookes* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1571): ‘Calling to memorie right honourable, and my singular good Lorde, the great fauour your Lordship bare my father in his life time, and the conference it pleased your honor to vse vvith him touching the Sciences Mathematicall, especially in Geometrical mesurations, perusing also of late certaine volumes that he in his youthe time long sithens had compiled in the English tongue, among other I found this *Geometricall practise*, vvwhich my father (if God had spared him life) minded to haue presented your Honoure vvithall, but vntimely Death preuenting his determination... I am bolde to exhibite and dedicate it to your honor, as an eternall memoriall of your Lordshippes great fauoure tovvardes the furtherance of learning, and a publike testimonie of my bounden duetie.’

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*: ‘Wherby your Lordship shall not only incourage me heereafter to attempt greater matters, but also as it vvere vvith a soueraigne medicine preuent the poysoned infection of enuious backbiting tongues: for as the veritie of these experimentes and rules shall neuer be impugned, being so firmly grounded, garded, and defended vvith Geometricall demonstration, against vvwhose puissance no subtile Sophistrie or craftie coloured arguments can preuaile.’ See also Stephen Johnston, ‘Digges, Leonard (c. 1515-1559)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7637>>.

⁸⁹ For a definition of the ‘commonwealth men’, see Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 40.

⁹⁰ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 132.

meant simply to retain ‘Catholicism without the pope’—and, indeed, this was very close to the truth.⁹¹ Thus with the old King’s death there was excited the prospect of a monarch who would finish what his father had started, and secure a fully reformed, Protestant settlement. There was, however, another obstacle in the way: Prince Edward (1537-1553) was still just a boy. At nine years old, he was unable to exercise the full extent of his kingly prerogative, and would thus have to wait until he came of age before he could embark on reform. This was likely to postpone plans yet again, as the question of the protectorate now hung over the nation.

With remarkably little scuffle, however, it was decided that King Edward’s uncle, Edward Seymour, the 1st Duke of Somerset (1500-1552), would serve as Lord Protector. At the outset, this proved ambivalent news for those eager to press on with reform: Somerset himself was little more than a soldier; his capacity to govern, let alone his religious views, both unclear and untested.⁹² Any fears in the reformist camp were quickly laid to rest, however. Somerset liberated English gospellers from Henry VIII’s draconian laws; swiftly abolishing the 1539 ‘Act of Six Articles’ and repealing all legislation prohibiting the preaching and publication of evangelical material. The cessation of censorship of the press witnessed a massive outpouring of reformist tracts between 1547-1549, and a wealth of new translations of continental theology—and, in particular, of Jean Calvin’s works—were made widely available.⁹³ Evangelical exiles likewise began to return to the country; some of whom Cranmer was now able to offer bishoprics. It was also under Somerset’s command, finally, that the 1547 Injunctions authorizing Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* of the Gospels and Acts (1517-1524) to be sent to parish churches was implemented.⁹⁴ If anything had remained the same, it was the top down nature of the Reformation in England. This was no grassroots movement; Somerset, Cranmer, and the commonwealth men around Edward VI, clearly meant, just as Henry VIII had, to impose their religious views on the people.

Christian humanism and the evangelical cause were thus alive and well within only a few months of Somerset’s election as Lord Protector. Though Somerset himself did not remain in power beyond 1549, a dramatic shift had taken place: the reformist cause had become entrenched at court—at least deep enough to survive the return of a

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² There is no evidence of Somerset’s personal religious views, or of when he chose the reformed faith.

⁹³ For a more detailed picture, see Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, pp. 150-152, 165.

⁹⁴ Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 43.

Roman Catholic monarch a few years later. Henry may not have reformed the faith as much as many of the English desired, but he had allowed himself and his son to be surrounded by men bent on evangelical reform. Of these, and after Somerset, Cranmer was the most influential: having served as the primate of England for nearly fourteen years, he found himself in a position to finally act on his convictions. He now busied himself with reeling in all the continental Protestants he had worked quietly to establish relationships with over the years, and was, as a result, able to welcome a number of prominent theologians to England; most notable among whom were Martin Bucer (1491-1551) and Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562). In addition to his official duties, Cranmer did his utmost to promote the ‘word of God’ to his godson Edward; a task he and Somerset accomplished through the appointment of his tutors.⁹⁵ For both of these men, Edward was to be made into a new King Josiah; ‘the boy king of ancient Judah who had restored Jewish worship to its ancient purity.’⁹⁶

The wealth of humanism at Edward VI’s court cannot be easily overstated. Amongst the King’s tutors between 1547-1553 were Richard Cox, John Cheke, Roger Ascham, and Anthony Cooke—classical scholars and reformists all. Cranmer had developed close relationships with each of these men, arguably the foremost English humanists of their day, and now Nicholas Bacon followed suit.⁹⁷ Although he retained two lucrative posts, neither are sufficient to explain how Nicholas had ended up in the innermost circles of Edward’s court.⁹⁸ It is possible that Cranmer played a part in this; but there is no evidence to prove the matter either way. What little we do know is that Nicholas shared his humanist interests, his religion, and his *alma mater* with most of this elite group. Perhaps this was sufficient. Anthony Cooke (1504-1576) was clearly impressed: shortly before Edward’s death, Nicholas would marry Cooke’s daughter, Anne; a young woman of abundant intelligence, and a godliness to match.⁹⁹ Cooke’s task, along with the other tutors, was not only to teach the classics to Edward, as well as to his own daughters, but ‘to embue their tender souls with a knowing[,] serious,

⁹⁵ See MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 325-6. Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, pp. 152-4, argues that it was ‘partly as a result’ of Cranmer’s continental connections that, ‘from Edward’s reign ... we can abandon the use of vague terms such as “evangelical” and speak more precisely of Protestants’ (on p. 154).

⁹⁶ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 161.

⁹⁷ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 325.

⁹⁸ These were his positions at the Court of Augmentations and Court Wards and Liveries, which he retained until becoming Lord Keeper in 1558.

⁹⁹ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 50-51.

and sober Religion, which [would go] with them to their graves.’¹⁰⁰ This, it was thought, would secure the desired settlement once Edward came of age. Nicholas’s ‘sober Religion’, his proficiency in the classics, his enthusiasm for a Christian commonwealth—it can only be surmised that these were qualities that gained him a place amongst men such as Somerset, Cooke, and Cranmer.

As a member of Edward’s court, Nicholas also engaged in a number of activities beyond the bounds of his official posts. These were largely religious; minor contributions, yet indicative of his proximity to both the pursuit of a settlement, and the men behind it. In the British Library, to give one instance, can be found a copy of the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* with Nicholas’s signature inside it. Although he was not its author, Nicholas was most certainly one of its major supporters when the first edition was published by Cranmer in 1549.¹⁰¹ The contents of the first edition reflect largely political over theological concerns, as it was initially envisioned to serve as a compromise between the old and the new religion; a means to ease people into an unfamiliar form of worship. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that we find only the 1559 edition amongst what remains of Nicholas’s personal effects; for the earlier editions were, theologically speaking, rather ambiguous, whereas the later Elizabethan edition aligned with his beliefs.¹⁰² As one of its sponsors, Nicholas would have been aware of the purpose for which it had been created: namely, the gradual but steady imposition of Reformed religion upon the English laity—a programme which he fully supported. As recognition of his sponsorship, Nicholas was shortly after made a member, along with Cooke, of a commission first appointed in the spring of 1549 to uncover heretics and scorners of the Book.¹⁰³

Although the settlement the commonwealth men sought was still a decade off, Nicholas Bacon’s contributions to the Protestant cause between the years 1547-1553 would eventually earn him a central role in the successful execution of its Elizabethan incarnation. Edward VI’s short reign had proved advantageous to Nicholas beyond all doubt. Still, not all was happy during these years. He faced a personal crisis late in

¹⁰⁰ David Lloyd, *The States-Men and Favourites of England since the Reformation* (London: Printed by J. C., 1665), p. 202.

¹⁰¹ Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon’, p. 255. Collinson indicates that the press-mark for this item is c.25.m.7.

¹⁰² It should be noted that the 1552 edition already contained a largely Reformed theology, such that the amendments made to the 1559 edition were relatively minor.

¹⁰³ Nicholas Bacon was not himself appointed until sometime between 1551-1552. For further details, see Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection*, p. 84. Others appointed to the commission between 1549-1552 included Thomas Cranmer, Anthony Cooke, Hugh Latimer, William Cecil, John Cheke, and Matthew Parker.

1552, which was followed, only a matter of months later, by a religious one. The next few years would test his resolve and his convictions more than anything he had previously encountered, but would also shape his future, as well as that of his sons.

Anne Cooke: From the Studia Humanitatis to an Established Church

Nicholas had married Jane Fernley, the daughter of a Suffolk merchant with important trade connections in London, and sister to Anne, the wife of Thomas Gresham, himself future benefactor of Gresham College, in 1540.¹⁰⁴ Jane bore Nicholas seven children before her death in October 1552, and in so doing helped to secure for him a lasting dynasty of sorts.¹⁰⁵ All indications suggest that this was a happy, and most certainly productive, marriage. However, it was Nicholas’s second wife, Anne Cooke (1528-1610), who was to prove both a force for reform and, eight years later, the mother of Francis Bacon. It was to be yet another advantageous marriage for him, as Anne, the daughter of the humanist Anthony Cooke, esteemed along with her sisters both for her erudition and piety, would provide him with further political connections, but, perhaps more importantly, with ample ‘fruits of mind’. Before, during, and after her marriage, Anne would invest her intelligence, her studies in both the classics and patristics, and her energy into Reformed religion and the establishment of an English Church. Her efforts would earn her praise and, although largely unrecognized, a pivotal role in the advancement of the early Presbyterian movement. For these and other reasons, Anne, especially after the death of her husband, would come to be seen as ‘little better than frantic’; an obstinate Puritan who had given up all hope of reform from the monarchy, and so had placed matters into her own hands. If some perceived her this way, it was largely due to her determination, but also because she was a woman whose vision of a godly nation extended well beyond that of most of her male contemporaries, Nicholas Bacon included.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Very little is known of Jane Fernley, other than that she was ‘a Suffolk girl of good background and capable manner’ (see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 33, 49-51, 148, 152, 209).

¹⁰⁵ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 148-67 and Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ There has been a slew of recent research on Anne Cooke, which has opened up paths for understanding her contribution to early modern England. See, for instance: Gemma Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and *The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Lynne Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church: Election and Education in the Works of Anne Cook Bacon’, in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women: 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 42-56 and ‘Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon’s Epistolary Advice’, *English Literary Renaissance* 31 (2001), pp. 3-33.

Anne’s ‘fruits of mind’ had been furnished by her father, who had not only tutored King Edward VI, as we have seen, but also each of his own five daughters according to the *studia humanitatis*. Anthony himself appears to have been largely self-taught; for though he attended the Inner Temple, there is no evidence that he ever attended university.¹⁰⁷ Even so, the latter seems not to have prevented him from becoming a recognized authority on matters of theology. At some point in the 1530s, he had embarked on a course of private studies of the Church Fathers; and, though we do not have many details of this period of his life, by 1541 it seems he was sufficiently competent to translate from Latin a sermon by St Cyprian.¹⁰⁸ The resultant translation was subsequently dedicated to King Henry, probably to little effect, but Henry must nevertheless have noticed him, for Cooke was later given the position of Gentleman of the Privy Chamber.¹⁰⁹ Somerset would likewise take note of Cooke; but for his erudition rather than his capacity to empty the royal chamber pot. And so, with the Lord Protector’s assistance, Cooke soon found himself instructing ‘his Daughters at night’ and ‘the Prince in the day’—or at least so the story goes.¹¹⁰

As a result of their father’s progressive views, the Cooke girls thus received an education unbeknownst to most Tudor women. ‘Knowing that souls were equal, and that Women are as capable of Learning as Men,’ his earliest biographer records, Anthony Cooke spent much time in the instruction of his five daughters: Mildred, Anne, Katherine, Elizabeth, and Margaret.¹¹¹ Walter Haddon, suitor to Anne, recounted that ‘while I stayed’ at the Cooke household, ‘I seemed to be living among the Tuscans, except that the studies of women were flourishing in this Tuscany.’¹¹² Where Edward’s education had been centred around the skills requisite for a life in public, however, the focus of the girls’ studies was primarily to ‘decorate them’ with the accom-

¹⁰⁷ Marjorie McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke, Tudor Humanist, Educator, and Religious Reformer’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119 (1975), pp. 233-250 (on p. 235).

¹⁰⁸ Cooke’s translation of St Cyprian’s *De dominica oratione* was never published, and only exists in manuscript form: see Donn L. Calkins, ‘Cooke, Sir Anthony (1505/6–1576)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6155>>; McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, pp. 237-8.

¹⁰⁹ McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, p. 241. He was likely awarded this position just before Henry’s death.

¹¹⁰ This is retold by Lloyd in *The States-Men and Favourites of England*: Somerset is recorded to have said after a visit to the Cooke house that ‘Fondness never loved his Children, and Passion never chastised them[.] but all was managed with that prudence and discretion, that my Lord *Seymour* standing by one day when this Gentleman child his Son, said, *Some govern Families with more skill then others do Kingdomes*; and thereupon commended him to the Government, of his Nephew *Edward* the sixth’ (on p. 202).

¹¹¹ Lloyd, *The States-Men and Favourites of England*, p. 200. For more details on Cooke’s views about the education of women, see Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 18-44.

¹¹² Quoted from McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, p. 240. For the original, see Walter Haddon, *Lucubrations* (London, 1567), sig. R2r.

plishments of learning. As such, their readings were based around ‘Greek rather than Latin, and above all on New Testament Greek, and the Greek church fathers.’¹¹³ After the scriptures, Anthony was especially keen to introduce them to patristic theology; a reflection of his own passion, as plain from his translations of Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Nazianzen.¹¹⁴ The sisters were also well read, as a matter of course, in works of ancient and contemporary Latin; with Cicero, Plutarch, and Horace prominent among the former, and Erasmus, Vives, and Melanchthon among the latter. This selection of authors was meant to provide them with a firm grounding in the grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy which made up the *studia humanitas*. Additionally, works such as Erasmus’s *Institutio principis Christiani* (1532), Vives’s *De officio mariti* (1529), and Vergerio and Filelfo’s *De educatione liberorum* (1493) were expected to instil in them ‘right religion’ in preparation for marriage.

The outcome of her course in the *studia humanitatis* was to render Anne ‘exquisitely skilled in the Greek, Latin, and Italian tongues,’ as Henry Chauncey noted.¹¹⁵ More than any other subject, though, it was her studies in Greek theology that would continue to occupy her throughout life. Beyond her childhood readings, which commenced with Moschopulus’s *De ratione examinandae orationis libellus* (1545), Anne pursued a diet of Greek theology as originally prescribed by her father.¹¹⁶ In time, she would own copies of Robert Estienne’s Greek New Testament (1550), which she used to supplement her Geneva Bible (1560), as well as St Basil’s *Opera Graeca* (1551); a gift from Nicholas in which appears marginalia in her Greek hand.¹¹⁷ More controversial writings, such as the *Orthodoxographa* (1569) of Johann Grynaeus and Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus* (c. 198), copies of which were owned by her sisters, may also have been digested, as the contents of some of her letters suggest.¹¹⁸ Finally, in the autumn of her life Anne would choose to present herself as a ‘godly widow’ in

¹¹³ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 22. In addition to his translation of Cyprian’s *De dominica oratione* (1541), Cooke translated Gregory Nazianzen’s *Theophania* (1560), and was widely read in Chrysostom.

¹¹⁵ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 25. It is not clear who Henry Chauncey is.

¹¹⁶ In her copy of Moschopulus, Anne wrote that ‘My father delivered this book to me and my brother Anthony, who was mine elder brother and schoolfellow with me, to follow for writing of Greek’ (see Lynne Magnusson, ‘Bacon [Cooke], Anne, Lady Bacon (c.1528–1610)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/987>>).

¹¹⁷ See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 29-35: Cooke’s marginalia ‘reveal that she ... was concerned with Basil’s belief that every man had a craft they could use to further ‘the chirche of the living god’ (on p. 32).

¹¹⁸ See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 33-34. Grynaeus’s *Orthodoxographa* is a collection of both patristic and apocryphal material. Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus* included a considerable amount of Stoic material from Musonius Rufus.

similitude to the widows of the Pauline epistles. In at least ten letters, she signed herself ‘ABacon χήρα’, the Greek for ‘widow’, and a word central to the impression she desired to impress on others.¹¹⁹ Throughout her epistles are consequently to be found frequent scatterings of Greek, which indicate her preference, like that of her father, for the Eastern Fathers. ‘Anne Coke’, one contemporary observed, was ‘well estued in holy Scrypture,’ but equally so in the ‘Greek and Latyn tongues’; a woman, in other words, able to decide, in the best Protestant fashion, her own religious course.¹²⁰

In light of Anne’s interest in Greek patristics, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider Steven Matthews’s recent claim that Francis Bacon turned from the Puritanism of his mother towards the ‘Ancient Faith’ of the Fathers. In Matthews’s view ‘there is a recognizable trajectory in Bacon’s adult life away from his Puritan upbringing’ and ‘toward Patristic theology’; and, in particular, ‘toward the theology of specific [i.e., Eastern] Fathers of the ancient Church.’¹²¹ This position rests on a number of problematic assumptions, not least of which is that Puritanism and the works of the Church Fathers were seen, at the time, as inimical to one another; when, if anything, Puritans used patristic sources, including the Greek Fathers, just as everyone else did, picking and choosing passages which aligned with their theological preferences while discarding the rest.¹²² If there was one point of agreement between all confessions—whether Puritan, Anglican, or Catholic—it was a dependence on, and very often a reverence for, the ancient Church, be it Latin or Greek.

Matthews, to be fair, situates the crux of his argument in theological details, rather than historical evidence. But what evidence there is—and there is not a great deal of it—speaks against this interpretation. His claim that Francis’s beliefs would have ‘disturbed’ his mother, for instance, depends on the testimony of just one letter, sent by Anne to his brother (which, incidentally, does not discuss theological matters).

¹¹⁹ 1 Timothy 5: 5. For a more detailed discussion, see Allen, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 18-9.

¹²⁰ John Coke, *The Debate Betwene the Heraldes of Englande and Fraunce* (London: Robert Wyer, for Rycharde Wyer, 1550), sig. KI^r.

¹²¹ See Matthews, *Theology and Science*, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1, 2, 15, 20, and 27 (on pp. 1, 27).

¹²² For the use of the Greek Church Fathers, see Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 18, 37, 75, 79, 87: the Latin Fathers were generally preferred, in particular Augustine, and probably for the simple reason of their availability. Nonetheless, the Greek Fathers, were in common use by the middle of the sixteenth century, such that ‘the legacy of that first period of Reformed patristics to later generations of divines should not be underestimated’ (on p. 85). Even if not as well known, it is clear that Anne Cooke was closely connected to a group that did prize the Greek Fathers, e.g. Cooke and Parker, and that ‘Puritans’ should not be defined as persons opposed to patristic thought, Greek or otherwise. See also Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp. 26-7, 47-9, 85.

Disregarded, moreover, is Anne’s own interest in some of the more controversial ideas of the Greek Fathers, as well as her capacity to draw upon both Calvinist and patristic sources—just as Francis himself did—in the formation of her beliefs.¹²³ Throughout her considerable body of epistolary advice, Anne in fact never once disparages her son’s theological views; she is far more concerned with his financial situation and, where religion is implicated, the Catholic friends that her other son, Anthony, is keeping. Further, and unlike his mother, Francis never learned to read Greek; a point suggestive that Anne’s interest in the ‘Ancient Faith’ was equally as present as that of her son. It is true that Francis Bacon would eventually move away from the religion of his mother, but his reasons for doing so were almost entirely political.¹²⁴ His desire to be buried next to her at St Michael’s Church in St Albans should serve to remind us that, even where theology, and hence the fate of his soul, were concerned, here too there is little evidence to prove any ‘estrangement’ on his part.¹²⁵ For now, however, it is sufficient to note that, historically speaking, there are no grounds to think that Anne ever renounced her son for holding beliefs that derived from patristic sources. To what extent he did, in fact, hold such views is a question that will occupy us later.

Nicholas Bacon’s admiration for Reformed religion and the classics could thus be said to have found a fitting object in Anne Cooke.¹²⁶ With what must have caused some amusement, Anne now became Anne Cooke Bacon; though she started her married life much as she had lived her unmarried: in study, worship, and entanglement in the web of a woman’s role at court. Her education in the *studia humanitatis* and patristics had led her, as it had both her husband and father, to the view that religion was in dire need of reform; although, at twenty-five, her relative youth meant that she, unlike Nicholas and Anthony, had been raised almost entirely on Reformed beliefs, with the result that her interests lay much more in the establishment of a Church restored to

¹²³ Matthews admits that Francis Bacon ‘was intimately acquainted with the Church Fathers and had chosen his favourites among them. This would not have necessarily disturbed Anne, who read the Fathers in the Latin and Greek herself ...’. He then goes on to claim that ‘Francis’s turn away from Puritanism,’ on account of the Church Fathers, ‘disappointed his mother’ (Matthews, *Theology and Science*, pp. 20, 25).

¹²⁴ There is no evidence, either in his biographical details or his own writings, that Francis Bacon knew how to read Greek. See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 36-7.

¹²⁵ Despite the fact that ‘we know very little of what may have passed between mother and son during the later years of her life,’ Matthews still concludes that ‘the sense of estrangement between Anne and Francis in these years in hand to avoid’ (Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 25). See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 518, where Francis’s will is quoted: ‘For my burial, I desire it may be in St. Michael’s Church, near St. Albans: there was my mother buried...’.

¹²⁶ Nicholas’s poetic sentiments suggest they bonded over their shared, humanistic interests: he composed a number of poems to his wife, Anne, many of which include references to classical authors. See Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, pp. 14, 26-9.

its ancient roots, and erected for England and the English. It was to this cause that she now dedicated her studies, particularly as the first years of her marriage failed to bring her the ‘much hoped imps’ she and Nicholas desired.¹²⁷

* * * *

Anne’s readings of the Church Fathers, combined with the influx of Calvinist writings to England after 1547, put into her mind the idea that she, too, could contribute to the establishment of an English Church. Like her sister Mildred, she had been influenced by St Basil’s belief that the Church had need of ‘craftsmen of all types.’ In her copy of Basil’s *Opera Graeca*, she specially noted in the margins how a Christian should give whatever she can to ‘the chirche of the living god’; a belief that would ultimately motivate her to put what she deemed to be her greatest advantage—her proficiency with languages—to work.¹²⁸ But beyond a justification for her commitment, Anne found in these texts a Church, primitive yet pure, which could serve as a model for the Church of England.¹²⁹ This was not in the least unusual in itself. But her subsequent contribution to the intellectual formation of a Reformed English Church was. Anne would ultimately utilize her knowledge of patristics, as Grynaeus’s approach in the *Orthodoxographia* had shown her, as a ‘conciliatory force’ within English Christianity.¹³⁰ As the authoritative record of the *Ecclesia primitiva*, she recognized that these writings alone could provide the common ground needed to legitimize an emergent national Church. An so, through her position as an unofficial counsellor and translator to the architects of the 1559 Settlement, Anne Bacon came to exert her will, one of only three female voices in the matter of English religion, as to the need for a Church restored to its ancient foundations.¹³¹

In reality, though, much of Anne’s faith was derived not from the Fathers, but from the arrival of theological tracts from Zürich and Geneva. The earliest evidence of her adherence to the Reformed beliefs of Jean Calvin and the Swiss Reformers, and hence the theology she encountered in many of these imported works, is 1547. Nevertheless, it is quite likely that Anthony Cooke was in possession of a number of Calvin-

¹²⁷ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 28.

¹²⁸ Quoted from Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 32.

¹²⁹ Quantin, *The Church of England*, p. 13.

¹³⁰ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 33.

¹³¹ After Queen Elizabeth, there were Mildred Cooke Cecil, and Anne Cook Bacon.

ist writings before this date, and that his daughters had already been exposed to ideas such as double predestination and election. This is not to say that Anne was a ‘Puritan’ from this date on, however, because she was not. As Patrick Collinson has shown, Puritanism was, above all, an ‘Elizabethan Story’.¹³² It emerged primarily towards the end of the sixteenth century, and as a movement largely from within, but against, the Church as established under the terms of the 1559 Settlement. Anne’s overriding concern at this point in her life was to advance a Church reformed through mechanisms of state, but also to spread Calvin’s missive and the consolation she thought it offered the elect. As a consequence, when she married Nicholas Bacon in 1553, Anne shared with him in his conformism, preference for magisterial reform and, most of all, his sense that England was finally on the cusp of an age of genuine godliness. The disappointment that would turn her towards Nonconformism, and what later became the Puritan movement, was still many years off.

By her twentieth birthday, Anne had started down a path that would lead to her eventual acknowledgement as one of only a handful of godly female translators. As a religion dominated almost entirely by men, Tudor Christianity permitted women limited, though not always insubstantial, avenues of access and influence. Anne, as such, took one of the few means accessible to her to promote her religion: translation.¹³³ In 1547-8, she translated a number of the sermons of Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), a Sienese preacher raised Catholic, but converted Protestant, from Italian.¹³⁴ Anne must have met Ochino at some point in 1547, after his arrival in London, where, as an exiled Protestant, he had enjoyed a warm welcome from Cranmer and the King at Lambeth Palace.¹³⁵ Although there exists no evidence of a correspondence between Anne and Ochino (a remote possibility for an unmarried woman, at best), she would at least have been amongst the auditors who listened to him preach before the King. Her father was also on good terms with the Italian evangelical, so it is possible that Anne’s translation was a result of this friendship, but this remains a guess.

¹³² For the general picture see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Methuen, 1967).

¹³³ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 57-59.

¹³⁴ Bernardino Ochino, *Sermons ... Godlie, Frutefull, and Very Necessarye for all True Christians Translated out of Italien into Englishhe*, trans. Anne Bacon (London: R. Carr, 1551). Anne’s translations went through four editions between 1548-1570. See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 58-9 for more on the relationship between Anne and her mother; also the ‘Prefatory Epistle’ to her translations.

¹³⁵ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 31. The date 1547 is established on the basis of Anne’s publication of a number of Ochino’s sermons in 1548.

Ochino’s sermons were steeped in Reformed theology, a reflection no doubt of his time in Geneva a few years before, but, more importantly, the feature that attracted Anne to them in the first instance. Her concern in translating Ochino, as she acknowledges in the preface, was to show ‘how a true Chryst[ian] ought to make hys last will’ through the cultivation of a ‘clearenes of conscience.’¹³⁶ The emphasis throughout, as such, is on the utility of the examined life for the ‘healthe’ of the soul, placed in the context of predestination and determinism. At bottom, however, Anne’s principle motive was to proselytize the English to the Reformed faith; a task in which she was both aided and inspired by the immense momentum that swept in from Geneva as a result of Somerset’s orders to free the press. When she published her translation in 1548 it was, consequently, during the height of a printing boom of controversial, theological works in England.¹³⁷ Among the more than 260 treatises published in this year was a vast number of Reformed works; hardly controversial to the Edwardian court, but undoubtedly so to the common person. While Anne’s translations thus took advantage of fortuitous timing, this was no mere coincidence: it was a deliberate and dedicated act of religious reform, possibly even involving others.

The hand of Anne’s brother-in-law, William Cecil (1520-1598), for one, may have had some involvement in their publication.¹³⁸ Cecil had married Anne’s sister, Mildred, in 1546, just before he was awarded a secretarial role from Somerset and the King. The first of her translated sermons, five in all, were published two years later in London, but anonymously. It is likely that this lack of acknowledgement was the result of a prejudice against the practice of ‘translation by an unmarried woman’; a concern not uncommon for the Tudors. However, a second edition was published in 1551, and this time Anne was clearly recognized as the translator of all the sermons therein, including fourteen previously untranslated ones. As Gemma Allen has suggested, this second, expanded edition may have been published under Anne’s name with the help of Cecil.¹³⁹ It is certainly possible, as beyond family connections, Cecil was emerging as an influential patron of Reformed religion at precisely this time. The sermons chosen for the second edition, moreover, include more Calvinist theology, giving the im-

¹³⁶ Anne Bacon, ‘Prefatory Letter’ to Orchino, *Sermons*, sig. A iii.

¹³⁷ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 151: ‘During the early 1540s, the total number of books printed in England was running at around 100 editions per year. In 1547, this shot up to 192; in 1548, to 268, a level it was not to attain again for decades.’

¹³⁸ This has recently been argued by Allen in *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 59-60.

¹³⁹ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 59-60 (on p. 59).

pression that Anne may have received support from Cecil in so far as her translations served to convert the English to the views of the Swiss Reformers.

At the very least, it is clear that Anne intended a copy for Edward VI, who had himself listened to Ochino preach these sermons in Italian (thanks, in large part, to the tutelage of Anthony Cooke), for she concludes her preface: ‘GOD SAVE THE KYNG / and graunt us the truthe of hys Worde.’¹⁴⁰ There is, of course, the obligatory nature of such a dedication, but the expectation of the newly crowned King to complete the reformation so desired by Cooke, Cecil, Cranmer, and the circle around him was at a particularly feverish pitch. Anne, who had grown up in part around Edward, would no doubt have seen her translations of Ochino’s sermons as a gift to the King; but, more importantly, as confirmation of his will to further Reformed beliefs in England. Translation for the Cooke girls was, at heart, ‘a means of strengthening the reformed faith,’ and Anne viewed her own translations as nothing less than a contribution towards the ‘chirche of the living god’ which she and her sisters envisioned.¹⁴¹ Cranmer, after all, had extended his invitation for Ochino to come to England precisely so that he might aid in the reform of the Church of England.¹⁴² Hence, irrespective of whether she did so at the request of others or not, Anne’s translations of Ochino’s sermons and their dedication to King Edward should be seen as part of the larger project of magisterial reform being carried out by Somerset, Cranmer, and the Edwardian court.

* * * *

Despite Anne’s prayers, God did not save the King. Edward VI died on 6th July 1553, and, unfortunately for the Bacons, so too did their hopes for continued reform. A professed Roman Catholic, Queen Mary I (1516-1558) inherited the Crown the following October, and with it the right to return England to its traditional faith. This, of course, is precisely what she did; restoring the doctrines of the Church of Rome and repealing Somerset’s religious laws within months of her accession. Although Mary proclaimed that she would not compel her subjects to adhere to Roman beliefs, this was an ostensible and, at the most, placative move. Cranmer was soon thrown in the Tower, along with Anthony Cooke and a host of other, prominent Protestants, and the persecutions

¹⁴⁰ Anne Bacon, *Sermons of Barnardine Ochine*, ‘Prefatory Letter’ sig. A v.

¹⁴¹ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 60.

¹⁴² See Allen, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 5.

for which the Queen would soon earn the sobriquet ‘Bloody Mary’ commenced shortly thereafter.¹⁴³ In effect, Mary afforded the zealous Protestant limited choice: either leave England or burn at the stake.

Given the options, it is not surprising that Anthony Cooke, a man entirely incapable of keeping his religious beliefs to himself, fled the country. While it was ultimately a self-imposed exile, Cooke obviously felt that he could not tolerate outwardly confessing the Popish faith. So, fleeing to Strasbourg in the Spring of 1554, he started off on a pilgrimage of sorts with John Cheke, paying calls to many of the Reformed leaders of Continental Europe. From Strasbourg, he continued on to Italy, with a brief sojourn in Zürich where he visited Heinrich Bullinger. Theodore Beza later recorded how Cooke had also spent some time in Geneva; a fact rather incommensurable, however, with what other evidence we have of his travels. Nonetheless, he did correspond with Calvin; whether from Strasbourg, where he eventually returned to live, or elsewhere.¹⁴⁴ All in all, Cooke does not appear to have faced any particular hardship: besides a brief incarceration, there is little to indicate that his life was ever under threat; and Nicholas Bacon, together with Cooke’s other son-in-law, William Cecil, provided him with continual financial support while he was abroad.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, leaving his wife and daughters back in England, Cooke’s exile appears to have been almost entirely a matter of conscience; a result, no doubt, of his increasing fervour during the years of Edward VI’s reign.

What is surprising, is the extent to which Nicholas and Anne Bacon went to conform to the official religion of Mary’s reign. Rather than join Cooke, Cheke, and the other Marian exiles, they chose to remain in England, and, in what must have been difficult for them to digest, to feign their sympathy for Roman Catholicism.¹⁴⁶ Their earlier support of Reformed religion would have been impossible to hide, as both had by now developed reputations for their devotion to the Protestant cause. Still, instead of fleeing, the Bacons decided to salvage the situation as best they could. On Mary’s

¹⁴³ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, pp. 177-195. Cooke ‘was committed to the Tower with Cheke and others on 27 July, 1553, on suspicion of complicity in the Northumberland/Lady Jane Grey manoeuvre, but since he had not signed the Letters Patent for the Limitation of the Crown, he was soon released’ (McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, p. 242).

¹⁴⁴ McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, pp. 242-4. Cooke also continued to correspond with Peter Martyr back in England, at the same time as he developed a close friendship with Johannes Sturm (on p. 244). Unfortunately, almost all of Cooke’s correspondence has been lost.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁶ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 31.

accession, Anne rode from the Bacon estate at Redgrave in Suffolk to Kenninghall in Norfolk, where she quickly assured the Queen of her allegiance, as well as that of her husband and Cecil. Robert Wingfield, then owner of Kenninghall, recorded how she had been ‘their chief aid in beseeching pardon for them.’¹⁴⁷ Anne was indeed keenly aware of the danger that faced them, but also shrewd enough to realize that outward conformity was the only way they would survive the change of tide. Unlike her father, she was willing, as was Nicholas, to swallow her personal beliefs for political ends and act, in this anxious time, as a ‘broker’ between her husband, Cecil, and the Queen, ‘passing on political information’ and ‘supplying Cecil with news of his likely reception from Mary.’¹⁴⁸ To prove her word, Anne stayed on, finally, as a Gentlewoman of the Queen’s Privy Chamber.¹⁴⁹ This, she did for the sake of her husband’s and brother-in-law’s careers, but also because she was committed to the cause of reform; hope for which still remained to her even now.

The years 1553-1558 were consequently a quiet ones for the Bacons, with no prospect of further advancement. Even though they adhered outwardly to the Roman religion, Mary and her supporters knew that Nicholas and Anne Bacon were committed Protestants. Still, Nicholas was able to retain his position in the Court of Wards, thanks in large part to the actions of his wife. Far from the zeal that had by now overtaken Cooke, the approach of the Bacons to the crisis they faced was thus measured; fortified in part by Stoic resolve and corollary belief in *mediocri firma*, and in part by a realistic expectation that a Protestant could very well accede the throne given time. Neither made any attempt to rebel against the Queen and her religion, nor escape the situation; a sign of their shared commitment to the process of magisterial reform. The Bacon’s resolve to remain in Marian England and conform was not a pronouncement on their sincerity, but a reflection of their conviction that further reform needed to be centred around the establishment of a Church under the rule of the monarch.

* * * *

Queen Mary, like her predecessor, did not sit long upon the throne. When she died in November 1558, so did the hopes of the reformers, once buried, rise again. The acces-

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 53-4.

sion of Elizabeth I (1533-1603) afforded those who had remained Protestant through Mary’s reign, such as the Bacons, renewed hope that the Reformation would continue where it left off; and, indeed, for some time it seemed as though this would hold true. But when it came to matters of faith, Elizabeth ultimately proved somewhat of a mystery. While she appears to have accepted most of the doctrines of the Reformed faith, she also retained a preference, like her father, for the old ecclesiastical hierarchy, ceremonies, and rites of the Roman Church, as well as an equally strong propensity for authoritarian rule in religion.¹⁵⁰ Where she differed from Henry was in her acceptance of a more thorough Protestantism, but also in practice, where her governance would prove more moderate; less inclined to persecution, and more inclined to a toleration rooted chiefly in external compliance. As Francis Bacon would later famously remark, ‘her Majesty’ did not like ‘to make windows into men’s hearts.’¹⁵¹

One of Elizabeth’s first priorities was the establishment of a new Protestant settlement; one she hoped people would accept precisely, as Francis Bacon observed, because of its demand for outward conformity only, but also one which could buttress a fledgling, national Church. Although more realistic in her goals than Cranmer, the settlement and church Elizabeth pursued were not, in principle, all that dissimilar to those sought by the old primate. Nicholas’s erstwhile patron was now dead, however; burnt at the stake in 1556 for his refusal to recant.¹⁵² Elizabeth consequently needed to look elsewhere to find suitable candidates for the task. A plethora of Marian exiles, including Anthony Cooke, were now on their way back to England, but the Queen found the fervour of many of those who had sponsored reform under Edward distasteful; some of their views outright dangerous.¹⁵³ So despite a hopeful return, Cooke soon discovered himself amongst those blocked from further preferment.¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth had no time for radicals; she recognized clearly how ‘dangerous it is to make alterations in religion, especially at the beginning of a prince’s reign,’ and especially with unbridled zeal.¹⁵⁵ Further reform was to proceed at a steady, measured, and calculat-

¹⁵⁰ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 195.

¹⁵¹ RPQ, OFB I, pp. 227-33.

¹⁵² See MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 600-605.

¹⁵³ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 197. See also McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, pp. 245-6.

¹⁵⁴ See McIntosh, ‘Sir Anthony Cooke’, pp. 245-50. According to John Jewel, when Cooke returned to England he was ‘defend[ing] some scheme of his own’ instead of ‘the confession of Zurich’ (on pp. 245-6).

¹⁵⁵ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 238.

ed pace; not to run blindly into the kind of trouble that had mired her predecessors’ tenure. It called for committed, but above all moderate, Protestants; men capable of both self-restraint and great feats of social engineering. In the end, the Queen found these traits in two of her privy counsellors: Cecil and Bacon.

The fortunes of the Bacons rose drastically on the accession of Elizabeth. In the days immediately after her coronation, the Queen, in considerable haste to fill the offices of her government, chose to restore a number of those who had served either her father, half-brother, or both. The resultant, largely Edwardian, government was foremost a reflection of her concern to restore Edwardian religion, as were the magistrates she subsequently appointed.¹⁵⁶ To William Cecil, Edward’s talented administrator, she bestowed the position of Secretary of State.¹⁵⁷ To Nicholas Bacon, she granted the position of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (though it should be noted that he was not given the chancellorship without qualification).¹⁵⁸ The Queen’s reasons for elevating Nicholas were threefold: Cecil, who had served as an advisor to Elizabeth for some time already, no doubt pressed for his brother-in-law’s appointment; Nicholas’s own moderation, far from the self-righteous and volatile faith she found so deplorable in his father-in-law, was incumbent to her aims; and, finally, his theological views may have mirrored her own to some degree. As Ryrie has noted, Elizabeth’s private beliefs were ‘curiously dated’.¹⁵⁹ It is no wonder, then, that she found common ground with her new Lord Keeper, a man whose own religion was not exactly up to the minute. It would not be remiss to suggest that Nicholas shared with Elizabeth a predilection for that particular mix of Reformed and Roman religion which would come to define the future orientation of the Church of England.

Many of the Edwardians now appointed had received their education either at Cambridge or London’s Inns of Court. Although he preceded most members of Elizabeth’s Cambridge-educated government by about a generation, Nicholas was readily adopted as a fellow of the so-called ‘Athenian tribe’; a close-knit group of humanists who had coalesced as students in Cambridge, and who would, as of early 1559, come

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 238-9.

¹⁵⁷ See Wallace T. MacCaffrey, ‘Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4983>>.

¹⁵⁸ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 70: ‘... even then Elizabeth, always conscious of social form and chary of titular elevations, demurred from allowing Bacon the chancellorship *per se*. For all his manifest abilities and experience, this sheep-reeve’s son was only asked to serve as the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, though by letters patent he was to hold all the rights and responsibilities of the lord chancellor’s office.’

¹⁵⁹ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 195.

to comprise Queen Elizabeth’s ‘monarchical republic’, to use the term of Collinson.¹⁶⁰ A number of the ‘Athenians’ had also received training at Gray’s Inn, Cecil included, where, it seems, his friendship with Nicholas first began. Nicholas’s old friend from Bene’t College, Matthew Parker, was another late addition to the group. Parker had served as King Henry’s private chaplain from 1537-1544, prior to his return to Cambridge as master of Corpus Christi, and thereafter as vice-chancellor of the university. All three men—Parker, Cecil, and Bacon—although adopted Athenians at best, would soon find themselves the architects and executors of Elizabethan religious policy; the nucleus of the Queen’s Protestant caucus, around whom men the likes of John Mason, William Petre, Walter Mildmay, the Earl of Bedford and the Marquis of Winchester, to provide just a sampling of names, naturally converged.¹⁶¹

Even before his appointment to the chancellorship, Nicholas Bacon proved an instrumental player in the religious manoeuvres of the new Queen. Cecil, who would make a lifelong habit of turning to Nicholas for advice on both legal and ecclesiastical matters, requested his friend’s assistance with little dithering, for instance, when asked by Elizabeth in December 1558 to offer his thoughts on who she should appoint to the archbishopric of Canterbury. Cecil’s candidate was none other than Matthew Parker. Like Nicholas, Parker was a Protestant of temperate mind and moderate manners. He would uphold the Queen’s sovereign will, and seek neither the path to Rome nor to Geneva, but rather the establishment of a uniquely English Church. The problem was that Parker did not want the archbishopric. He was sitting quite comfortably in Cambridge, clearly aware that to accept the Queen’s offer was to place himself at the centre of much future controversy. Cecil, thus unable to convince Parker himself, turned to the one person he trusted most. As his brother-in-law’s agent in the matter, Nicholas wrote to Parker to request that he come to London, where a ‘certain matter touching yourself’ would be discussed, which ‘I trust shall turn you to good.’ Parker, replying within a week, was quick to question Cecil’s judgment that this opportunity ‘may turn me to good’ (‘as here you [Nicholas] use to call it!’), however, and pleaded with him

¹⁶⁰ See Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection*, p. 3. Patrick Collinson, ‘Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments’, *Parliamentary History* 7 (1988), pp. 187-211 and ‘The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I’, in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 31-58.

¹⁶¹ See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 84-85: it is ‘possible to recognize a significant degree of cohesion among these councillors, with Cecil and Bacon often forming the nucleus of the group’. See also Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan *Via Media*’, p. 257: ‘... it is clear that the principal devotees of the middle way [*via media*] were that trinity of glittering prizemen from Henrician Cambridge and the pillars of the Elizabethan church and state, Archbishop Parker, Mr Secretary Cecil and Lord Keeper Bacon.’

to persuade Cecil to desist from ‘his mediation.’ ‘I pray you,’ he finished, ‘either help that I be quite forgotten, or else so appointed ... in any respect of public living.’¹⁶² In the end, his protestations went for nought.

Parker was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury a year later.¹⁶³ Nicholas had been influential in gaining his appointment for the Queen and Cecil; the prime mover, according to the antiquary John Strype.¹⁶⁴ As Lord Keeper, he now had more pressing duties to attend to, however. A date for the first parliament under Elizabeth was established for the 25th January 1559, wherein he was to set forth the Queen’s statement on religion, as well as other pressing matters, before the combined Houses of Commons and Lords. The task in front of him entailed a precarious balancing act: with little time to prepare, Nicholas would need to deliver a speech on behalf of the Queen that would alienate neither the Protestant nor Catholic factions of Parliament, so as to secure a shared platform upon which the divisive matter of a new settlement might be pursued over the months to come.

Addressing the members of Parliament that wintery day, Nicholas had, at last, found a worthy audience; one before whom he could prove himself the ‘Excellent Orator, in whom both Art and Nature Concur.’ ‘My Lords, and Masters all, The Queen’s most excellent Majesty,’ he began,

Now the Matters and causes whereupon you are to Consult, are chiefly and principally three points. Of those the first is of well making of Laws, for the according, and uniting of these people of the Realm into an uniform order of Religion, to the Honour and Glory of God, the establishing of the Church, and Tranquillity of the Realm.¹⁶⁵

The assembly must have waited with baited breath for his next words, expecting the Lord Chancellor to deliver a fatal blow to the Catholics. Instead, Nicholas retained the middle ground, delivering the Queen’s mandate ‘in vague and ambiguous terms.’¹⁶⁶ Both houses, he declared, were to ‘fly from all manner of Contentions, Reasonings and Disputations, and all Sophistical Captious and frivolous Arguments and Quiddi-

¹⁶² *The Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, ed. John Bruce and Thomas Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1840), pp. 49-53.

¹⁶³ 19 December 1559; nearly one year to the week of Nicholas’s first letter to him.

¹⁶⁴ John Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1711] 1821), Vol. 1, p. 71. See Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 70, 86-7 for a discussion of a more sceptical assessment of Nicholas’s role in Parker’s installation.

¹⁶⁵ D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, January 1558/9, p. 11.

¹⁶⁶ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 87.

ties, meeter for ostentation of Wit, than Consultation of weighty Matters, comelier for Scholars than Counsellors; more beseeming for Schools, than for Parliament Houses.’ The aim was to unite Marians and Edwardians under one God, but, more importantly, under one Queen, for ‘the Establishment of his Church, and ... the Tranquility of the Realm,’ not to provoke anyone.¹⁶⁷ Parliamentary debate was to refrain from all (contentious) matters of doctrine—the *minutiae* of the schoolmen—and to focus on the civic implications of the religious policies Elizabeth intended them to implement over the course of the year.

In the sessions to follow, the houses were to avoid ‘being Nurses of such Seditious Factions and Sects,’ to avoid ‘opprobrious words, as Heretick, Schismatick, Papist and such like names,’ and to find a means to concord. A ‘great and wary Consideration is to be had,’ the Lord Chancellor continued,

That nothing be advised or done, which any way in continuance of time were likely to breed, or nourish any kind of Idolatry, or Superstition; so, on the other side, heed is to be taken, that by no Licentious or loose handling, any manner of Occasion be given, whereby any contempt, or irreverent behaviour towards God and Godly things, or any spice of irreligion might creep in, or be conceived; The examples of fearful punishments that have followed these four Extremities, I mean, Idolatry, Superstition, Contempt and Irreligion in all Ages and times, are more in number than I can declare, and better known than I can make recital to you of.¹⁶⁸

Although his speech was equivocal, the equivocation was deliberate; calculated to avoid the implication that either Protestant or Catholic was a ‘Heretick, Schismatick, [or] Papist’ *per se*, but rather that anyone who opposed the Queen’s religious policies was, in effect, displaying ‘contempt, or irreverent behaviour towards God and Godly things.’ It was a caution aimed against the formation of ‘Factions and Sects’, framed squarely by the idea of the Aristotelian mean. Everything outside of commonwealth programme, rather than outside of Christian teaching, could be branded ‘superstition.’ Nicholas brought the values of Christian humanism into the Houses of Parliament; the implicit message that civic participation was more Christian than precisian in ecclesiastical matters—that is, at least where the ‘well making of Laws’ was concerned. To resolve ‘the Realm into an uniform order of Religion’ did not mean strict doctrinal

¹⁶⁷ D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, January 1558/9, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12. While as Lord Keeper, Nicholas was speaking on behalf of the Queen, it can hardly be doubted that these were his own words, and that he shared the Queen’s position on most, if not all, points.

uniformity, as it had in the reign of Edward VI: Elizabeth asked only for uniformity in outward conformity. It was a subtle shift, and not one immediately apparent to all present; but the notion that the establishment of a prosperous kingdom should be the object of every English Christian was pregnant in Nicholas Bacon’s speech.

Nicholas’s admonishment, carefully crafted to prepare members of both Houses to pass the forthcoming acts, implied that the ‘Common-Wealth’ was a ‘work ... in God’s name’ which transcended individual differences of doctrine, if not confession. This was no acknowledgement that religion was now irreparably fractured: such a conclusion would not be accepted for another hundred years. For those present in January 1559, Catholic and Protestant could still be reconciled into one Christian religion, but the means to accomplish this, as the Lord Keeper suggested, was no longer theological, but civic. The language was that of the Christian humanists: it was a scriptural mandate to actively pursue a good and godly society, not to twiddle one’s thumbs in expectation of the hereafter.¹⁶⁹ The commonwealth envisioned by More, Erasmus, and a subsequent generation of English humanists was the catalyst, Nicholas knew, because it crowned an ideology that could unite the nation; a cause with the potential to transcend individual differences of confession for the ‘building up’ of a godly nation. History informs us that the plan did not play out so neatly. Even so, the Athenians’s programme to collapse the *regnum Christi* into that of a *regnum Elizabethae* was hugely successful: if for religious peace alone, Elizabeth I’s reign proved a ‘Golden Age’ of precisely the kind that the parliamentary sessions of 1559 set out to make it.¹⁷⁰

Although the mandate was oblique, the bills proposed soon thereafter provided clear enough insight into the plans of the Queen. The initial Reformation Bill (21st February) met with opposition from the House of Lords; its proposed alterations, including the rejection of transubstantiation and prohibition of the surplice and Roman Catholic vestments, went too far for many to stomach. After much reworking and the Easter recess, the Reformation Bill was abandoned for two similar, but theologically

¹⁶⁹ Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁰ The *regnum Christi* was the godly society envisioned by Erasmus, and the goal of many Tudor humanists. See Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp. 41, 51-52.

less Reformed proposals.¹⁷¹ The Act of Supremacy (1559) would (re-)establish Elizabeth as Supreme Governor of the Church of England: ‘God of his divine Power and Ordinance’ had, after all, ‘brought the Imperial Crown of this Realm to a Princess,’ not to the Pope, Nicholas reminded Parliament.¹⁷² At the same time, the Act would limit the Crown’s jurisdiction over what constituted heresy: councils were now to be appointed to judge heresy ‘by the authority of the canonical Scriptures.’¹⁷³

The Act of Uniformity (1559), on the other hand, comprised a number of bills meant to secure both a Protestant Church for England and a higher degree of ecclesiastical cohesion. To this end, it reinstated the Royal Injunctions of 1547, the Edwardian Book of Common Prayer of 1552, and the 1553 Articles of Religion. People would be required to attend church on Sundays or face a fine, and while there to follow the Reformed service outlined in the prayer book. Still, the Act of Uniformity allowed for a much wider range of worship than the original Reformation Bill had: it was more tolerant of Catholics in general, and even permitted—although only through ambiguous wording—belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Communion.

An updated version of the Royal Injunctions was also prepared by Cecil (although only after Parliament concluded), which legitimized the surplice and permitted the use of traditional wafers at Mass. In MacCulloch’s view, the Royal Injunctions of 1559 with which Cecil effectively concluded the settlement were not a concession to Catholics (who were far too dispossessed by now to be mollified), but rather a reflection of Elizabeth’s idiosyncratic views.¹⁷⁴ Neither is sufficient to explain the outcome, however. The rewritten Acts had gone far enough to be approved by the bishops in the House of Lords: the religious terms underlying the new commonwealth, as laid out by the Lord Keeper, had succeeded—although barely. But behind its final success was a well-crafted compromise, implicit in the 1559 injunctions: fealty to the Queen, to the

¹⁷¹ Between the rejection of the Reformation Bill and the introduction of the two Acts, Elizabeth decided to hold what has come to be known as the Westminster Disputations (1559). This was essentially an opportunity for Protestants to bolster their position in debates held against English Catholics. Nicholas Bacon (clearly a Protestant, though supposedly impartial) was appointed to judge the affair. Needless to say, the whole event, staged as it was, ended rather badly for both sides, including an ‘outburst’ from the Lord Keeper. For the full details, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 88-90.

¹⁷² D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, January 1558/9, p. 12. Both the Act of Supremacy and that of Uniformity are often given the date 1558. This is the convention, but erroneous: both acts were proposed in 1559.

¹⁷³ Act of Supremacy 1558, 1 Eliz. 1 c. 2. This was further clarified in the fifty-third article of the 1559 Royal Injunctions. See Henry Gee and William J. Hardy (eds), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1914), pp. 438-9.

¹⁷⁴ Diarmaid McCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 289-90.

commonwealth, would be secured in return for a ‘safe and quiet conscience’.¹⁷⁵ This was not as much of a concession as it might first appear. From the point of view of Cecil and Bacon, toleration (albeit limited) was a necessary step towards a successful commonwealth. Thomas More (1478-1535) had convinced many of the Athenians that a monarch needed to govern society for the benefit of all, which included enough leniency to offer a reasonable amount of religious toleration: reasonable, that is, in so far as it aided the institutional growth required to establish a ‘Christian’ society. This sentiment had been echoed by Martin Bucer in his *De regno Christi* (1550), where he argued that the goal of government should be ‘an effective Christian social order.’¹⁷⁶ What made the Acts and the subsequent Injunctions successful where the Reformation Bill had failed was this tacit agreement—partly by concession and partly by design—between Elizabeth and her government, that support for the Crown would be secured through permitting slight differences of belief; a toleration that Cecil and Bacon engineered, in effect, through theologically ambiguous policies.

This guarantee of toleration rested on ancient intellectual foundations: the idea of ‘adiaphora’, from the Greek ἀδιάφορα (‘things indifferent’). It was an idea that had underlay the moral theory of the Stoics, having originated with their founder, Zeno of Citium.¹⁷⁷ In the context of Reformation theology, however, it had more recently taken the sense of those things not necessary to salvation. Prominent in debates between Luther and Melancthon in the 1540s, the notion of *adiaphora* seems to have surfaced in England by the 1530s. The commonwealth men, in the tradition of More and Erasmus, recognized that an awareness of what was theologically vital and what could be eschewed was a necessary prerequisite to the construction of a godly society. Nicholas and Cecil were not the first to realize the power of *adiaphora* for English Society. The

¹⁷⁵ Royal Injunctions (1559), XX, in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 427.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 100-1. Basil Hall, ‘Martin Bucer in England’, in *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community*, ed. D. F. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 144-60 (on p. 155). The German reformer Martin Bucer, who spent the last years of his life in Cambridge, and who had served as an inspirational figure to the Athenians, was also influential in this respect. His message of conciliation had been readily imparted to the commonwealth men who formed Elizabeth’s government. Bucer had not only had a hand in the 1549 edition of the prayer book, but had also published his own programmatic statement for the establishment of a godly England: the *De regno Christi*. Although the work was not published until 1557, and then in Basel and in not London, Bucer had given a manuscript copy to John Cheke, who likely disseminated it to members of Edward’s court after Bucer’s death in 1551.

¹⁷⁷ Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, ed. and trans. Arthur J. Pomeroy (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 5A, p. 11. For the Stoic notion of ἀδιάφορα, see John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006), pp. 110-4.

Ten Articles (1536) and the Injunctions of 1538, as crafted by Cranmer and Cromwell, already incorporated an ‘adiaphoristic awareness.’¹⁷⁸ The question now, as then, was what, besides faith, was necessary for salvation? But it was also now, what is necessary for good social order? Well, going to church on Sundays, for one thing. But the answer provided by Cecil and Nicholas implied, more importantly, that ‘things indifferent’ to the commonwealth were, essentially, ‘things tolerable’. So long as it did not embrace ‘superstition’, which was to be suppressed ‘throughout all her highness’s realms and dominions,’ nor transgressed the laws established by the Acts and Injunctions, the Queen would turn a blind eye.¹⁷⁹ Act XLI of the 1559 Injunctions said it all: this was ‘God’s true religion truly set forth by public authority.’¹⁸⁰

When the Houses met in May 1559 to close the parliamentary session, Nicholas again had an opportunity to summarize the mandate of the new Queen. On matters of religion, he was rather more forthright than he had been in January, demanding utmost allegiance to the laws newly enacted:

And as to ... the Observation of the uniform Order in Religion; you are to endeavour your selves, to the best of your powers and understandings, drawing together in one line all points, to further, set forth and maintain the same, which by great and deliberate advice here in Parliament hath been established. And here great Observations and watch should be had of the withdrawers and hinderers thereof; and especially of those, that subtilly, by indirect means, seek to procure the contrary. Amongst these I mean to comprehend, as well those that be too swift, as those that be too slow; those I say, that go before the Laws, or beyond the Laws, as those that will not follow; for good Government cannot be where Obedience faileth, and both these alike break the Rule of Obedience.

The Lord Keeper had drawn a line. The terms of the middle way (*via media*) had now been established.¹⁸¹ Room for those of Geneva and those of Rome had been made at the expense of a fully Reformed Protestant Settlement; for the sake of social and political unity. There would henceforth be limited toleration in exchange for absolute fealty to the Crown.

¹⁷⁸ Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁹ Royal Injunctions (1559), ‘Preamble’, in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 419. Remember that the Crown relinquished the right to judge potential cases of heresy in the Act of Supremacy 1558, 1 Eliz. 1 c. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Royal Injunctions (1559), XLI, in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 434.

¹⁸¹ See Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon’, p. 255.

Those who went ‘before the Laws, or beyond the Laws,’ ‘upholders of all Factions and Sects,’ would be dealt with harshly, as the laws established in the Acts and Injunctions were argued equitable. For ‘the handsome bridling of the factions of men,’ continued the Lord Keeper:

I see not that a better way can be taken, than is used by the Horse-Master, who provideth for the good Government of his Horse, Bit, or Brakes, according to the tenderness or hardness of his Mouth, whereunto he addeth a certain and well-taught hand. And like as it is very well to be allowed, that none other Bit or Brake should be provided for these Factious Folks, than by the Laws be forced; so were it meet that any of that kind, be it never so sharp, should not be omitted, if the cause so requireth; and this would be executed by a certain and well-taught hand.

The law was a bridle in two senses: on the one hand, as a ‘bit’, it signalled the toleration that had been afforded through the Acts—the ‘tender’ side. On the other, it stood for the ‘hardness’ of the law, which would, the Lord Keeper warned, be applied to its full extent to put a ‘brake’ on cases of nonconformity. The law was soft enough to tolerate minor matters of conscience, but ‘never so sharp’ when called to deal with those who affronted royal supremacy. For all intents and purposes, then, it had been devised ‘to weed out those that be evil in the Common-Wealth,’ not to secure theological uniformity.¹⁸²

So there was now a Protestant Settlement, but it was hardly the settlement that the Reformed Edwardians had been waiting for. It was ‘tolerably’ Protestant. National unity had taken precedent, however. The so-called ‘twin pillars’ of the settlement were not so much the Act of Supremacy and Act of Uniformity *per se*, but the ideology of the commonwealth, and the adiaphoristic awareness that underlay it, and allowed it to have some flexibility. Perhaps the most striking feature of the whole affair, though, was that those who had orchestrated the settlement were almost all laymen; statesmen whose chief priority lay in social well-being rather than doctrinal precision. When one examines the religious policies implemented in that first Elizabethan parliament with an eye to Elizabeth’s aims, it is perhaps not so surprising after all: absolute monarchy alone had not procured uniformity for any of her predecessors. What was needed was the foresight of moderates with an irenic outlook like Nicholas Bacon; those whose chief business lay not with the nuances of theology, but the nuances of ‘godly’ state-

¹⁸² D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, May 1559, p. 34.

craft. John Jewel was right, it was ‘the Bishops’ who had been ‘the greatest hindrance’ to plans of the Queen, ruling the House of Lords ‘as sole monarchs’; the bishops who were the real obstacle to social stability and prosperity.¹⁸³ Jewel, after Parker, was an exception. Both recognized that Elizabeth’s privy counsellors—if not the Queen herself—were determined to carry through the reforms requisite to make England a truly godly nation; slowly and painfully, but implement them they would. The Settlement of 1559 was just the beginning.

* * * *

Nicholas was not the only Bacon involved with the establishment of a new settlement and Reformed Church. Anne continued her efforts into marriage with further works of translation. When her two sons, Anthony and Francis, were just infants, she translated Bishop Jewel’s *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562; translated *An Apologie in Defence of the Churche of Englande*, 1564). Prior to his exile to the continent, John Jewel (1522-1571) had been a reader in rhetoric at Oxford, as well as a close friend of the reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli. After Queen Mary I’s accession, however, Jewel’s involvement with Vermigli led him to be charged with the preaching of heretical doctrines, as well as failure to uphold the rites of the Church. So with a number of Protestants, Jewel fled to the continent, eventually settling in Strasbourg, where he encountered, among other prominent Marian exiles, Anthony Cooke. Consecrated as Bishop of Salisbury upon his return to England in 1560, Jewel readily gave himself to the task of the Athenians’s gradual reformation of the Church—although to Vermigli he inveighed privately against the slow pace of Elizabeth’s reforms. All the same, Jewel soon became the principal defender of the settlement which Bacon, Cecil, and Parker had worked hard to establish.¹⁸⁴ It was in this capacity that he wrote the *Apologia*, and for the same cause that Anne translated it into English two years later.

Dissatisfaction in the wake of the parliamentary sessions of 1559 was a minor, but nevertheless genuine problem to be addressed. The resultant compromise had led, as might be expected, to complaints from both the Marians and Edwardians. No major incidents had yet to spoil the hard-won settlement, but a persistent murmur of discon-

¹⁸³ Quoted from Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 239.

¹⁸⁴ See John Craig, ‘Jewel, John (1522–1571)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14810>>.

tent surrounded the Queen and her counsellors. This murmur was made all the louder by the papal bull issued in 1560 in anticipation of the upcoming sessions of the Council of Trent (1562-1563). Writing in 1562, Jewel informed Vermigli that he had just completed ‘an Apology for the change of religion among us, and our departure from the church of Rome’: in other words, a response to the Pope, to be published and distributed on the continent.¹⁸⁵ Left out of his correspondence, however, was the fact that the *Apologia* was not entirely of his own design: Bacon, Cecil, and Parker had in fact requested that he defend the terms of the new settlement in a work positioned against foreign detractors. There can be little doubt that the disaffected at home would benefit, too. But the *Apologia*, in Latin, was foremost a political response to foreign criticism. It was intended to show how ‘the principles and foundations of oure [English] religion’ were in accord with those of the ‘primatiue Church.’¹⁸⁶ How, employing both biblical and patristic texts, the Church of England aligned with the ‘authoritie of the auncient fathers and Councels of oulde time.’ And, finally, to vindicate Elizabeth from those who would claim that ‘Ciuell Princes haue learned to gouerne a common welth,’ but ‘they vnderstande not the secret mysteries of Religion.’ For ‘yf that be so, what is the Pope I praye you, at this day, other then a Monarche or a Prince?’¹⁸⁷

In all probability, an English translation of the *Apologia* was intended from the work’s inception—both the content and prefatory epistle by Matthew Parker certainly suggest as much. As the *Apologie*, Jewel’s defence was arguably more successful, too. This was largely because continental Roman Catholics took little interest in what was essentially a national affair (Latin or otherwise), but also because the English version included a creedal statement for the Church of England which, as Parker suggested in his preface, would be ‘publikely beneficiall.’¹⁸⁸ Indeed, a section was devoted to setting out, in much the same manner as the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), a more elaborate version of the Nicene Creed for the English.¹⁸⁹ This served a clearly catechetical purpose; but one that Parker, in his preface to ‘Ladie A.B.’, nevertheless attempted to disguise. Parker in fact presented the translation as a private domestic act, for which Anne’s ‘modestie woulde haue made in staye of publishinge it,’ instead of the public

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ John Jewel, *An Apologie or Answere in Defence of the Church of Englande*, trans. Lady Anne Bacon (London: Reginald Wolfe, 1564).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 211.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, ‘Epistle’.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44.

apologetic he had designed, together with Jewel, Bacon, Cecil, in order to justify the terms of the new settlement.¹⁹⁰ The scheme was eventually foiled by the Anglo-Dutch antiquary Richard Verstegan, who recognized Anne’s translation as ‘a plot and fortification of this newe erected synagog,’ which had been masterminded by ‘*Cecill* and *Bacon*’ (the latter of whom was ‘of exceding craftie witt’).¹⁹¹

Further evidence for the deliberative character of the *Apologia* is the emphasis Anne’s translation places on irenicism, and the Athenians’ message of reconciliation: ‘They vary not betwixt themselues vpon the principles and foundations of oure religion,’ she writes, ‘nor as touching God nor Christ nor the holy Ghoste, nor of the meanes to iustification; nor yet euerlasting life, but vpon one onely question, whiche is neither weightie nor great.’¹⁹² It appears, in fact, that the Cooke sisters were dedicated, as a whole, to the cause of conciliation in the early years of the Church: Elizabeth Cooke (1528-1609), wife first to Thomas Hoby and, subsequently, to Lord Russell, translated John Ponet’s irenical work the *Diallacticon* (1557?), giving it the title *A Way of Reconciliation*, at some point between 1558-1576; while Mildred Cooke, Cecil’s wife, likewise sought to support ‘the chirche of the living god’ through the message of charity on offer in her English translation of Basil’s sermon on Deuteronomy 15:9.¹⁹³ It is, on the evidence of its irenic and catechetical nature, thus likely that the *Apologia* had been destined for translation from the start, and Anne, with her skill in the Latin language, envisioned a leading role all along.

Besides its obvious historical importance, the translation also provides unique testimony to Anne’s private designs for a Reformed Church of England, as evidenced in the choices she made throughout the *Apologie*. Anne used her considerable humanistic erudition to present fully the message of a uniform English Church, aware that her translation was intended to serve a different purpose to that of the Latin original. Gemma Allen in her recent study of the Cooke sisters has outlined the several ways in which Anne’s translation differs from Jewel’s text.¹⁹⁴ For one, her translation consistently seeks to highlight the credal significance of the work through a repetition of the English equivalent for the Latin verb ‘*Credimus*’ (‘We believe’). This is aimed square-

¹⁹⁰ See Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 6, and *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 61-63.

¹⁹¹ Richard Verstegan, *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles* (Antwerp: J. Trognesium, 1592), pp. 9, 12. See also pp. 132-3 below.

¹⁹² Jewel, *An Apologie*, p. 87. See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 61.

¹⁹³ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 61. The substance of the tract was an attempt to reconcile conflicts over the nature of the Eucharist.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-71.

ly at those ‘Factions and Sects’ which Nicholas Bacon had set out to quell in his 1559 speech to Parliament, and to imply a sense of national unity that transcends individualist tendencies.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, it was meant ‘to compensate for the laity’s lack of spiritual direction’ in the early years of the Elizabethan Church, by offering clear religious instruction to those in doubt about the official beliefs of their nascent Church. Almost four-hundred years later, C.S. Lewis commended Anne’s efforts, writing that: ‘Anne Lady Bacon deserves more praise than I have space to give her ... if quality without bulk were enough, Lady Bacon might be put forward as the best of all sixteenth-century translators.’¹⁹⁶ Lewis’s praise, like Allen’s analysis, underlines the fact that Anne kept her English audience constantly in sight through the use of simple language, for the sake of national uniformity.¹⁹⁷

Anne, like Jewel, Vermigli, and numerous others of a Genevan bent, was not satisfied with the progress that had been made towards a Reformed Church. Although she recognized with Nicholas that her envisioned outcome was a work in progress, not to be implemented too hastily, she was also frustrated with the Queen, and would become increasingly so, for Elizabeth’s reluctance to enact the further reforms she felt were needed. It was in this sense that she identified with the figure of the ‘wandering Truth’ (*Veritas vulgivaga*), in search of the True Church, as presented at the outset of the *Apologie*.¹⁹⁸ ‘Truth,’ she translated, ‘wandereth here and there as a stranger in the world.’¹⁹⁹ The task was to find the true, but invisible, church of the elect and render it visible within the commonwealth.²⁰⁰ It has been argued that Calvinist ideas of election and predestination allowed her to ‘counteract feminine silencing,’ and thereby validate her search for this Church.²⁰¹ Be that as it may, it was the instruction of her father that

¹⁹⁵ Allen rightly contends that ‘the *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* was designed to respond to Catholic accusations that Protestantism caused division and faction,’ such that *credimus* has ‘a very different significance within the Latin work’ than the English (*The Cooke Sisters*, p. 66). It could be argued that ‘We believe’ in Anne’s translation performs the role of a propaedeutic to, and caution against, ‘Factions and Sects.’

¹⁹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth-Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 307. For a further account, see Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 65.

¹⁹⁷ Anne’s translation of the *Apologia* was again published as the basis of Jewel’s *A Defense of the Apologie of the Church of England* (London: Henry Wykes, 1567), and subsequently included with the collected works of Jewel in 1609 and sent to every parish church in England. See Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 70-1. See also Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, p. 244.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Wandering Truth’ are the words Anne uses to translate ‘*Veritatem in terris peregrinam agere*’, which is more literally: ‘The Truth goes as a foreigner on the earth.’

¹⁹⁹ Jewel, *An Apologie*, p. 10. See Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, pp. 243, 244.

²⁰⁰ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.7, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, [revised from the 1581 trans.] 2008), p. 677.

²⁰¹ Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 37-8. Quoted in Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, p. 243.

had provided her with the Latin competency required to undertake such a translation, and the inclusivist attitude of her well-positioned family which made her involvement possible. This is in no way to belittle Anne’s role, but rather to argue that, at least where the *Apologie* is concerned, she was hardly contending against the patriarchal system of the day, but was rather included within this privileged group. Verstegan was correct in more than one sense; Anne was *part* of the ‘plot’. It was, as Magnusson has noted, a combination of ‘humanism and protestantism that opened up the prospect and possibility of a reformed church and social order, a reformed English nation, with imagined roles and relationships that motivated [Anne’s] actions and shaped her identity’; the possibility of a distinctly English Church made visible by the godly elect of Elizabeth’s government.²⁰²

It is important to recognize, as such, that Anne Bacon was far from the radical Puritan she has been portrayed as in these early years of her life. Yes, she was dissatisfied with the pace of change. Yes, she held strong Calvinist beliefs. But this alone is not enough to label her a ‘Puritan’—an uncommon and very much derogatory term at the time.²⁰³ She shared the same vision of a unified Reformed Church as her husband, and participated in the magisterial processes at work to realize it, conforming to the laws recently enacted. The *Apologia*, just as her translation of Ochino’s sermons, was not the work of a disgruntled old Puritan, but an intelligent visionary in sync with the latest religious trends of her time. Anne Bacon deserves to be recognized, along with Nicholas Bacon, William Cecil, and Matthew Parker, as one of the architects of the Elizabethan Church.

* * * *

It is hard to deny Anne Bacon a central role in the formative years of Elizabeth’s early reign. From her education in the *studia humanitatis* to her role in the Elizabethan Settlement, she had thrived in the court of Edward VI, where she had translated the latest Calvinist theology; had subsequently come to overlook her private religious views to assist her husband and brother-in-law when a Catholic Queen came to the throne; and,

²⁰² Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, p. 243.

²⁰³ Collinson, Patrick. ‘Antipuritanism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 19-33 (particularly pp. 22-7): Collinson has shown how ‘Puritan’ emerged as a largely derogatory term in the 1580s and 1590s; although there were almost certainly instances of its use in the two decades leading up to the 1580s.

when the opportunity arose, had put her gifts in learning and language to use for the cause of a newly Reformed Church. When her husband was elevated to Lord Keeper, Anne had not sat idly by, but had engaged in a programme whose aim, a uniform English Protestantism with irenic ends, she shared with the men who possessed the power to realize it. She was not a Puritan, nor was she alone in her mounting disenchantment with the Settlement: while the years 1559-1564 had ushered in a number of important reforms, in effect they set the boundaries for much of the subsequent debate about religion in Elizabethan England, not because of any notable advancement, but because little was to change thereafter. Nicholas, in closing the first parliament of Elizabeth’s reign, had promised that ‘in time the whole fruits of all your Labours’ would come to pass.²⁰⁴ By 1564, this promise was starting to look a little hollow to those, like Anne Bacon, who had given so much to the cause already.

The Bold Birth of Opportunity: Francis Bacon and the Promise of Reform

When Francis Bacon was born on the 22nd January 1561, Elizabeth I’s reign still held the promise of further religious reform. For many who had been waiting eagerly for the Crown to purge Catholic sympathizers, worship, and doctrine once and for all, the coronation of Elizabeth had heralded an age free from popish tyranny and superstition. But within five years of her reign, this had still to actually happen, and the patience of Reformed Christians was starting to wear thin. Their country, even their own Church, was still too full of idols, relics, and the remnants of the old religion: despite promises made, Rome continued to pervade their rectories, their universities, their government. There were, of course, many who conformed to the 1559 Settlement; those who stood by the Lord Keeper’s assurances. Indeed, for most, Elizabeth was still *Veritas*. But she was also now *filia Temporis*; the daughter of time. When Francis Bacon wrote fifty-nine years later in his *Novum organum* (1620), that ‘Truth is the daughter of Time,’ he was quoting an old adage, the sense of which had not changed much since his birth: despite the fact that there was now a king on the throne, English reformers were still waiting for the truth of Reformed religion to emerge

²⁰⁴ D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, May 1559, p. 34.

triumphant.²⁰⁵ But back in the 1560s, the hopes of the Bacons still rested with Elizabeth, and the arrival of their two boys, Anthony and Francis.

Born in York House on the Strand, Francis, along with his older brother, Anthony, were ‘much hoped imps,’ and not just because Anne had been praying for their arrival for some time, but also because they were to be raised as reformers of the right religion. Anne’s influence, she believed, would be realized in part through her sons, and in this she was not altogether wrong.²⁰⁶ Both Anne and Nicholas would spare no expense when it came to the education of their boys: from the private tutors hired to instruct them in humanistic learning and Reformed religion to their tutorials under the watchful eye of the master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Anthony and Francis Bacon were to be given the same kind of education that had served their parents so well. The Christian humanism which had dominated their childhoods would ensure that the their sons, too, would be shaped into active citizens, adept at the art of godly statecraft. But as the 1560s turned into the 1570s, the humanism in which they had put their hopes, with its corresponding promise of religious renewal, began to seem as though it might never yield fruit; hindered, as it was, by a Queen content to leave matters as is. The frustration that resulted would lead them to continue their course of reform at a more grass-roots level, and, after their sons departed for university, involve a turn towards nonconformity on the part of Anne.

* * * *

The Bacon boys were born into sin. Fortunately for them, though, their parents were strong believers in the power of education to eradicate the effects of Adam’s original transgression. As Nicholas wrote in his leisure: ‘If the false ffoxge geese and the gredye wolffe sheepe / By payne in bringeing vppe maye be taughte to keepe, / What excuse for thee then if thye childe lacke nurture / Synce thou seeste Education chaunge the nature?’²⁰⁷ The Bacon home at Gorhambury where Francis spent most of his pre-adolescent life was, as one might expect, a pious household. It was not Puritan, but it was Reformed in religion, as a result of which instruction was provided

²⁰⁵ NO, OFB XI, p. 132-133. For the connection between the Protestant use of *Veritas filia Temporis* and Bacon’s *Instauratio magna*, see James A.T. Lancaster, ‘Natural Histories of Religion: A (Baconian) “Science”’, *Perspectives on Science* 20 (2012), pp. 246-67 (on pp. 246-7).

²⁰⁶ Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 11.

²⁰⁷ Bacon, *The Recreations of His Age*, ‘The Strengthe of Education’, p. 14.

within the framework of a Protestant sacred history which stressed the effects of the Fall, and called on the believer to examine what natural light remained to him, and improve, if at all possible, this remnant.²⁰⁸ But it also placed a premium on the power of faith and works to better the human condition. This paradoxical merger of belief in the irradicable effects of sin with an optimism about the potential for human and social improvement was the crux of Christian humanism. As Erasmus expressed it, ‘while [sin] is indisputably man’s condition ... we cannot deny that the greater portion of this evil stems from corrupting relationships and misguided education.’²⁰⁹ This same paradox was to find what is arguably its most powerful expression in the thought of Francis Bacon. Leaving aside the question of the *Instauratio magna*, Bacon’s division of religion, into the eternal and the political, the unchangeable and the changeable, owes a great deal to the Christian humanism of his parents, with its sustained effort to disentangle the possible from the impossible.²¹⁰

Study at Gorhambury was imbued with a heightened sense that the ends of the good life were twofold: civic and religious reform. The desire of the godly parent was, in brief, to raise good and godly citizens who would, in turn, advance the state of the commonwealth.²¹¹ In *The Christian Mans Closet* (1581), Barthélemy Batt taught that marriage should be ‘the ioyning together of one man, and one woman, ordeined to the seruice of God, for the procreation and vertuous education of children, to the preseru-ation of his Church and common wealth’; for it was, he concluded, the ‘fountaine of all priuate and publike gouernment.’²¹² Thomas Elyot, in his *Boke Named the Governor* (1531), likewise spoke to the importance of ‘fourmynge the gentyll wyttes of noble mennes chydren, who frome the wombes of theyr mother’ should be made ‘apte to the gouernaunce of a publyke weale.’²¹³ Thomas Cartwright, a Puritan who would later become close to the Bacon family, argued that when children ‘come to age that they are in any measure able to learn[, parents] are carefully to instruct them first in their duty toward God & then to their brethren,’ for the ‘honest and peaceable

²⁰⁸ Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 98.

²⁰⁹ Desiderius Erasmus, ‘A Declamation on the Subject of Early Liberal Education for Children’ (‘De pueris et statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamatio’), trans. Beert C. Verstraete, in *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol. 26 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 291-346 (on p. 301).

²¹⁰ See Chapter 2, pp. 116-8 for a more detailed account of this division.

²¹¹ See Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp. 96-117.

²¹² Barthélemy Batt, *The Christian mans Closet*, trans. William Lowth (London: Thomas Dawson, and Gregorie Seton, 1581), sig. A4.

²¹³ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, 2nd ed. (London: Thomas Berthelet, [1531] 1537), p. 16.

gouernment of the Common Wealth.’²¹⁴ These sentiments were shared wholeheartedly by Nicholas and Anne Bacon, the result of which was that their sons were destined to be raised as citizen reformers of the commonwealth; or, as Queen Elizabeth would say of Francis, as a ‘little Lord Keeper’ in the image of his father.²¹⁵

To this end, and besides his father’s decorative *sententiae*, Francis would have been introduced to the classics; works by Plutarch, Seneca, and Cicero, among others. It is probable that he would have encountered the editions, if not writings, of Erasmus, too: from his later works, it is possible to get a sense of Erasmus as a formative influence on his outlook—although this is not evidence of the age at which he first read him.²¹⁶ What is clear, is that the emphasis was on classical Latin: grammar, rhetoric, and logic in service to the Roman ideal of civic formation. It could be taken as odd that Francis never seems to have learned Greek, which his mother—indeed, the whole Cooke family—valued so greatly, but it should be kept in mind that the aim of the Bacons was to prepare their sons for an active life, for which Latin and French or Italian would be much more useful.²¹⁷ While this course of life in public service was set out by both Anne and Nicholas, the exalted example of his father, the Lord Keeper, must also have been decisive in shaping his self-image.²¹⁸ Indeed, Francis, who would later recall that ‘I think I had [the] greatest part in his [‘my father’s’] love of all his children,’ was left with a fatherly ‘idol which he worshipped all the rest of his life.’²¹⁹ His many attempts at reform—whether of the law, of learning, or of natural philosophy—certainly each find some precedent in ambitions of Nicholas Bacon.²²⁰

At the same time, Anne, who seems to have been responsible for the education of her two boys at home, made sure they had a foundation in the Reformed theology

²¹⁴ Thomas Cartwright, *Cartwrightiana*, eds. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), pp. 147, 190.

²¹⁵ SEH I, p. 4. See also Daphne du Maurier, *The Winding Stair* (London: Virago Press, 2006), p. 5.

²¹⁶ Unfortunately, when Francis read Erasmus must remain an educated guess, based upon citations throughout his collected works. We do know, nonetheless, that Nathaniel Bacon’s wife, Anne Gresham, who received instruction under Anne Bacon while Francis and Anthony were still children, was likely taught Erasmus (see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 33).

²¹⁷ Nicholas’s aims for the both civic and humanistic education of his sons can be gauged from his proposals for educating wards of the crown in the ‘Denton-Bacon-Cary Report’ (see pp. 34-5 above).

²¹⁸ The attempt of Paul H. Kocher, ‘Francis Bacon and His Father’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 21 (1958), pp. 133-58, while not entirely fruitless, reveals the difficulty with trying to draw any conclusions from the intellectual relationship between Francis and Nicholas Bacon. Nevertheless, Francis undoubtedly shared with his father a fair number of intellectual commitments.

²¹⁹ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 14; Kocher, ‘Francis Bacon and His Father’, p. 157.

²²⁰ See Titler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 192: ‘All five [of Bacon’s sons] were educated by tutors and at institutions of their father’s choice, and his intellectual stamp—a love of learning, a respect for the gospel, and a firm grounding in the classics—marked them all.’

of Calvin; with its emphasis on the unknowability of God (except through self-revelation), God’s covenant with Adam and redemption through Christ, and the experiential basis of election, with its corollary sense of vocation. In this capacity, she hired a tutor to help her instruct them in the finer points of religion.²²¹ Their earliest tutor (1566-1569), as well as Nicholas’s chaplain, was the Reformed scholar John Walsall, who had graduated from Christ Church, Oxford. Walsall would later dedicate his *Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse* (1578) to a ‘right Christian Ladie,’ none other than Anne Bacon, in which he would remember when he was ‘first called from the vniversity to teach your two sonnes,’ who he went on to commend: ‘those such children, as for the true feare of God, zealous affection to his word, obedience to their parents, reuerence to their superiors, humility to their inferiours, loue to their instructor, I neuer knewe any excell them.’²²² It appears as though Anthony and Francis were, at least in Walsall’s appraisal, godly children. Although little is known of Walsall himself, the scant details of his life we possess, in addition to the contents of his sermons, suggest a conformist with deeply-rooted Calvinist sympathies like Anne.²²³ Finally, it should be noted that despite the fact that their earliest lessons in religion were derived from largely continental theologians, Anne never let them forget the fact that their religion, their Church, was distinctly English.

In 1573, Anthony, aged thirteen, and Francis, aged twelve, were sent up to Trinity College, Cambridge. This time around it was Nicholas’s turn to shape the education of his sons, a task which he entrusted, rather tellingly, to the Master of Trinity College, John Whitgift (c. 1530-1604). Whitgift, who was later to be the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with whom the Bacon brothers lodged on and off for three years, was placed in charge of their studies, which included readings of Cicero, Livy, Caesar, Demosthenes, Homer, Aristotle, and Plato.²²⁴ Apart from their studies, Whitgift ‘held [them] to their public disputations, and exercises, and prayers which he never missed, chiefly for devotion, and withall to observe others absence, always severely punishing

²²¹ Jardine and Stewart have suggested that Anne Bacon made sure her sons ‘were given a solid grounding in the severer sort of radical Protestantism’ (*Hostage to Fortune*, p. 32). It is by no means clear, however, what they mean by ‘radical Protestantism’, since the separatism and Presbyterianism implied by this label was not advanced by Anne at this time, and would hardly have been acceptable to Nicholas.

²²² John Walsall, ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ in *A sermon preached at Pauls Crosse ... 5. October. 1578* (London: Henrie Middleton, 1578).

²²³ See Virgil B. Heltzel, ‘Young Francis Bacon’s Tutor’, *Modern Language Notes* 63 (1948), pp. 483-5.

²²⁴ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 34-5.

such omissions and negligences.’²²⁵ Whitgift was a Reformed Christian and an ally of the established Church. He subscribed to the terms of the 1559 Settlement, holding an inclusivist view of the Church which included a toleration rooted in the distinction between ‘things disputable’ and ‘things not disputable’ similar to that advocated by Nicholas Bacon. These liberal tendencies would be overshadowed by the time Whitgift was appointed to the archbishopric in 1583, as he was compelled to address increasing instances of wilful nonconformity (and criticism from the likes of his former pupil, Francis Bacon).²²⁶ But in 1573, before he became widely known as the enemy of the godly, Whitgift was a good fit for the Bacon boys.

On top of his recreation, costly ‘physicke’ bills indicative of regular illness, and pigeons sent regularly for his dinners, it is a wonder that Francis learned much in his three years at Cambridge.²²⁷ Still, it appears as though he imbibed enough knowledge to take something of a disliking to Aristotle. As William Rawley, his chaplain, later wrote in his biography, Francis ‘fell into the dislike of the philosophy of Aristotle; not for the worthlessness of the author, to whom he would even ascribe high attributes, but for the unfruitfulness of the way.’²²⁸ Setting aside the extent to which his later thought is owing to Aristotle, Rawley’s recollection is suggestive of the humanistic values Francis brought with him from Gorhambury to Cambridge. It also appears on this evidence that Whitgift tried to teach Francis to read Aristotle, among other authors, in Greek. The success of this endeavour must be questioned, though, as there is little evidence from his later writings to indicate that Francis ever had more than a cursory knowledge of the language. At the very least, Whitgift provided the brothers with a continuation of the same kind of humanistic education and Reformed religion they had received earlier at home.²²⁹

Jardine and Stewart have argued that ‘Anne Cooke’s most significant and enduring contribution to the fortunes of her two sons ... came not from her family connections, nor from her humanistic erudition, but from her deeply Protestant religious convictions’; and, moreover, that Anne, when Francis and Anthony were boys, was a

²²⁵ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 35.

²²⁶ William Joseph Sheils, ‘Whitgift, John (1530/31?–1604)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29311>>.

²²⁷ Anne Bacon wrote in one of her epistles to Anthony, that Francis ‘was wont to love them [pigeons] better then yow from a boy’ (Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon, (8 April 1595), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 210-1).

²²⁸ SEH VIII, p. 4.

²²⁹ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 35-7: Whitgift also bought a Greek grammar for them.

nonconformist who instructed them in the ‘severer sort of radical Protestantism’.²³⁰ The reality, as we have seen, is that Anne was not a ‘Puritan’ at this time, however. She was certainly devout, there can be no question about it. And she was undoubtedly frustrated with the pace of reform in the Church, but then so too were most of those who, like her husband, had shaped the boundaries of conformism in 1559. Anne, it is true, imparted to her sons Reformed beliefs that were not part of the official teachings of the Church, but it is not accurate to label them ‘radical’; either in a theological or a political sense. For starters, similar beliefs comprised the substance of the 1559 prayer book, which included—even if it was ambiguous—an adiaphoristic awareness which allowed the ‘severer sort’ of Calvinists to privately hold unofficial beliefs and yet remain in full conformity. Secondly, the humanistic values Anne taught her sons emphasized the power of magisterial reform above all else, and the necessity of a top-down reformation. In any case, by the time Francis was twelve, his mother’s influence was from afar: he was under the tutelage of Whitgift in Cambridge before her nonconformity truly started to rear its head.

* * * *

Nicholas and Anne Bacon were not yet done reforming the state of English religion. By the early 1560s, Anne had already begun to see herself, as the *Apologie* implies, as a wandering Truth, disillusioned by Elizabeth’s reluctance to pursue the Reformation in England to its natural ends, and hence fearful that a fully Reformed Church would never see the light of day. Nicholas, though he shared in his wife’s apprehension, was devoted nevertheless to the course he had set out in 1559; aware, even as he was, that a Protestant successor had still to be secured. As a landholder, he would use patronage at a local level from the 1560s until his death in 1579, and as Lord Keeper, his influence in Parliament, to encourage further reform. But in the end, the misgivings of the Bacons towards the Queen were well-founded. During Elizabeth’s forty-four years on the throne, the Church saw no major alterations to either its structures or practices.²³¹ Between the birth of Francis in 1561 and Elizabeth’s death in 1603, virtually no subsequent reforms were agreed to by the Crown. The vision of the Bacons for a national Church that would serve as the gathering place for the elect to share their heightened

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

²³¹ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 201.

experience of faith and, at the same time, as an umbrella for the reprobate, in this way supporting the growth of a godly commonwealth, came to little.²³²

Anne was never close to the Queen. She was never invited to attend Elizabeth, nor wait upon her at court. The obvious reason for this was that Elizabeth perceived her as aligned more with her father, in his zealotry, than with her husband, in his moderation—and perhaps she was right. With little influence at court, Anne subsequently turned to the context in which she could effect change: the godly community around Gorhambury. Nicholas, on the other hand, still had the attention of Elizabeth, and as her Lord Keeper, the right to speak on her behalf. It was in this latter capacity that he once again addressed Parliament on its opening in May 1563.

‘Matters of Religion,’ he commenced, are ‘divided into two parts’: ‘one touching Religion for the setting forth of Gods Honour and Glory, and the other concerning Policy, for the Common-Wealth.’²³³ It was to the second that the Houses were to turn their attention. For, despite the ecclesiastical laws established in 1559, the ‘Preachers be not so diligent in their Vocation of Preaching, as they ought to be’, and ‘even so we of the Laiety be neither so diligent in hearing, nor yet in doing as we should be’. The problem was not the terms of the Settlement, but a failure to follow them: ‘at the last Parliament,’ he reminded those in attendance, ‘a Law was made for good Order to be observed,’ and yet still it ‘appeareth not Executed.’ Since ‘heretofore the Discipline of the Church hath not been good, and again, that the Ministers thereof have been slothful,’ the Lord Keeper proposed that a nation-wide system of deaneries be instituted, which would send officers to the local parishes ‘twice or thrice a Year, till the faults be amended.’ The notion of the rural deanery was Protestant, proposed by Martin Bucer, and founded on the model of the apostolic Church.²³⁴ It was not entirely new to England; an attempt to implement it—albeit an unsuccessful one—had been made in Edward VI’s reign. Tittler has argued that this was, in fact, a ‘subtle intervention’ on the part of Nicholas to implement his ‘radical Protestant’ beliefs.²³⁵ But this overlooks the fact that the speech, given by Nicholas as Lord Keeper, would have been scrutinized by Cecil, and possibly even the Queen herself. Further, the proposed deaneries were

²³² For Anne Bacon’s vision of the Church as a gathering place, where the elect participate in ‘prophesyings’, see Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, p. 249.

²³³ D’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, May 1572, p. 192.

²³⁴ See Martin Bucer, *Opera Latina: De regno Christi*, ed. F. Wendel, Vol. 15 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), p. 118.

²³⁵ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 92.

intended to enforce the established laws, not to meddle with the hard-won Settlement of 1559: this was no attempt to alter either official doctrine or worship, just to enforce them. Despite broaching the subject once more in May 1572, Nicholas’s proposal was not met. Laxity would remain a problem throughout Elizabeth’s reign.²³⁶

Besides his official duties, Nicholas had his hand in a number of other matters of religion, including the use of his influence to promote Reformed worship, the appointment of preachers locally in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Hertfordshire, and the issue of the royal succession.²³⁷ In 1566, he took what turned out to be the first of many stands against Matthew Parker, when he refused to assist the Archbishop enforce the statutes prescribing the proper clerical attire.²³⁸ His distaste for the traditional vestments was not new knowledge: as early as 1552, he had sold off the relics of the old religion at Gray’s Inn. But his sense of frustration—that the past seven years had still to see the removal of Roman paraphernalia at an official level—was new.²³⁹ In refusing Parker, Nicholas had not breached the law, but this incident had nonetheless shown that there were limits to his patience.

Two years later, Nicholas was again on Parker’s bad side, and this time clearly in the wrong. In 1568, Parker led a visitation to Norwich Cathedral, where he planned to investigate Bishop John Parkhurst’s management of the diocese. What Parker found was that two of the Cathedral’s six prebendaries had been personally appointed by the Lord Keeper, and both were unlicensed to preach. Even worse, one of them, Thomas Fowle (1530-1597), had been orchestrating weekly prophesyings at the Bacon parish church in Redgrave since 1563. ‘Prophesying’, a type of communal biblical exegesis, was not specifically prohibited at the time, but neither was it prescribed under the terms of the Settlement. Again, Nicholas refused to co-operate, and ‘broke off relations’ not only with Parker’s investigation, but with his friend altogether.²⁴⁰ Soon after the incident, Parker, afraid to contact his friend after such ‘angrie busynes’, wrote in-

²³⁶ Nicholas again attempted to deal with laxity in the Church in 1572—although, as Tittler has suggested, this may have been a ruse to buy time for other dealings (Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 144). For Nicholas’s speech to the Lords, see d’Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, May 1572, pp. 192-195.

²³⁷ See Tittler, pp. 127-32. Nicholas’s proposed compromise was to allow Mary Queen of Scots to accede, but only if her son, James, was brought up by Protestants. Later, in the early 1570s, he also ‘assumed leadership of the anti-Marian forces’ in Parliament (on p. 146).

²³⁸ In this act of defiance, Nicholas acted with Cecil (see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 135).

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135: In refusing Parker, Nicholas in effect ‘gave a fillip,’ as Tittler has argued, ‘to the puritan antagonists in the vestments controversy of the mid-1560s.’

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

stead to the Lord Keeper’s wife. In his letter of February 1568, Parker implored Anne, as her husband’s ‘alter ipse’ (his ‘other self’), to pass on a message of his ‘good frindship’ to Nicholas; that he had, after meeting ‘her highnes’ on ‘Lamhithe bridge,’ been instructed to send ‘visitors into Norwiche,’ and that it was his ‘dutye’, not a personal attack. The letter also reveals that Anne, at this time, was not seen as a Puritan, but as a conformist. With Nicholas, she was ‘one spirit, one flesh’ (*unus spiritus, una caro*), and Parker had no doubt that, even after the incident at Norwich, the Bacons were still allies of the Established Church.²⁴¹

Norwich, however, was not the only place where Nicholas exercised his privilege to appoint preachers of the right religion. His considerable landholdings throughout Norfolk and Suffolk allowed him to impose godly rule at the local level, and he took full advantage of each opportunity.²⁴² Between 1563-1572, he appointed roughly two-dozen Reformed preachers in these areas, including Robert Johnson and Thomas Smyth, as well as a Dutch Calvinist, John Thomas, as master of the Bury-St-Edmunds Grammar School (established to replace the monastery). This led to what has been described as the ‘emergence of a viable puritan group’ in East Anglia by the 1570s.²⁴³ But it also led to yet more confrontation with Archbishop Parker.

In 1571, the nonconformity of Robert Johnson, a chaplain for the Bacons, was discovered, as a result of which Johnson took refuge at Gorhambury in defiance of the Archbishop. Parker, as one might imagine, was not pleased, and decided to take Johnson, along with Edward Dering, Percival Wilburn, and John Browne, before the privy council on the charge of distributing the works of Thomas Cartwright. With Nicholas in attendance, Parker railed against the four preachers, reminding her counsellors that the Queen would not tolerate such blatant nonconformity. His suggestion was that an oath be established, under the terms of which it would be illegal to publish theological tracts without prior permission from the Queen. Nicholas submitted to Parker’s better judgement, recognizing that to refuse to co-operate now would be to undo much of what he had strived to achieve twelve years earlier.²⁴⁴ Although Johnson escaped the

²⁴¹ Matthew Parker to Anne Bacon (6 February 1568), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 61-8 (on pp. 63, 68).

²⁴² See Diarmaid MacCulloch (ed.), *Letters from Redgrave Hall: The Bacon Family, 1340-1744* (Woodbridge: Suffolk Records Society, 2007) for more on the Bacons’ local patronage of Puritans.

²⁴³ For more on Nicholas’s appointments, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 157-8, 163, 167, 168.

²⁴⁴ For the complete details, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 169-71. Nicholas craftily adjusted the terms of the oath, such that any request to publish a nonconformist work ‘would have to be signed by its author’s name, and thus no mere anonymous tract or protest could be interpreted as a petition to the Queen.’

ordeal relatively unscathed, others, such as Edward Dering, who would be brought before the Star Chamber in 1574 for heretical preaching, were not so fortunate. Even the efforts of Anne and her sisters, who united to compose a set of prefatory verses to an Italian manuscript by Bartholo Sylva, the *Giardino cosmografico* (1572), as part of a campaign to help him, could not save Dering. The Lord Keeper upheld the law, and Dering was prosecuted, to die a few years later.²⁴⁵

Ultimately, though, it was at Gorhambury that the Bacons most blatantly sheltered nonconformists. Among the Reformed preachers appointed in and around St Albans from 1560, were Humphrey Wyblood, Percival Wilburn, and Thomas Wilcox, in addition to Fowle and Johnson. The chief difference with Gorhambury was that Anne oversaw these appointments as much as, if not more, than her husband. It is true that Gorhambury was rather more ‘commodious’, accommodating more preachers than at Redgrave, but recent scholarship has shown that this was in good part the doing of Anne.²⁴⁶ Although Jardine and Stewart are correct to write that, ‘for public purposes Lady Bacon’s religious convictions were on the whole firmly subordinated to those of her husband,’ the situation at home was quite otherwise.²⁴⁷ There is, for starters, proof of continuity between the engagement of godly preachers at Gorhambury before and after Nicholas’s death.²⁴⁸ Evidence of her independent will in matters of faith has been supplied abundantly throughout this chapter, and while it is only in her widowhood that we can be absolutely sure of Anne’s installations, her sustained efforts to provide ‘godly exhortation’ to her family and friends throughout the 1560s and 1570s suggests that she had more than a minor role to play in the appointment of the private chaplains and tutors employed by the Bacon family.²⁴⁹

While Anne and Nicholas were engaged on the home-front, Matthew Parker, friend, collaborator, and even antagonist to the Bacons, died on 17th May 1575.²⁵⁰ It is unclear how the Lord Keeper reacted to the death of his old friend, but at some level it

²⁴⁵ See Patrick Collinson, ‘Dering, Edward (c.1540–1576)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7530>>. For Anne’s involvement, see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 32 and Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 169-70.

²⁴⁶ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 169 admitted as early as 1976 that ‘much credit must also go to the lady of the house, for Anne Bacon—who had resided at Redgrave only briefly—was extremely forthright in her support of puritans.’ See Allen, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 23-7 and *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 169-87. See also Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 31-2.

²⁴⁷ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 32.

²⁴⁸ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 176.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁵⁰ See David J. Crankshaw and Alexandra Gillespie, ‘Parker, Matthew (1504–1575)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21327>>.

must have involved more than a modicum of ambivalence; for Parker’s death left the archbishopric open, and with it, the possibility that the Church might undergo further reform. Cecil again made the recommendation: Edmund Grindal (c. 1516-1583), ‘the meetest man to succeed,’ was proposed to Elizabeth and installed shortly thereafter, to the great delight of the Bacons.²⁵¹ Grindal, another friend of Nicholas, was considerably more Reformed, especially when it came worship, than his predecessor. Like the Lord Keeper, moreover, he had struggled to uphold the cause of the reformers and still perform his duties within the limits of the law. It was for this reason that he soon fell afoul of the Queen. His refusal to prohibit the practice of prophesying, followed by a diatribe on the limitations of the Crown in ecclesiastical decisions, assured her wrath: Elizabeth summoned a council to defrock Grindal within only months of his installation, and appointed her Lord Keeper as chairman.²⁵²

Once again, Nicholas was placed in a uncomfortable position; instructed to prosecute a friend, a man who shared in his cause to build a godly nation, over a form of worship he himself patronized. As with the case of Thomas Fowle eight years prior, Nicholas could hardly deny that, like Grindal, he viewed prophesying as a justifiable vehicle for the promotion of theological unity.²⁵³ In essence a meeting of the godly in which a shared reading of scripture occurred, prophesying was derived from St Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians: ‘Let the Prophetes speake two, or thre, and let the other iudge ... For ye may all prophecie one by one, ye all may learne, & all may haue comfort.’²⁵⁴ In the sixteenth century, it was a scholarly form of worship; requiring the participant to be able to undertake exegesis in Latin, Hebrew, or Greek before a closing sermon was delivered in the vernacular. When it arrived in England, however, prophesying was quickly transformed into an almost entirely vernacular affair so as to accommodate the majority of listeners. It proved most popular, unsurprisingly, in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Hertfordshire, the domain of the Bacons, and Elizabeth knew this. But from her point of view, the practice undermined her Church’s authority to oversee biblical interpretation—something she could hardly let stand. In prohibiting prophesy-

²⁵¹ Patrick Collinson, ‘Grindal, Edmund (1516x20–1583)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11644>>.

²⁵² Tittler has suggested that the friendship between Nicholas and Grindal may have extended as far back as 1551, when Grindal served as chaplain to Edward VI. There is evidence that they later worked together in the 1560s, and even met socially from 1568 on (*Nicholas Bacon*, pp. 171-3).

²⁵³ See Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 168-76 (and particularly pp. 169, 170, 171-3).

²⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 14: 29-31. Quoted from Anthony Gilby (ed.), *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Nene Testament* (Geneva, 1561), p. 74.

ing, the Queen, one commentator remarked, gave ‘a great rejoicing to all God’s enemies.’²⁵⁵ To Nicholas Bacon, she gave an ultimatum.

Despite Grindal’s absence on the grounds of ill health, the privy council met in November 1577 as planned, with the Lord Keeper as chairman. From his words to the council, it was clear that Nicholas had already made up his mind: he would support the Queen; uphold the laws he had helped to establish. There was, admittedly, little he could do, but his words must have tasted bitter all the same. It was undeniable, he began, that

her Majesty being given to understand, well nigh from all the parts of the realm, of the great divisions and sects that had grown, and were like to increase, by reason of these exercises, amongst her good and loving subjects in the cause of religion, and that so far forth, that if they had not been made in time, it was like that religion, which of [its] own nature should be uniform, would against [its] nature have proved milliform, yea, in continuance nulliform, specially in rites and ceremonies, and sometime also in matters of doctrine.²⁵⁶

Here was the crux of the matter. If the Queen could not expect ‘her principal minister’ to execute her orders on the grounds of uniformity, how then could she hope to govern the commonwealth. If those who helped her govern could not maintain uniformity in their worship, how could she ask it of her subjects? ‘Religion,’ Francis Bacon would later write, was, after all, the ‘chiefe Band of humane Society.’²⁵⁷ The Queen’s message had struck home: if religion were allowed to become ‘milliform’, it would, in time, disappear altogether; become ‘nulliform’.²⁵⁸ There was reflected in his words a truth that Nicholas now saw all too clearly: he had become a supporter of faction, and faction was not, had never been, the aim of his labours. Grindal was arrested, soon to be replaced as Archbishop by John Whitgift.

Despite his desire to further the Reformation in England, Nicholas let the Settlement prevail over his own preferences. The Bacons’ hopes for further reform in the 1560s and 1570s had been curbed by the same laws Nicholas had so forcefully advanced in the Parliament of 1559. Their efforts towards a Reformed Church had been largely successful—if, at times, embarrassing—at the local level. But his attempts to

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 175.

²⁵⁶ William Nicholson (ed.), *The Remains of Edmund Grindal, D.D.* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1843), pp. 471-2.

²⁵⁷ Ess, OFB XV, p. 11.

²⁵⁸ Nicholson (ed.), *The Remains*, pp. 471-2. Nicholas Bacon, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was in fact the originator of the word ‘nulliform’.

convince the Queen were not. Grindal was to be Nicholas’s last confrontation with the boundaries of Elizabethan religion. In his quest for a godly England, he had, at times, momentarily lost his confidence in the magisterial processes of reform to which he had committed himself as a student. In the end, however, his ideals of religious unity, peace, and commonwealth had triumphed—even if only in theory—over religious precisian and sectarianism.

* * * *

By the end of his life, Nicholas’s Reformed faith was widely acknowledged. On the continent, he was described as ‘one of the most pernicious heretics in Europe.’²⁵⁹ In the local parishes of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Hertfordshire, as a patron of the godly. What, though, are we ultimately to make of his faith? It has been argued already that it would be incorrect to label Anne Bacon a Puritan during these years, but what about Elizabeth’s Lord Keeper?

Robert Tittler, in his biography of Bacon, has argued that Nicholas ‘favoured a strongly Protestant and even puritan course in his private life,’ and that ‘even Elizabeth ... may not at first perceived the nature of Bacon’s true loyalties.’²⁶⁰ There is certainly much truth in this: as we have seen, his success in promoting Reformed religion from the 1560s was largely achieved in his ‘private’ life, that is, *ex officio*; through the appointment of chaplains and, occasionally, unlicensed preachers. But this merely underlines the fact that it was out of frustration; that he could not, even if he wanted to, proceed through the official channels. Further, as the case of Grindal indicates, Elizabeth was not as clueless as Tittler has suggested: she tested his loyalty and won on several occasions. In fact, when it came to doctrine, Nicholas may have been closer to the beliefs of the Queen than to those of his own wife (although not in matters of ecclesiology and worship). Finally, and if only for the same reasons as those given for Anne, it would seem incorrect to label one of the men who defined orthodoxy in the Elizabethan period a ‘Puritan’. He would not have identified himself as such. He was a Protestant, he sought a more Reformed Church than what the Settlement had been able to secure, but he ultimately chose to maintain the status quo when faced with the loss of the commonwealth he had worked towards.

²⁵⁹ Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 135.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Patrick Collinson, on the other hand, has described the faith of Nicholas and Parker as the ‘very soul of “golden mediocrity”’.²⁶¹ He rejected Tittler’s view that Bacon was a ‘private Puritan’, and concluded instead that, ‘on the evidence we should resist the temptation to call Bacon a puritan’ at all.²⁶² Both scholars have valid points to make, but Collinson comes closer to the mark. Part of the question revolves, of course, around the definition of ‘Puritanism’. But even accepting an inclusive definition, Nicholas Bacon does not fit the profile in a number of important respects.²⁶³ As I have tried to show, his theological preferences—at least on the available evidence—were Protestant, but never Calvinist; his efforts to reform the Church further were almost always within the ambit of the ecclesiastical laws that he himself had helped to bring to fruition; and even in his appointment of unlicensed preachers, it is not possible to entirely rule out the hand of his wife.²⁶⁴ Lastly, Nicholas’s life came to an end in 1579, just prior to the emergence of the Puritan as a self-ascribed identity; one that his wife would eventually adopt.

To extend Collinson’s line of argument further is likewise to pursue a mistaken sense of Nicholas Bacon’s contribution to any emergent orthodoxy. Jardine and Stewart have argued that ‘Nicholas consistently represented his faith as orthodox Anglicanism, pursuing the “middle way” of the moderate reformed church just as he advocated *mediocria firma* in every walk of life.’²⁶⁵ Again, there is truth in this statement, but a distinction must be drawn. The difficulty here is that there exists nothing even close to the ‘orthodox Anglicanism’ Jardine and Stewart have claimed Nicholas adhered to at this time. Anglicanism is very much a construction of the nineteenth century. While it is possible to find the term *Ecclesia Anglicana* (‘English Church’) in the 1215 Magna Carta, the English term ‘Anglican’ was an invention of the mid-nineteenth century.²⁶⁶ The commonplace definition of Anglicanism, as the ‘middle way’ between Reformed

²⁶¹ Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon’, p. 257.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 266-7.

²⁶³ For detailed, and conflicting, definitions of Puritanism, see Todd, *Christian Humanism*, pp. 1-15; Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Basil Hall, ‘Puritanism: The Problem of Definition’, *Studies in Church History* 2 (1965), pp. 283-96.

²⁶⁴ While it has been possible for some time to speak of ‘moderate Puritans’, men and women who were part of the mainstream evolution of religion in early modern England, this term applies more convincingly to the seventeenth and, at the earliest, late sixteenth centuries. See, for instance, Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*.

²⁶⁵ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 31.

²⁶⁶ The first modern instance of ‘Anglican’ appears to be in William Gladstone’s *Church Principles Considered in Their Results* (London: John Murray, 1840). For an account of the term Anglican, see Mark Chapman, *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

and Roman Catholic religion, is also particularly problematic here. Nicholas was not an advocate of the *via media*, but of *mediocria firma*: his views had little to do with finding the correct theological and ecclesiastical balance between Geneva and Rome, and everything to do with a philosophical position based in Aristotle’s definition of virtue as a means between excess or deficiency. To be truly religious, for him, was to have neither too much religion nor too little, but rather the right amount to maintain a godly social order. Faction was the great enemy of the commonwealth, and Nicholas was well aware that ‘there is no faction so violent and dangerouse as the faction of religion.’²⁶⁷ Godly rule was vital to the success of the commonwealth, but godly rule also required a political balancing act between religious extremes.

Nicholas Bacon ultimately conformed to the English religion he had helped to implement in 1559, but to the end of his life he remained dissatisfied with what conformity actually meant. For him, the question continued to be how to shape religion to best fulfil the divine mandate of a godly social order. For religion, as he laid it out in 1567, had two parts: one setting forth ‘God’s Honour and Glory,’ the other ‘concerning Policy.’ The question was what to do with the temporal, the ‘Policy’, in order to create a society that would be witness to the full greatness of human potential, and in this way reformed the covenant between God and Adam that established man’s rule over the world. The ‘middle way’, it seemed to him, was the best means to this end: even if it did not immediately fix the problem of incorrect worship, its implicitly tolerant, irenic, and charitable character constituted the best path to the *civitas Dei*, and thus to the true worship of God. This was a cause that Francis would later take up under the name of the *Instauratio magna*.

Sent Abroad: The Influence of French Protestantism on Francis

Between 1576 and 1579, while his father was dealing with the death of Parker and the installation of Grindal, Francis was to reside in France under the watch of the English

²⁶⁷ Collinson, ‘Sir Nicholas Bacon’, pp. 271.

ambassador to Paris, and ‘surrogate father figure’, Amias Paulet (1532- 1588).²⁶⁸ The statesman under whom he was meant to receive a working knowledge of ‘intelligencing’ over the subsequent three years was chosen for the task by the Lord Keeper himself. Anne would no doubt have been pleased with his choice, though: Paulet was an active advocate of the Protestant cause (‘a Puritan in religion’) on the channel island of Jersey, a sympathizer of Huguenot refugees, and, before he had left for France, had helped to cement the Church of the Channel Islands first Presbyterian form of discipline.²⁶⁹ In service to Elizabeth and her agent Walsingham, Paulet dispatched intelligence from the French court, always with an ear attuned to the threat of a Catholic alliance between Henri III and Phillip II of Spain. From the point of view of the Spanish ambassador in France, Bernardino de Mendoza, Paulet’s activities at court clearly demonstrated that he was ‘not only a heretic ... but a terrible Puritan’ (the latter worse than the former). Later in life, Paulet would famously serve as the gaoler to Mary, Queen of Scots, intercepting and reporting back to Elizabeth on her activities—a task for which his time in France had no doubt prepared him well.²⁷⁰

Terrible Puritan that he was, there is little evidence to suggest that Paulet himself had much of an impact on the maturation of the fifteen-year-old Francis’s faith. If anything, Francis’s immediate comfort with Paulet and his family, and his participation in the Huguenot worship they practiced, suggests that he felt at home. Unlike his brother Anthony, whose travels would later take him to Calvinist Geneva and the Protestant court of Prince Henri of Navarre (1553-1610), Francis was primarily preoccupied with the duties, largely of ciphering and letter-writing, assigned to him in the service of Paulet. Although the English ambassador’s ‘nights were spent conducting secret interviews with Huguenot leaders,’ including François de la Noue (1531-1591) and Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay (1549-1623), Francis was likely not privy to the information that passed between them, nor does he make any mention of them later in life.²⁷¹ Two years after Francis left Paris, Mornay published his *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1581), in which he presented natural theology as an antidote

²⁶⁸ For a more detailed account of Francis’s time in France, see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 39-66.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁷⁰ On Paulet’s life and career, see Michael Hicks, ‘Paulet, Sir Amias (c.1532-1588)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21612>>.

²⁷¹ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 44.

for ‘les athées, épicuriens, payens, juifs, mahométans et autres infidèles.’²⁷² Although it is tempting to read Mornay as a basis for Francis’s later views on natural history and atheism, there are substantial differences between them: for one, Francis does not, like Mornay, perceive atheism as a moral failure, nor does Mornay associate natural theology exclusively with God’s power, as Francis later does.²⁷³

What useful information we do have about Francis’s religious interests while in France comes not from his association with Huguenots, but rather from an English friend abroad, the founder of the Bodleian Library, Thomas Bodley (1545-1623). Bodley’s father John, like Anthony Cooke, had been amongst the Marian exiles who had landed in Geneva. Having fled England with his family in 1555, Thomas had thus been educated, as he would later described himself, as an ‘auditor of Chevalerius for Hebrew, of Beroaldus in Greek, [and] of Calvin and Beza in Divinity.’²⁷⁴ Such an education no doubt helped to cement Bodley’s interest in the book-trading networks that arose between the Protestant cities of Europe, and subsequently served as the intellectual foundation of his extensive, private collections.²⁷⁵ With the accession of a Protestant monarch, Bodley was able to return to England in 1559, where he seized the opportunity for further study at Oxford before turning his impressive knowledge to employment in the service of the Crown.

At the time of his response to Francis, Bodley was once again back on the continent, having commenced the diplomatic mission that would see him travel to France, Germany, and Italy over the next twenty-eight years. Responding warmly to Francis’s request for employment, he advised his ‘cousin’ to take full advantage of his time in France, ‘either in knowledge of God, or of the World; the rather, because the days you

²⁷² Philippe du Plessis-Mornay’s *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne contre les athées, épicuriens, payens, juifs, mahométans et autres infidèles* (Antwerp, 1581) was translated into English and printed in London in 1587 and 1592.

²⁷³ Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, ‘Preface to the Reader,’ in *A Vvoorke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion, Written in French: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and Other Infidels* (London: John Charlewood and George Robinson for Thomas Cadman, 1587), sig. iii; on the power/wisdom distinction, p. 213. For the influence of de Mornay and other Huguenots on Bacon, see Dana Jalobeanu, ‘Idolatry, Natural History, and Spiritual Medicine: Francis Bacon and the Neo-Stoic Protestantism of the late Sixteenth Century’, *Perspectives on Science* 20 (2013), pp. 207-26.

²⁷⁴ Quoted from W. H. Clennell, ‘Bodley, Sir Thomas (1545–1613)’, in ODNB: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2759>>

²⁷⁵ Years later, Bacon sent Bodley a copy of his newly-published *The Advancement of Learning*, along with a letter of commendation to his old friend: ‘the second copy I have sent unto you, not only in good affection, but in a kind of congruity, in regard of your great rare desert of learning. For books are the shrines where the Saint is, or is believed to be: and you having built an Ark to save learning from deluge, deserve propriety in any new instrument or engine, whereby learning should be improved or advanced’ (Francis Bacon to Thomas Bodley (1605), in SEH X, p. 253).

have already spent abroad, are now both sufficient to give you light, how to fix yourself and end with counsel, and accordingly to shape your course constantly unto it.’²⁷⁶

Bodley’s advice continued:

Besides, it is a vulgar scandal unto the travellers, that few return more religious than they went forth; wherein both my hope and request is to you, that your principal care be to hold your foundation, and to make no other use of informing yourself in the corruptions and superstitions of other nations, than only thereby to engage your own heart more firmly to the truth.²⁷⁷

With his admonition that the traveller be wary of ‘the corruptions and superstitions of other nations,’ Bodley sent Francis £30 for ‘use of informing’; that is, to convey any intelligence he might light upon about the state of religion amongst the French. In return for payment, he was charged with surveying ‘the impostures of the debased age.’ Bodley knew that the task to which he had assigned Francis, the close contact with foreign religious practices it entailed, might put the young man’s ‘foundation’ in faith at risk, might tempt him awry, hence the great caution he implored.

Bodley made his instructions very clear. France, he reminded his friend, was ‘a country of two several professions [faiths],’ which Francis should take the opportunity to analyze; both for his own profit, but more importantly, for that of his nation:

... you shall return a novice, if you be not able to give an account of the ordinances, strength, and progress of each, in reputation, and party, and how both are supported, balanced and managed by the state, as being the contrary humours, in the temper of predominancy whereof, the health or disease of that body doth consist.²⁷⁸

This information was to be gathered from two perspectives: as an Englishman, ‘whom it may concern, to what interest his country may expect in the consciences of their neighbours’; but also ‘as a Christian, to consider both the beauties and blemishes, the hopes and dangers of the Church in all places.’²⁷⁹ The task by which Francis was to repay the £30 was thus both political and personal: through observation and intimate parley, he was to collect information about the confessional politics of France, and in

²⁷⁶ Bodley refers to Francis as ‘cousin’, here a term of endearment rather than relation. See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 47-50.

²⁷⁷ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 48-9.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

so doing to ‘engage your own heart more firmly to the truth’ of Reformed *English* religion. Whether the former did lead to the latter is impossible to know. Whether Francis was amongst the ‘few [who] return more religious than they went forth’ seems unlikely. If anything, Bodley’s division of religion into the political and the true, or invisible Church (i.e., ‘the Church in all places’), helped to reinforce in Francis his parents’s inclination to view these as two sides of the same reality.

Francis soon got the chance to put Bodley’s advice into practice. Arriving with Paulet’s entourage at Henri de Navarre’s court in Poitiers in 1577, he quickly became ‘very intimate with a young Frenchman of great wit, but somewhat talkative, who afterwards turned out a very eminent man.’²⁸⁰ It has been suggested that this ‘great wit’ was in fact Maximilien de Béthune, the Duke of Sully (1560-1641), a Huguenot who later advised Henri’s conversion to Catholicism (on political grounds), but who himself remained a committed Protestant.²⁸¹ There survive, as far as we know, no known letters from Francis to Bodley from these early years: so while the ‘very intimate’ relationship Francis was quick to establish with this undisclosed Frenchman may have involved some element of reconnaissance, there is no way to know for certain.

Perhaps even more revealing is the close friendship he formed with Jean de la Jessée (1550-1600), secretary to the duc d’Alençon, and former protégé of the Queen Regnant of Navarre, Jeanne d’Albret. It would have been difficult for Francis to have found someone whose religious beliefs were more controversial: La Jessée’s fervent French Protestantism, patronized by none other than Jeanne d’Albret—herself widely viewed as the spiritual and political leader of the Huguenot movement—had made his escape from Paris after the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (1572) very fortunate. La Jessée was also, it seems, a member of the Famille de la Charité, a mystical offshoot of the Dutch Anabaptists, whose ‘heresy’ Francis would later attempt to dissociate

²⁸⁰ HVM, SEH V, p. 319.

²⁸¹ See Francis Bacon, *Le Nouvelle Atlantide*, trans. and ed. Michèle Le Doeuff and Margaret Llasera (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), p. 168.

from the Puritan cause (and subsequently denounce outright).²⁸² It is not clear whether Francis knew that La Jessée had connections to the Famille de la Charité, but it was in all probability here in Poitier that he first put his intelligencing skills to use, discovering what he could of the religion of such men.

Approximately eighteen years later (1595/6), La Jessée composed a sonnet for ‘Monsieur François Bacon’, in which he offered elaborate praise; first of Queen Elizabeth, and then of Francis himself, whose ‘vertu claire en mon ombre reluit.’²⁸³ In the sonnet, La Jessée was keen to identify the Francis he had once known with Pallas Athena (‘votre Pallas’), a mythical figure recognizable to both as a personification of *prudentia civilis*, or the art of state governance.²⁸⁴ Francis is credited with having instructed La Jessée’s ‘Muse’ in the art of civil discourse (‘Bien que vostre Pallas me rende mieux instruit’). So the young boy with whom La Jessée had made friends was, it seems, already actively cultivating the art of statesmanship. As Francis would write many years later in the *Novum organum* (1620): ‘we must call to our aid the counsel of experience in statebusiness (*prudentia civilis*), which mistrustful on principle, takes a dim view of human affairs.’²⁸⁵ If this is any indication of the manner in which he spent his time in Poitier, it appears Francis had meant to earn Bodley’s £30.

* * * *

By 1578, Nicholas Bacon was keen for his son to return to London in order that he might commence his legal studies at Gray’s Inn. Francis had other ideas, though: his heart was set on Italy, where he could continue his investigations into ‘the corruptions

²⁸² La Jessée’s poetic interests after 1572 appear to have turned largely to the themes of ‘religious toleration’ and ‘charity’, central to theological interests of the Famille de la Charité, and to Bacon’s later writings on religion. See Heather Ingman, ‘Jean de La Jessée and the Family of Love in France’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 47 (1984), pp. 225-8. For Bacon on the Famille de la Charité, see ACE, OFB I, p. 184: ‘They haue sorted & coupled them [the Puritans] with the familye of love, whose heresydes they haue labored to descry and confute’; OL, OFB I, p. 366: ‘And here I note an honestie and discretion in the Libeller, *which* I note no wher els in that he did forbear to laie to *our* charge the secte of the *Familie of Love*, for about twelue yeres since ther was creepinge in som screat places of the Realme indeede a verie great heresie derived from the Duch and named as before was said *which* since by the good blessinge of God and by the good strength of *our* Church is vanished and extincte.’

²⁸³ Jean de la Jessée, ‘Sonnet to Francis Bacon’, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 653, f. 281^r. See also Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 51.

²⁸⁴ In his essay ‘Of Counsel’ (first published in 1612), Bacon likewise identifies Pallas with *prudentia civilis*: ‘Wherby he became himselfe with Child, and was delivered of *Pallas Armed*, out of his Head. Which monstrous Fable, containeth a Secret of *Empire*; How *Kings* are to make use of their *Councill of State*’ (Ess, OFB XV, p. 64; DSV, SEH VI, p. 554).

²⁸⁵ NO, OFB XI, pp. 148-9.

and superstitions of other nations.’ Although he pleaded with Paulet to inform his father of his ‘opinion touching his intended voyage into Italy,’ further travel was not in the cards. As Jardine and Stewart have noted, ‘Italy was well known as the most dangerous destination for English boys abroad,’ particularly in matters of a religious nature, and ‘with the Bacon name, Francis carried the burden of his parents’s religious convictions and a reputation for dissent which Paulet believed would place him in serious jeopardy.’²⁸⁶

Francis was envious of his half-brother Edward (1548/9-1618), who had freely indulged in travel to Strasbourg, where he had studied with the educational reformer Johannes Sturm, and then Geneva, where he had continued his studies with Lambert Daneau and Theodore Beza.²⁸⁷ When Paulet did write to Nicholas, it was to advise him against Francis’s proposed voyage, for ‘such of our countrymen as are known to be no papists live there in great peril.’ The real problem, though, was Francis:

To speak plainly as I think, I am of opinion that no English gentleman now being on this side the Seas should live in greater danger in Italy than your Lordship’s son as the world goeth at present. I refer this matter to your Lordship’s better judgment, whereof I have considered with no less carefulness than if the same concerned my self, wishing unto the young gentleman in all things as to my own son.²⁸⁸

Reputation travelled further abroad than Francis. Although the Reformed sympathies of the Bacons prohibited him from leaving France, he would not have much time left to spend even in Paris.

Two or three days before the 20th February 1579, Francis had a strange dream, which he would later tell to ‘divers English gentlemen, that my father’s house in the country was plastered all over with black mortar.’²⁸⁹ The next morning he received word that his father, ‘the Lord Keeper,’ had ‘departed this life.’²⁹⁰ This strange experience, he would later attempt to explain, had not been a religious one. In the *Sylva syl-*

²⁸⁶ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 59-62.

²⁸⁷ A. Hassell Smith, ‘Bacon, Edward (1548/9–1618)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/998>>. See also Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 62, who report that Edward also encountered the exiled Thomas Cartwright during his time in Geneva.

²⁸⁸ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 65.

²⁸⁹ SS, SEH II, p. 666.

²⁹⁰ Quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 66.

varum, published only after his own death in 1626, Francis reflected somewhat upon ‘the force of the imagination and the secret instincts of nature,’ recommending it be

thoroughly inquired, whether there be any secret passages of sympathy between persons of near blood; as parents, children, brothers, sisters, nurse-children, husbands, wives, &c. There be many reports in history, that upon the death of persons of such nearness, men have had an inward feeling of it. ... There is an opinion abroad (whether idle or no I cannot say,) that loving and kind husbands have a sense of their wives breeding child, by some accident in their own body.²⁹¹

He was never to experience the latter, never having had children of his own. But this premonition of his father’s death had been enough for Francis to seek out an answer to how the ‘secret instincts’ of matter could have made such a dream possible.

Writing to Anthony Bacon, Thomas Norton, son-in-law of the late Archbishop Cranmer, and one of his Nicholas’s oldest friends, reflected lovingly that:

... my Lord your father lived in honor, lived in favor of his Sovereigne, in love of all good menne, lived in Knowledge of the Gospell, of his Salvation, lived to a blessed age, lived out a time to see you all brought up in the fear of God, & in hopefull likelihood of wordly blessings, he died in all these ioyes, & in dyeing he hath overlived all mixture of disease, paines, sorrowes, & feare[.] Lastly, you may not forgett that your father liveth, and hath left you well instructed & well furnished, & soe much the more deeply bound to serve and comforte your mother...²⁹²

Although not ‘well-furnished’ in material wealth like Anthony, Francis nevertheless had been ‘well instructed’ by both his mother and father in fruits of mind. Between his studies in the humanist curricula and Reformed religion of Anne Bacon, John Walsall, and John Whitgift, and his experience with the *prudentia civilis* of Bodley and Paulet, Francis was prepared ‘to shape [his] course constantly unto’ the same path his father had followed.

In the end, Francis discovered the sense of his father’s *sententia*, that ‘Everywhere means nowhere. When a person spends all his time in foreign travel, he ends by

²⁹¹ SS, SEH II, p. 666.

²⁹² Thomas Norton to Anthony Bacon (20 February 1579), Lambeth Palace Library, Hopkinson MSS 28, ff. 126-7.

having many acquaintances, but no friends.’²⁹³ French Protestantism was, at least politically, a far more radical movement in the sixteenth century than the Reformation in England. Francis was no Huguenot: in fact, as his endeavours for Bodley suggest, he was already well on his way to adhering the same cause as his parents: the reform and establishment of a idiosyncratically English Church.

* * * *

The years 1510-1579, in effect the life of Nicholas Bacon, had drastically shaped the religious landscape in which his son, Francis, would pursue his own reforms: whether in his support for Henry’s split with Rome, his contribution to the formation of the Elizabethan Settlement, or his patronage of the godly on the home-front, Nicholas had played a major role in effecting the religious world of Tudor England. From his humble beginnings as the son of a sheep-reeve near Bury St Edmunds to his rise to Elizabeth’s Lord Keeper, he had constantly sought to establish a godly commonwealth that would live up to the exhortations of his teachers, the Christian humanists. His various programmes for the further reform, whether pedagogical, ecclesiastical, or legal, were all aimed at one end: the biblical imperative to realize a social order in accordance with God’s providential plan for mankind. His second wife, Anne, had shared in this vision, perhaps perceived it in her mind’s eye even more clearly than her husband; such that while Nicholas Bacon’s efforts on behalf of the Reformation had come to an end, the promise of reform would live on through his wife, and perhaps even through his children.

²⁹³ Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, II. 2, Vol. I, p. 7. Nicholas Bacon’s Latin inscription reads: ‘NVSQVAM ES, QVI VBIQVE EST: PEREGRINANTES MVLTA HOSPITIA, SED NVLLAS AMICITIAS HABENT’ (copied from McCutcheon, *Sir Nicholas Bacon’s Great House Sententiae*, p. 86).

2 'A Laughing Countenance':

Youth and the Politics of Religion

*To leaue all reuerend & religious compassion towardes euell or indignation...
& to turne religion into a comedy of satyre, to search and ripp vpp woundes
with a laughing countenance & to intermixte scripture and scurrillytye sometymes in one sen-
tence, is a thinge farre from the deuoute reverence of a Christian.*

— Francis Bacon
*An Advertisement Touching the
Controuersyes of the Church of England*

The years 1579-1601 provided Francis Bacon with the opportunity to respond, reject, and cement the values he had acquired through his education in Christian humanism and Reformed religion.¹ It was a period which would witness the gradual emergence of his own thought as it matured in relation to the religious and political world of the late-Elizabethan period, but also as it evolved in relation to the aspirations his parents had been so careful to fix in his mind. These two influences, it should now be apparent, were not entirely separable, however: for the intellectual and religious landscape of Elizabethan England had itself been shaped in no small part by Nicholas and Anne Bacon. This coalescence of the personal and the social was so successful, in fact, that it is often impossible to tease out the boundaries of influence. Nevertheless, there are enough instances of difference and disagreement that it is possible to observe at times those forks in the road where Bacon diverged.

The most pronounced of these arose from the increasingly radicalized views of his mother in the 1580s and 1590s; views he was not sure whether he shared. Bacon's reaction to the position of his father, though much less pronounced than his response to his mother, also signified an intellectual watershed in his life: his partial movement away from the ideal of Ciceronian statesmanship and towards one modelled on more recent developments in Italian political theory, though not a rejection of the humanism of Nicholas Bacon, also signalled a divergence. Combined with an increasingly urgent

¹ From Chapter 2 to 4, 'Bacon' will always refer to Francis Bacon.

need to clarify his stance on the politics of religion, Bacon made a number of choices in the final years of Elizabeth’s reign that would effectively remain unaltered to the end of his life. It is possible to say, as a result, that Francis Bacon’s religious views, though planted between 1562 and 1579, were cemented almost entirely in the ‘second reign’ of Queen Elizabeth (1579-1601).

By the mid-1580s, Bacon’s career as a lawyer was established: he was elected a Reader at Gray’s Inn by 1587, and had sat in his first Parliament in 1581. With his father deceased, it was now he who took on the full weight of the Bacon name. Like Nicholas, he quickly gained a reputation for his oratorical acumen over the course of the Parliaments of 1584, 1586, 1589, and 1593.¹ He would also have garnered a reputation—once more in the footsteps of his father—for his irenic aims, but his decision to retain anonymity in matters of religion meant he would not be identified, except by later generations, as the author of some weighty tracts on the subject. His involvement with the politics of religion would emerge in the form of an early letter of advice to the Queen, the interrogation of Catholic recusants, two anonymous tracts, and through the voices of the men who commissioned him to provide them with opinions. It was also during these years that he published his first book, a collection of ‘essayes’ modelled on the example of Montaigne, as well as some religious meditations. But neither of these were as provocative as his anonymous manuscript publications.²

Bacon, as we shall see, was determined to prove himself his father’s son, the Lord Keeper’s son. In this way, he would quietly emerge as a champion of the 1559 Settlement, while also retaining a sense that further religious reform was required. He did this not as a Puritan—an identity ascribed to him at least since Abbott (1886), and continued in the tradition of Merton and Webster—but rather as a ‘Christian pollitique Counsellor.’³ This Victorian identification was largely the result of Bacon’s association with the ‘godly’ reformers, and the ideas he shared with them. But the reformers, those men and women who would become ‘the Puritans’ after 1589, were themselves indebted to the Christian humanists; so much so, in fact, that it is arguable that Puritanism would never have existed without Christian humanism. The problem from our perspective, then, is that it can be difficult to tease apart these two intellectual strands.

¹ See Alan Stewart, ‘Introduction’, in OFB I, pp. xxiii-xxiv, who notes that there are no surviving copies of his early parliamentary speeches.

² Francis Bacon, *Essayes. Religious Meditations. Places of Perswasion and Diswasion. Seene and Allowed* (London: John Winder for Humfrey Hooper, 1597).

³ Abbott, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 105-11.

This does not mean, however, that we should confuse the two: for, as the instance of Francis Bacon shows, it was perfectly possible to hold many of the same views as the Puritans, and yet not be a Puritan. Elizabethan Christianity was a complex matter that was, for Bacon, not to be scoffed at.

Religion on the Homefront

Left with no inheritance, Bacon continued his education at Gray’s Inn, following after his brother Anthony in 1579. Gray’s was known at this time for its close proximity to licentiousness; to the thriving theatres, brothels, and dicing-houses beyond Newgate. Anne was understandably a little worried for her sons’ immortal souls: as a Calvinist, any sin could be seen as confirmation that one was not destined for heaven. But it was the revels at the Inn itself she feared most.⁴ Before he gave up the ghost, Nicholas’s concern had not been the revels or the nearby brothels, but that his sons might be exposed to ‘extreme religious opinions,’ which is somewhat ironic (and not just for the obvious reason!), given that it was his exposure to progressivist views at Gray’s that eventually secured his own success.⁵ But the Christian humanism which had permeated the Inn during the 1530s and 1540s had been replaced by ideas about the de-centralization of ecclesiastical authority; ideas Nicholas could hardly condone. So he had hired a private tutor, Richard Barker, when his sons were admitted in 1576. Barker, a young lawyer with moderate beliefs, was quickly elevated within the ranks of the Inn, however, making it unlikely that he ever instructed Bacon (or hampered his participation in the dreaded revels).⁶

In the end, Nicholas’s safe-guarding failed to prevent his sons from engaging in the latest religious controversies; for while his brother was in France, Anthony read Thomas Cartwright’s recently published *The Rest of the Second Replie agaynst Master Doctor Whitgift* (1577).⁷ Cartwright, who had since fled to the continent—teach-

⁴ Legend has it that once a year her ghost appears to ‘come down as opiate from the catalpa tree’ which Bacon planted. ‘Gliding along the grass, alone and palely loitering like Keat’s hero, she wrings her lily-white hands and magnolia-like brow,’ and moans: ‘Alas they mum! They sinfully revel!’ (see C.G.L. Du Cann, ‘Ghosts in Gray’s Inn’, *Graya: A Magazine for Members of Gray’s Inn* 1 (1927), p. 27).

⁵ For Anne’s dislike of the ‘revells’ of Gray’s Inn, see Tittler, *Nicholas Bacon*, p. 51.

⁶ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 71. Bacon was admitted in 1576, but only commenced his studies after returning from Francis in 1579.

⁷ This was in 1578. Thomas Cartwright, *The Rest of the Second Replie of Thomas Cartwright: Agaynst Master Doctor Whitgifts Second Answer, Touching the Church Discipline* (London, 1577). See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 71, 79.

ing first at Beza’s academy in Geneva, before moving to Heidelberg, and finally Antwerp—had been an adversary of Whitgift’s in the dispute over surplices at Cambridge in the early 1570s (when the Bacon boys were under the latter’s supervision). His vocal support for Presbyterianism had led him to be associated with *An Admonition to Parliament* (1572); a vitriolic attack on the 1559 Settlement by John Field and Thomas Wilcox—the latter of whom, as we have seen, was one of Anne’s personal appointees in Hertfordshire.⁸ *An Admonition* did not win much sympathy, even from the Puritans, but Whitgift nevertheless responded with *An Answer to a Certain Libel Intituled, ‘An Admonition’* that same year. Cartwright, though not the author of the *Admonition*, replied through a secret press in 1573, elaborating upon his refutations of Whitgift’s position in his *Second Replie* (1575), and then again in *The Rest of the Second Replie*, which Anthony was reading in 1578. The main issue addressed in *The Rest of the Second Replie* was, in effect, the question of to what extent scripture was binding in matters of ecclesiology; a question that Richard Hooker would later take up in his more sophisticated *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1594, 1597).⁹

While Anthony’s engagement with such writings can hardly serve to inform us of his brother’s interests while abroad, it does suggest that prohibited writings such as Cartwright’s were in circulation at Gray’s in the late 1570s and early 1580s, and that the Inn remained a centre of progressive ideas, even if the meaning of progressive, as their father suspected, had changed. It also seems that Cartwright himself was in circulation at Gray’s just after Anthony left: having returned from Antwerp to London in 1580, he briefly took to the pulpit at the Temple, during which time he visited Bacon at Gray’s Inn.¹⁰ In a letter from 23rd May 1591, Cartwright, imprisoned in the Fleet, thanked Anthony ‘for keeping the door of your acquaintance unto me still, & to Mr Francis for so ready an opening of it unto his.’¹¹ Other than his short visit to London in 1580, Cartwright had lived in Antwerp since 1576, and would remain there until 1585. This means that he must have visited Bacon in his private apartments at Gray’s

⁸ See *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 93-98 for Wilcox’s correspondence with Anne Bacon.

⁹ Patrick Collinson, ‘Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820>>

¹⁰ Anthony Bacon’s journey to France offers some particularly notable encounters with the Catholics and Huguenots that are not altogether irrelevant to Francis, but which have been largely left out of the current account for lack of space. For more on Anthony Bacon, see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*; Daphne du Maurier, *The Winding Stair* and *Golden Lads: A Study of Anthony Bacon, Francis and their Friends* (London: Virago, 1997 [1975]).

¹¹ Thomas Cartwright to Anthony Bacon (23rd May 1591), in A.F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1535-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp. 464-5 (on p. 465).

either in 1580 or at some point between 1585-1591. Given that Anthony had just read *The Rest of the Second Replie*, and that Cartwright moved to Warwick—effectively out of harm’s way—after 1585, it is more likely that the visit occurred soon after Bacon commenced his studies. Nominally, Cartwright was still a conformist at this time, so it would have been less risky, for one, that Bacon be seen with him in 1580. But under this guise (one which effectively disappeared a few years later), Cartwright was a committed Presbyterian; his views perceived as dangerous by the men, such as Cecil and Walsingham, whose favour Bacon hoped to win in the near future.¹²

Although we do not know whether he also read Cartwright upon his return to London, we do know, then, that Bacon held palaver with him, and that he later attended the Temple with his mother to listen to Walter Travers (1548-1635), an associate of Cartwright’s, preach on at least one occasion. It is a little much to consider this proof of Bacon’s ‘independent religious thinking,’ as Jardine and Stewart have, given that there is no evidence to indicate that he attended Travers’ sermons in the absence of his mother.¹³ But even if he did, Travers was effectively under the protection of Cecil at the time, and like Cartwright he was still—at least nominally—a conformist; his sermons were attended by members of both the Inns of Court and Parliament. When Travers announced a fast for the House of Commons on 21st January 1581, for instance, it can hardly be thought that Bacon (who was sitting for his first parliament), was alone in listening to him preach.¹⁴ Still, it was not long after that Travers would come to the forefront of the English Presbyterian movement: his years in Geneva had taught him to seek the establishment of a Christian polity in England based upon that of the primitive church as set out in the New Testament.¹⁵ And after he took up preaching at the Temple in 1581, it was said that ‘the Pulpit spake pure Canterbury in the Morning, and Geneva in the Afternoon, until Travers was silenced.’¹⁶

¹² Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright*, p. 238.

¹³ Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 79. Jardine and Stewart write that Bacon’s attendance at Travers’ sermons ‘occasioned comment,’ but provide no evidence of this. Martin, *Francis Bacon*, p. 190, n. 20 writes that: ‘Letters from Walsingham’s secretary [Faunt] show that Francis often went to the sermons of Walter Travers.’ Martin provides the following source: ‘20 November 1583’, in *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth*, ed. J. Stevenson et al., 23 vols (London: 1863-1950). But I have not been able to find any letters from Faunt to Walsingham from this period, or any from 1580-1583 that even make mention of Francis Bacon (a number refer to Anthony).

¹⁴ The Queen was very displeased that the House had followed Travers’ call for a fast, since that was her prerogative, and issued threats (which were largely ignored) to the Commons. See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 81-2.

¹⁵ Alan Ford, ‘Travers, Walter (1548?-1625)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27673>>.

¹⁶ Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London: J. G. W. L. and W. G., 1662), p. 264.

For his part, Anthony arrived in Geneva in early 1581, and on the example of Cartwright and Travers, stayed with Theodore Beza, drawing upon the name of Bacon to secure his accommodation. Anne was relieved when she learned that her son had made it safely to Beza’s doorstep. Writing on 18th May 1581, she asked that Beza give Anthony ‘your counsel and take him unto your protection.’ But she also made it clear that her son was there to learn, so that on his return he might succeed ‘to the benefit of *his* church and of *this* commonwealth.’ From Anne’s point of view, Anthony was in Geneva to acquire a familiarity with ‘the church of God’ (*Ecclesia Dei*) and ‘your republic’ (*reipublica tua*): that is, to observe godly rule in Calvin’s Geneva and return to promote it in England.¹⁷ Anne displayed great respect towards Beza in her letters, but she also demanded it in return as the ‘widow of the Lord Keeper,’ and made it known that she alone knew what was best for her son. Probably to appease his mother or perhaps silence his mother, Anthony persuaded Beza to dedicate a discarded work of his meditations on the Penitential Psalms to Anne, which was published as *Chrestienes meditations sur huict pseumes du prophete David* (Geneva, 1581).¹⁸ Although Beza claimed it was inspired by her faith and leaning in ‘those great and holy doctors of Greek and Latine,’ his dedication was calculated to encourage her to donate funds to the church of Geneva, which she would in 1583 and 1590.¹⁹ It is not clear either, whether Anthony was there to learn from Beza, to secure his support, to have intimate relations with him, or all three!²⁰ But Anne would not have known of third, and there appears to be evidence of his intelligencing, suggestive of the second, on behalf of his brother and Thomas Bodley.²¹

What we do know of Bacon’s religious interests in his first two years at Gray’s survive in a set of briefing notes from 1582, entitled ‘Notes on the State of Christendom’. First attributed to Bacon by Robert Stephens in 1736, they are said by Stephens

¹⁷ Anne Bacon to Théodore de Bèze (18 May 1581), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 80-2. Emphasis added.

¹⁸ The work was translated into English the following year as T. de Bèze, *Christian Meditations upon Eight Psalmes of the Prophet David*, trans. J. S. (London: printed in Bacon House by Christopher Barker, 1582). Anthony claimed that Beza dedicated his meditations to Anne for his own sake: ‘Going to Geneva and being lodged with late father Beza it pleased him to dedicate his meditations to my mother *for my sake?*’ (quoted from Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 83).

¹⁹ Théodore de Bèze to Anne Bacon (1 November 1581), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 84-6 (see also p. 25).

²⁰ Anthony was in the employ of Walsingham at the time, and Beza was accused of sodomy by his detractors; an accusation soon leveled at Anthony (see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 84, 108-9).

²¹ As Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 84 write: ‘Beza was a linchpin in a network which Anthony established linking funding activities of the Protestant community in Geneva, intelligence, and the shipping of books back to England, involving Francis’ “cousin” and correspondent, Thomas Bodley.’

to have been ‘written soon after his travels,’ which appears to be correct.²² The problem is that the manuscript, Harley MS 7021, is not in Bacon’s hand.²³ Spedding, Bacon’s Victorian editor, was understandably doubtful about its attribution, but decided to include it in his own edition, nonetheless.²⁴ This is because there is still reason to think that Bacon was involved in its creation. For one, his brother Anthony’s hand is almost certainly present in the text.²⁵ Moreover, the nature of the text and its contents is indicative of the work Bacon undertook for Bodley: ‘Notes’ offers a list of the various states of the church and its rulers across Europe, with their respective political and religious preferences, and is clearly meant to inform the English Crown of threats and opportunities; or, as Bodley requested of Bacon, to give ‘an account of the ordinances, strength, and progress of each [religion], in reputation, and party, and how both are supported, balanced and managed by the state.’

Jardine and Stewart’s proposal, that ‘it looks as if the outline for these “Notes” was devised by Francis Bacon, the detail of facts and figures supplied by his brother,’ thus makes the most sense.²⁶ With Anthony off to France and then Geneva, it is not remiss to suggest that this was a co-operative effort. Bacon could well have provided an outline, based upon his recent interactions with figures such as the Duke of Sully, Amias Paulet, and Jean de la Jessée, for Anthony to fill in and send back to London. The route by which information passed between Nicholas Faunt (1553/4–1608), one of Walsingham’s secretaries, and Anthony over these years, frequently included stops at Bacon’s apartment, which, given the manuscript’s ultimate resting place among his papers, and bound with writings bearing his hand, suggests that ‘Notes on the State of Christendom’ may have been devised by him to raise his standing with intelligencers like Walsingham, or otherwise part of the Bacon brothers’ (certainly Anthony’s) more ambitious plans to establish a Protestant network from Geneva to London.

* * * *

²² Robert Stephens, *Letters and Remains of the Lord Chancellor Bacon*, 2nd ed. (London: Oliver Payne, 1736), pp. 277-300.

²³ British Library, Harley MS 7021, ff. 25^r-42^v.

²⁴ SEH VIII, pp. 16-30.

²⁵ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 87 for the argument about Francis’s possible involvement.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

A year after ‘Notes’ was composed, John Whitgift was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. His appointment was widely perceived as bad news for those who, like Anne Bacon, continued to push for further reform. Whitgift did not disappoint. Immediately after his installation, he began to clamp down on nonconformity. Before his enthronement, he had set out a schedule of articles, with a number of other prominent bishops, ‘touching preachers and other orders for the Church,’ which now, in 1583, received the approval of the Queen.²⁷ Whitgift enacted harsher punishments for Catholics and those Protestant who failed to attend Sunday church. He also called for closer inspection of the qualifications of preachers in order that the Church might be more certain of what people were being instructed in their local parishes. He was determined, in effect, that the Church of England avoid the transition from ‘milliform’ to ‘nulliform’, as Nicholas had warned. But Whitgift was no longer the same man that Nicholas had hired to oversee the education of his sons at Cambridge: before he was placed in a position of authority, he had been a moderate who upheld the status quo, but always with a recognition that a degree of leniency was required. As Archbishop, however, he set out to punish those who did not conform. His means to achieve discipline included three articles that incensed Reformed Christians. But it was the second of these—that neither the prayer book nor the ecclesiastical order as determined in 1559 contained anything contrary to the word of God, and therefore that ministers were to employ no other order of worship—which irked them most. The Settlement Nicholas had helped to establish never claimed that the Church of England was the perfect implementation of the church as laid out in the scriptures. But Whitgift now said it did, and those who argued that the scriptures set forth a Presbyterian discipline, and that the Church of England did not reflect the primitive church, ended up as his principal targets.

On 17th November 1583, Whitgift delivered a virulent sermon at Paul’s Cross, announcing his plans to put the brakes on all ‘wayward and conceited persons.’ The outcry, and the more than four-hundred suspensions which followed soon forced him to back down from his course—though not for long: his efforts were supported by the Queen and Earl of Leicester, and neither of them intended to suffer defeat in the war initiated by the new Archbishop. Almost in response, godly Christians began to gather

²⁷ See Collinson, ‘Whitgift, John (1530/31?-1604)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29311>>.

in what they called *classes*; meetings meant as a sign of their intention to oversee the realization of the true Church as found in the scriptures, whether or not Elizabeth and Whitgift liked it.²⁸ Amongst those who the Archbishop targeted was Walter Travers. Cecil had frequented Travers’ sermons, and even used his influence to protect him. But no more. As 1584 dawned, and with more Precisians than ever now sitting in Parliament, the Queen began to receive petitions calling for the creation of presbyteries throughout England, based upon the model instituted in Geneva and Scotland, and supported from the pulpit by Travers. Even Cecil could no longer protect him. Travers was suspended from the Temple, the new printing of his *Ecclesiasticae disciplinae et Anglicanae ecclesiae ... explicatio* (1574) burned by Whitgift.²⁹ ‘The woeful year of subscription,’ one contemporary remarked, had begun.³⁰

Another means to secure conformity was devised: the so-called oath *ex officio*. Whitgift announced his intentions in the parliamentary session of 25th February 1585: the Presbyterians would be allowed no ground; instead, ministers would be obliged to take an oath designed to incriminate nonconformists. In effect, the oath was intricately in a process of interrogation that breached the common law, and therefore the rights of the clergy; not just as ministers, but as English subjects. As Robert Beale complained to Cecil, the oath ‘savoureth more of a Spanish inquisition than Christian charity.’³¹

It was now that Anne decided to champion the nonconformists in public. ‘Extraordinarily admitted’ to listen to the Archbishop’s proclamation by ‘your Lordship’s [Cecil’s] favour,’ the wife of the former Lord Keeper placed herself firmly within the Presbyterian camp. Writing to Anthony Bacon, Faunt observed of her that: ‘The Lord raise up such matrons for the comfort of his poor afflicted church, assuring you, Sir, that I have been a witness of her earnest care and travel for the restoring of some of them to their places, by resorting often unto this place [the court] to solicit those causes.’³² Bacon was also present to witness his mother’s silent act of support for the reformists, but he made no effort to protest Whitgift’s measures. Incensed, Anne wrote

²⁸ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, pp. 273-4: a ‘classis’ was an ancient Roman unit of administration.

²⁹ Walter Travers, *Ecclesiasticae disciplinae et Anglicanae ecclesiae ab illa aberrationis, plena e verbo Dei, et dilucida explicatio* (Geneva, 1574). Travers, though prohibited from preaching in 1586, would continue to try to undermine what he took to be an unscriptural form of ecclesiastical government, though without bothering to ask the Queen for permission first. There is also evidence that Anne Bacon continued to communicate with Travers into the mid-1590s (see *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 217-8).

³⁰ Quoted from Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 43, 44.

³¹ Quoted in Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, p. 44.

³² Nicholas Faunt to Anthony Bacon (12 March 1584), Lambeth Palace Library, MS 647, f. 166^r.

to Cecil the next day on behalf of ‘the preachers’: ‘fearing to stay too long,’ she had left Parliament in a hurry, but nevertheless sought to offer her ‘counsell’ to her brother-in-law, in the hope that he might solicit the Queen. The ‘byshopps,’ she protested, were ‘parties partiall in their own defence,’ who ‘seek more worldely ambition then the glory of Christ Jesus.’ As such, Anne argued the best course would be if ‘her Majestie her selff’ granted ‘ii or iii of them’ an ‘attentyve eare,’ so they might convince Elizabeth of the need for ‘that Reformation which they so long have called and cryed for.’ Cecil ignored her request.

What is clear from her letter, is that Anne still hoped to influence the Church, like Cartwright and Travers, from within. She believed the preachers were the best to promote ‘the inwarde feeling knowledg of God his holy wyll’ throughout England, and that if the Queen would but ‘lycence’ a few of them, she would see how they work towards ‘thadvancement’ of her kingdom. ‘To lett them be rejected with shame owt of the church for ever,’ was not the means to promote a godly commonwealth.³³ Walter Mildmay, Nicholas Bacon’s friend, agreed, and spoke out on 12th March, effectively in defence of Annes’ position. Critical of Whitgift’s anti-recusant measures, he insisted that we should not ‘give them cause to think that we had wholly secluded them from our society, not accounting them as natural-born Englishmen, and thereby drive a desperation into them.’³⁴ Even Mildmay, who was commissioned in the 1570s to address the lack of uniformity, felt that Whitgift had gone too far. For him, the ambiguity and the tolerance inherent in the Settlement existed for a reason—a reason that the Queen and Whitgift seemed to have forgotten. Uniformity was a problem that needed to be addressed through education, and better provision for the instruction of ministers. It would not be solved through the persecution and alienation of those who supported a common vision for the commonwealth (albeit a more reformed vision).³⁵

As it did to the other reformers, the events of 1584/5 deeply affected Anne Bacon. The Presbyterian movement, with its links to Geneva and Scotland, had attempted to gain ground as a kind of Trojan horse in the parliamentary sessions of these years and failed miserably. It was now clear that Elizabeth would never budge, and that the attempt to convince her had only enraged her more. Travers, Cartwright, and

³³ Anne Bacon to William Cecil, Lord Burghley (26 February 1585), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 87-9.

³⁴ Quoted in Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 97-8.

³⁵ See L. L. Ford, ‘Mildmay, Walter (1520/21-1589)’, in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18696>>. Mildmay founded Emmanuel College, Cambridge, the first ‘Puritan College’, on these ideas.

the Presbyterians became separatists, who would continue their efforts at the grass-roots level, in places like St Albans. For her part, Anne had irreversibly aligned herself with those who sought to undermine the Settlement and Church that she and her husband had worked so hard to establish over the years: Whitgift’s answer to the reformers had, in effect, turned her against the Church and sent her down the path towards Puritanism.

Florentine Political Thought and a Letter to the Queen

Despite his silence in Parliament, Bacon was not entirely silent during these years. He composed his first work in an attempt to remind the Queen of her real enemies, and to mitigate his old tutor’s influence over the Church. Simply titled ‘A Letter of Advice to the Queen’ (1584/5), this short tract reflects Bacon’s thoughts on Whitgift’s efforts to suppress the nonconformists between August 1583 and February 1585 but, more significantly, attests to his interest in Florentine political thought, and his determination to apply it to the problem of nonconformity. The earliest of his compositions, ‘A Letter’ exists in manuscript form, as one would expect, given that it was intended for the eyes of the Queen alone. Nevertheless, this did not prevent it from being copied, for which eight copies are extant, or from being circulated, which it did until the Restoration.³⁶ There is no indication that Elizabeth heeded its advice, but its real value lies not in her reaction, but in the evidence it furnishes of its author’s intellectual maturation; as the first of Bacon’s attempts to steer a considered course between nonconformity and the Archbishop’s bid to extinguish it.

When he was still in France, Bacon’s request to visit Italy had been denied by his father on the grounds of safety. So, since he could not travel to the Italians, he did the next best thing: he read them. Anne Bacon had studied and become competent in the Italian language, as is evident from her translations of Ochino.³⁷ It is therefore not surprising that Bacon knew enough Italian to read Machiavelli and Guicciardini—a political theorist and a historian, both from Florence—in their own language.³⁸ From

³⁶ OFB I, pp. 3, 10.

³⁷ See Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 5-6.

³⁸ Evidence of Bacon’s knowledge of the Italian language is in good supply throughout his written corpus: see, for instance, Edwin Abbott, *Francis Bacon: An Account of His Life and Works* (London: MacMillan, 1885); Napoleone Orsini, *Bacone e Machiavelli* (Genoa: Emiliano degli Orfini, 1936); and Vincent Luciani, ‘Bacon and Machiavelli’, *Italica* 24 (1947), pp. 26-40.

Machiavelli he took the idea of reason of state, from Guicciardini that of a balance of power, and from both a political realism that his father had earlier found in the works of Seneca. This does not mean that he rejected the Ciceronian values of the Christian humanists—of his own parents—but, as we shall see, ‘A Letter’ suggests that he fell into something of an intellectual infatuation with Florentine thought at this time. It has even been opined that the tract ‘reads like a discourse from Machiavelli’s pen.’³⁹ But as Bacon himself would have read in the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (c. 1517), what one learns when a child ‘will of necessity make an impression according to which he will govern his conduct in all periods of his life.’ The influence of his humanist education was somewhat stifled in these years, but it is nonetheless present, and not without some influence.

Bacon presents his letter to the Queen as advice on religious and domestic policy, following a number of ‘late wicked and barbarous attemptes’ on her life, of which the Throckmorton plot of June 1584 was the most notable.⁴⁰ But he also provides his reflections on the dangers posed by Spain and the Pope, which he perceives as at least partially to blame for the recent threats to Elizabeth’s safety.⁴¹ He first singles out the ‘Papistes’ at home—‘your strong factious Subiects’—before continuing to advise her, ‘in all reason of State,’ as to the best course.⁴² He next broaches his advice by asking whether it be better to ‘Content them’ or ‘discontent them,’ neither of which he deems a realistic option: for to discontent them, he argues, will lead the Catholics to believe that she ‘proceede[s] from feare then favour, which is the poison of all government’; while

to make them Contented absolutelie, I do not see how your Maiestie, either in Conscience will doe it, or in Policie may doe it, since you Cannot throughlie Content them, but that you must of necessitie throughlie discontent your faithful [i.e., Protestant] Subiectes ... Soe muche the more in that your Maiestie is imbarcked into the Protestant Cause, as in many respects, by your Maiestie, it Cannot with any safetie be abandoned, they havinge bene soe long the onlie Instruments both of your Councill & power.

³⁹ Luciani, ‘Bacon and Machiavelli’, p. 30. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, 3, 46 in *The Chief Works and Others*, ed. and trans. Allan Gilbert, 3 vols (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), Vol. 1, p. 525.

⁴⁰ AdQ, OFB I, p. 21.

⁴¹ The power of the Pope and of Philip II abroad suggests to Bacon ‘the need to protect the queen against Jesuits and seminary priests’ at home (AdQ, OFB I, p. 4).

⁴² Machiavelli never used the term ‘reason of state’, nor did Botero publish his *Ragione di Stato* until 1589.

Nor, Bacon continues, should she make them ‘halfe Content, halfe discontent,’ which ‘me thinkes Carries with it as deceitfull a shadow of reason, since there is noe paine soe small but if we Can, we will Cast it off.’⁴³ So what, then, is to be done?

His advice is first to draw a distinction between ‘discontentment & dispaire.’ It is one thing to discontent the Catholics, he argues, ‘but to kill the desperate ... in such a number as they are, were as hard & difficult, as impious and vngodlie.’ So, if ‘they must be discontented, yet I would not have them desperate: for among many desperate men, it is like some one will bring forth a desperate attempt.’⁴⁴ On the surface, this is a warning that persecution will not lead Catholics to accept the official state religion, but only drive them to further ‘wicked and barbarous attemptes’ on her Majesty’s life. But there is also implicit here a criticism of Whitgift’s clampdown on nonconformity; that to make the Puritans ‘dispaire’ will not serve her purpose either. For one, Bacon’s words echo closely those of Mildmay, who in March 1585 had, as we have seen, spoken out against recent efforts towards conformity, which he saw as an effective means to ‘drive a desperation into them.’ Mildmay had argued that if Whitgift were permitted to enforce all the provisions of the 1559 Settlement, he would alienate Catholic and Protestant alike, and make both an enemy of the Crown. It were far better, he insisted, to ‘reconcile them’ to the official religion through education.⁴⁵ Bacon’s distinction between ‘discontentment & dispaire’ is clearly meant to serve a similar purpose, and to remind Elizabeth of her limited options, but his solution goes beyond that proposed by Mildmay, and demonstrates his application of new modes of political thinking to the problem of English nonconformity.

To this end, Bacon counsels ‘relenting the rigour of the Oath’ that all preachers must take in recognition of the Royal Supremacy, and with it the articles of the 1559 Settlement, so as to reflect reasons of state and not of conscience:

Therefore Considering that the vrging of the Oath must needes, in some degree, begett dispaire, since therein, he must either thinke, as without the espetiall *Grace of God* he Cannot thinke, or ells become a Traytor (which before some Act done seemes somewhat hard) I humblie submitt this to your excellent Consideration: Whether with asmuch securitie of your Maiesties person and State, and more satisfaction of them, it were not better to frame the Oathe to this

⁴³ AdQ, OFB I, p. 22.

⁴⁴ AdQ, OFB I, pp. 23-4.

⁴⁵ J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1581-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), Vol. 2, p. 57. See also Julian Martin, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 31-3, and AdQ, OFB I, pp. 5, 9.

sence: that whosoever would not beare armes against all forreyne Princes, & namelie the Pope, that should any way invade your Maiesties dominions, he should be a Traytor.⁴⁶

In both the *Discorsi* and *Il Principe* (1513, published 1532), Machiavelli argued that religion should be an instrument of government, and thus subjugated to matters of statecraft.⁴⁷ Like Machiavelli, Bacon promotes reason of state above right religion, in urging the retention of the tolerance inherent in the Settlement for the ‘happines of your present Estate.’⁴⁸ But this message is not altogether incongruent with Christian humanism, either; for Nicholas Bacon was aware, as we have seen, that Christian rule required the manipulation of religion in its temporal aspect for the realization of a godly social order. God, in his view, even mandated such manipulation. Recent scholarship, moreover, has contended (quite sensibly) that Machiavelli was actually not as far from the Christian humanists in this respect: as Maurizio Viroli has written, Machiavelli ‘believed in, and suggested the possibility of a civic interpretation of Christianity similar to the one that he knew existed in his Florence.’⁴⁹ This view of the Christian religion as a ‘civic religion’ is not at odds with that of the English humanists, and would play an critical role, as we shall see, in Bacon’s own understanding of religion.

The oath to deal with the allegiance of English Catholics was not the only one that Bacon had in mind, however. The other target of ‘A Letter’ was Whitgift and the oath *ex officio*. Bacon admits that he is ‘bolde to thinke’ this, but that ‘the Bishoppes, in this daungeous time, take a very evill and vnadvised Course in driving them [the preachers] from their Cures.’ Whitgift’s introduction of fifteen articles in 1583 to deal with nonconformity, his ejection of four-hundred preachers from the Church, and (the final straw) the oath *ex officio*, could therefore be seen as the real criticism of Bacon’s advice that Elizabeth ‘frame the Oathe’ otherwise.⁵⁰ Martin, for example, has read ‘A Letter’ as proof that the ‘young Francis Bacon can be identified ... with the principal

⁴⁶ AdQ, OFB I, p. 24, 30.

⁴⁷ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 1, 11, 12, in *The Chief Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 223-229. The notion of reason of state has classical roots, and though Machiavelli never used this term (which Bacon did), it is implicit throughout his writings, particularly in *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi*.

⁴⁸ AdQ, OFB I, p. 22.

⁴⁹ Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli’s God*, trans. Anthony Shuggar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. xiii.

⁵⁰ AdQ, OFB I, p. 25. Abbott, *Francis Bacon*, p. 21 viewed Bacon’s attack on the Catholics as a ‘transparent veil’ for ‘his real sympathy’ with the Puritan movement.

men and the policies of the Puritan movement.⁵¹ But this is not so. For, although his criticism of the government's recent handling of the Puritans is present, and certainly implicit in the critique of his stance towards Catholics, Bacon is plain that he did not write this advice as a Puritan: for, he says, 'I am provoked to lay at your highnes feete my opinion touching the preciser sort: first protesting to *God Almighty* & your sacred Maiestie, that I am not given over, no nor soe much as addicted to their precisenes.'⁵² Bacon would not have been alone at this time in his effort to distance himself from the 'preciser sort'; those who had now begun to adopt the previously pejorative name of 'Precisian' or 'Puritan'. After the events of February 1585, a considerable number of Reformed Christians chose to dissociate themselves from Cartwright, Travers, and the Presbyterians. Among them was Mildmay, who, even though he recognized the bias of Whitgift, nevertheless perceived a new, even worse, danger in the Puritan movement: the shadow of separatism.⁵³

This is not to say that Bacon was not sympathetic to the Puritans. Despite the fact that he found them 'somewhat over squemish and nice, & more scrupulous then they neede,' he still believed they would, as Protestants, make better allies than the Catholics. In his speech to Parliament, Whitgift had brazenly associated the Puritans with the recusants and stated that the oath *ex officio* had first been 'misliked by Jesuits and Seminaries and from them derived to *others* that mislike government and would bring the Church to an anarchy.'⁵⁴ Bacon's response in the letter was that 'what they would doe when they gatt once a full and entire authoritie in the Church, me thinkes, are *inter remota et incerta mala* [among distant and uncertain ills].'⁵⁵ He was not so sure that the Puritans posed a danger (and, here, he had the experience of his mother, and his attendance at the sermons of Travers and Cartwright, who were strong advocates of the commonwealth), but neither did he consider himself as one of them. Martin has argued that, on this evidence, Bacon's advice was 'part of the great Puritan campaign of the 1584-5 parliament, and in it Bacon echoed the opinions of the political leaders of the "Godly", who believed ... [that] the destruction of the "papists" was

⁵¹ Martin, *Francis Bacon*, p. 33: Martin continues to argue that Bacon was closely associated with the Puritan circles around Philip Sidney and the the Earl of Leicester's court, but he provides no evidence of this in the footnotes. Nor have I (or Bacon's modern biographers) noted any trace of this association.

⁵² AdQ, OFB I, p. 25.

⁵³ See Ford, 'Mildmay, Sir Walter (1520/21-1589)', in *ODNB*: <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18696>>.

⁵⁴ Neale, *Parliaments*, Vol. 2, p. 65. Emphasis added.

⁵⁵ AdQ, OFB I, p. 27.

a principal part of their duty as statesmen’.⁵⁶ But, as we have seen, Bacon denied that he was a Puritan, nor did he call for the ‘destruction’ of Catholics. His letter counsels a tolerant stance, rejecting both stringent punishment and ‘death’ as a viable option.⁵⁷ He sees the path to a wholly Protestant England, where all ‘imbrace & live after the authorized and true Religion,’ as achieved through education to the ‘doctrine received generally in the Realme’; both of which are humanist ideas first and foremost, and not specific to the Puritans.⁵⁸ But, perhaps most tellingly of all, is the fact that Bacon was beginning to see the Puritans, as his letter implies, as a ‘faction’.

Once again relying on Machiavelli, the next passage of his letter treats the Puritans as though they are a faction, which the Queen should ‘vse & imploy’ against the Catholics, as ‘if it were but as ffrederick the second that excellent Emperour,’ who ‘did vse & imploy Sarazen souldiers against the Pope, because he was well assured & Certainly knew that they only would not spare his Sanctitie.’ Just as the oath has a double meaning, so too does Bacon’s use of the term ‘factious Subiects.’ Although he does not explicitly claim that the Puritans are ‘factious’, his recommendation that the Queen ‘vse & imploy’ them, as though they were ‘Sarazen souldiers’, to counter the threat of the Catholics, draws upon Machiavelli’s relativizing history of religious sects in *Discorsi* II, 5 (which Bacon later endorses in his essay ‘Of Vicissitude of Things’), making it evident that he perceives the Puritans as a sect that will change with the seasons, but who may be made good use of in the current situation.⁵⁹

For instance, if they are allowed ‘their Carefull Catechising & diligent Preaching,’ he contends, ‘the lessening & diminishing of the Papisticall number’ will be accomplished. Putting them to work as ‘diligent Preachers’ and ‘good Schoole-Masters’, the Queen will shortly observe how ‘one thousand of your Protestant Subiectes will make tenne thousand,’ and in time ‘breede a Chillynes vnto their fervour of superstitions.’⁶⁰ What is particularly interesting here is how Bacon employs the belief of the Christian humanists in the power of godly education to ‘Colour’ the mind, but again

⁵⁶ Martin, *Francis Bacon*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ AdQ, OFB I, p. 27.

⁵⁸ AdQ, OFB I, p. 28.

⁵⁹ AdQ, OFB I, p. 26. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 11, 5, in *The Chief Works*, Vol 1, p. 340. Abbot, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 20-21 also suggests that ‘perhaps there is some affectation of Machiavellianism in his eulogy of Frederick II.’ Ess, OFB XV, p. 173: ‘As for the Observation, that *Macciavel* hath, that the *Jealousie* of *Sects*, doth much extinguish the Memory of Things; Traducing *Gregory* the *Great*, that he did, what in him lay, to extinguish all Heathen Antiquities: I doe not finde, that those Zeales, does any great Effects, nor last long: As it appeared in the Succession of *Sabinian*, who did revive the former Antiquities.’

⁶⁰ AdQ, OFB I, pp. 25-7, 29.

subsidies it under Machiavellian reason of state: he at once endorses the Puritans’s eagerness to be licensed to instruct people in the right religion and their exploitation for purposes of political stability (though it is clear that they, too, will benefit). Years later, in his essay ‘Of Nobility’, he acknowledged that ‘there is, rarely, any Rising, but by a Commixture of good and evill Arts.’ The Swiss, ‘notwithstanding their Diversitie of Religion,’ were prosperous because they understood that ‘Utility is their Bond, and not Respects.’⁶¹ Bacon’s appreciation for the *Discorsi* and *Il Principe* did not surface first in the essays, then, but rather as part of a sophisticated response to a contemporary religious controversy in England.

If Bacon’s realism originated in Machiavelli, it was Guicciardini who taught him the utilitarian value of history.⁶² ‘A letter’ not only shows his familiarity with the *Discorsi*, but also with Francesco Guicciardini’s *Storia d’Italia* (1537-1540), with its Tacitean reading of Italian politics.⁶³ Guicciardini had characterized the history of the Italian city-states as one where self-interest and the necessity to secure power through the cultivation of balance ruled their fortunes: past and present. Bacon proves himself well-versed in both the details of this history and its underlying theory, when he suggests that Elizabeth find a ‘ffriend’ on the continent to counter the power of Spain and Pope Gregory XIII. He urges her, by ‘ioyning in good Confederacie, or at least Intelligence,’ to secure an alliance which will mitigate the threat from Philip II and tip the scales against Spain.⁶⁴ Much like his recommendation that the careful manipulation of domestic factions will lead to the establishment of a balanced state, Bacon thus offers similar advice in the matter of the Queen’s foreign policy.

His suggestions include King Henri III of France, who, although ‘he agree not with your Maiestie in matter of Conscience & Religion, yet *in hoc tertio* he doth agree, that he feares the greatnes of Spaine.’⁶⁵ It did not matter that Henri III was a Catholic: differences of religion were secondary to the safety of the realm. Bacon also proposes that the Queen ‘seeke, either the wyning of the Prince of Parma from the King of Spaine, or at the least to have it handled soe, as a Iealousie thereof might arise

⁶¹ Ess, OFB XV, pp. 41-2. Cf. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, 18, *The Chief Works*, Vol. 1, p. 66.

⁶² Vincent Luciani, ‘Bacon and Guicciardini’, *PMLA* 62 (1947), pp. 96-113 (on p. 96).

⁶³ Bacon later praised Guicciardini’s *Storia* in his essay ‘Of Empire’ (see Ess, OFB XV, pp. 60-1). Luciani, ‘Bacon and Guicciardini’, p. 99 suggests that Bacon must have read the *Storia* in the original language, given that he uses the Italian names and not their English equivalents.

⁶⁴ AdQ, OFB I, p. 34.

⁶⁵ AdQ, OFB I, pp. 30-1.

betwixt them; as Pope Clement did by the notable Marquesse of Pescara.’⁶⁶ He here derives his advice directly from a conspiracy related in Book II of the *Storia d’Italia*, involving Clement VII, Francesco Sforza, and the Marquesse of Pescara. His idea, in effect, is to weaken Spain by making an offer to the Prince of Parma which will make ‘his Master [Philip II] suspect him.’⁶⁷ It is this careful and calculated approach to the balance of European power, as well as his realistic appraisal of their motivations, that Bacon draws from Guicciardini. It has been argued, finally, that Bacon’s advice to befriend ‘fflorence, fferrara, and especially Venice’ may have been derived from Philip Sidney (1554-1586), but this could be a coincidence, particularly given Bacon’s love of Italian political history at this time.⁶⁸ What is clear is that he found in Guicciardini a historiography beneficial to his political counsel.

* * * *

‘A Letter of Advice to the Queen’ offers valuable insight into Bacon’s intellectual and political development in the mid-1580s, but also a first glimpse into his religious preferences. Bacon makes it clear that he is not a Puritan, that he is ‘not given over, no nor soe much as addicted to their precisenes,’ and sees them as ‘over squemish and nice.’ Martin’s reading of ‘A Letter’ as grounds for proof of Bacon’s Puritanism simply does not accord with what Bacon actually writes.⁶⁹ Given his Machiavellian advice for the use of the Puritans, to read Bacon as insincere here seems unfounded. It is true that he was Reformed in his religion, and did not perceive the Puritan preachers as much of a threat, but he identifies himself with the ‘Protestants’ and the ‘authorized and true Religion,’ and the slight evidence we have of his connection to men such as Travers and Cartwright simply does not justify so sceptical an interpretation. Further, the implied message, that the Puritans were a faction, or at least could shortly become one, given the current measures against them, was reason enough for him, as it was for Mildmay, to avoid any identification with them. The question of the Puritan cause was one that Bacon would return to again in 1589, but over the next few years he would focus his attention on recusants. Elizabeth might not have heeded his advice, but she did find

⁶⁶ AdQ, OFB I, p. 35.

⁶⁷ See Luciani, ‘Bacon and Guicciardini’, pp. 99-100. See also OFB I, p. 754.

⁶⁸ AdQ, OFB I, p. 34; Martin, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 32-3.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 31-2.

him suitable employment: around 1586, he was tasked with the interrogation of suspected Catholics.⁷⁰

Martin Marprelate and the Precisians

While Bacon was engaged with his career in London, his brother Anthony was beginning to encounter difficulties on the continent. By the autumn of 1584, Anthony had left Geneva to join the Huguenot party in Montauban, where he busied himself gathering intelligence to relay from the court of Henri of Navarre to Faunt and Walsingham back in England. He made a number of new friends here, including two Catholics: one who he employed as a servant, Thomas Lawson, and another, Anthony Standen, who was a double agent. Anne was not pleased, and now petitioned the Queen to force her son to return home.⁷¹ She would have been even more concerned had she known that Anthony had been arrested on charges of sodomy, and that he also, at the same time, managed to insult Madame du Plessis-Mornay, the wife of Philip du Plessis-Mornay, who Bacon had encountered in the late 1570s. 1586 was not a good year for Anthony. By its end, he was heavily in debt, had few friends, and was in ill health.⁷² Even so, the Queen refused his mother’s petition, and Anne, who feared that her son no longer ‘profess[ed] the tru religion of Christ,’ took the only other option available to her; she refused to finance his travels any more.⁷³

Bacon, meanwhile, was sitting for his second Parliament in the winter of 1586, and a year later would be elected a Reader at Gray’s Inn. His advice in 1584/5 on the threat posed by Spain eventually proved timely, even though it had gone unheeded: in August 1588, an armada sailed from A Coruña for England. The Spanish were defeated by a fortunate combination of poor weather, the Queen’s navy and, for the Puritans, God’s own preference for the ‘godly English’. Bacon, who had never been in the path of danger, was subsequently tasked to survey the state of imprisoned recusants in its wake.⁷⁴ Despite such an uninspired assignment, his career was on the rise: in 1589, he was granted the reversion of the clerkship of the Star Chamber, the court his father had once overseen. The evidence, as such, suggests that Bacon was preoccupied with

⁷⁰ Bacon’s name appears, as Stewart has noted, ‘on records relating to the interrogation and confession of the recusant John Ballard on 16 and 18 August 1586’ (see OFB I, p. xxiii).

⁷¹ Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 12.

⁷² Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 108-109, 115.

⁷³ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 February 1592), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 99.

⁷⁴ See Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 122-3.

his career and Catholic recusants between 1586-1588, and not with the Presbyterians during these years. By early 1589, however, he was sufficiently distressed by the current state of religious controversy to re-enter the debate.

It was, in all probability, Richard Bancroft (1544-1610), Whitgift’s chief ally, who raised Bacon’s ire in 1589.⁷⁵ In February of that year, Bishop Bancroft delivered a controversial sermon at Paul’s Cross, intended to contribute to the Archbishop’s war on nonconformity. The backdrop to Bancroft’s sermon was what has since come to be known as the Martin Marprelate controversy; a series of deeply satirical attacks on the Bishops by a select group of nonconformists. After the parliament of February 1585, the Presbyterians had been sufficiently suppressed to remain quiet. But by 1588, their inability to petition either Parliament or the Queen directly had led them to take to their cause underground, and to engage in a hostile war of words from the shadows. The history of the Marprelate controversy has been well documented, so little needs to be said here.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, it is helpful to provide a few details.

Unlike earlier controversies, the Marprelate dispute differed chiefly by virtue of the defamatory style of its contributors. ‘Martin Marprelate’ did not exist: he was, rather, an authorial persona who belonged to a number of Presbyterians, themselves fearful of persecution. The men behind Marprelate fabricated, in effect, a vituperative character with a pseudonym which stood for anything and everything critical of the bishops; ‘a satirist,’ who was ‘dexterous in word-fence, well furnished with wit, and with a notable gift of humorous irony.’⁷⁷ The pamphlets produced under his name were enabled by the increased availability of printing technology, which provided the Presbyterians’ attacks a much larger audience than any other English controversy to date.⁷⁸ In this way, numerous anonymous voices soon joined with Marprelate’s and, in criticism of ecclesiastical hierarchy, a slew of ridiculing Martinist tracts appeared to the disgrace of the bishops in 1588/9. The bishops, for their part, soon retaliated with their own brand of scurrility, such that by February, when Bancroft gave his sermon at Paul’s Cross, the controversy had reached a feverish pitch.

⁷⁵ See Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, pp. 80-1.

⁷⁶ For a list of works detailing the Marprelate controversy, see OFB I, p. 127, n. 1.

⁷⁷ William Pierce, *An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), p. 148. As Alan Stewart has noted, the doctrinal content of the Marprelate controversy differs little, if at all, from the Bridges-Fenner debates (1585-1588) (see OFB I, p. 130).

⁷⁸ For an account of the possible authors of the Martinist tracts, see Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, pp. 60-82.

Anne Bacon was in attendance to listen to Bancroft’s words. As Collinson has noted, Bancroft had previously been ‘the backroom boy,’ the man behind the scenes, who masterminded the anti-Martinist attacks on behalf of Whitgift and the bishops.⁷⁹ But he now stepped out into a much more public role, his words meant to give the impression that he was the inquisitor who would root out the Presbyterians one by one if need be. Bancroft spoke of the rise of ‘factions in these daies’ and, in particular, that of the ‘precisians,’ who ‘cast abroad their infamous libels, so leudly fraught with lies, and sleights, to corrupt therby the eares of their hearers.’⁸⁰ The plan of these ‘schismatikes’, he proclaimed, was to ‘begin at the house of God’ and then to ‘proceede farther to the overthrowe of all government.’⁸¹ Cartwright was their ‘chiefe ringleader’, a reincarnation of the heretic Arius, who ‘when through ambition [he] could not get the places [he] looked for in the church, [he] sought to attaine them in [his] particular synagog.’⁸² Bancroft in this way portrayed the Presbyterians as religious separatists, as political separatists—‘our *English Factioners*’—who were not merely opposed to ecclesiastical government, but to the Queen and her Parliament. Like the ‘Geneuans’, Cartwright, Travers, and the Presbyterians desired to transform the ‘monarchy into a popular state’ with a godly council at its heart.⁸³

It must have been hard for Anne Bacon to listen to these words, and no more so than when Bancroft invoked her translation of Jewel’s *Apologie* against the preachers she supported.⁸⁴ For years, she had defended the established Church, but now, in the eyes of the bishops, she was a ‘Puritan’, the contemporary counterpart of the ‘Donatist’ of Late Antiquity, and

both of them were in the same error, that these dreamers are in: seeking for a Church wherein there should want nothing that might be desired. Therefore they diuided themselues from the vniuersall society of Christians, lest they should be defiled with other mens impurities. But what came of it? *Dominus eos cum tam arroganti coepto dissipauit*. The Lord himselfe scattered them, with that their proud attempt.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

⁸⁰ Richard Bancroft, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse the 9. of Februarie* (London: E. Bollifant, 1588), pp. iii, 14.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁸² Ibid., p. 17. See also Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, p. 77.

⁸³ Richard Bancroft, *A Suruay of the Pretended Holy Discipline* (London: John Wolfe, Thomas Scarlet, and Richard Field, 1593), pp. 21, 56. *A Suruay* was the expanded version of Bancroft’s *Sermon*.

⁸⁴ See Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, pp. 244-5.

⁸⁵ Bancroft, *A Suruay*, p. 443. It was, in effect, during the Marprelate crisis that the name ‘Puritan’ came into common usage (see Collinson, *Richard Bancroft*, p. 81).

Had she separated herself ‘from the vniversall society of Christians’? Bancroft’s sermon was piercing. Anne must have recognized that there was some truth in it: she was a ‘dreamer’, whose dreams had effectively led her to part company with the established Church; not because her vision had failed her, but because the bishops had left the path that led to the restoration of the true apostolic Church.⁸⁶ It was Whitgift, and his lapdog, Bancroft, who had separated from the true society of Christians.

The scurrilous style of the Martinist tracts was matched, then, only by the vitriolic language of Bancroft and the bishops. Although Anne chose not to respond to his sermon in its immediate aftermath, Bancroft managed to incite another Bacon to pen a response. Bacon’s next foray into the ring of religious controversy thus came in 1589, when, in response to Bancroft and the Martin Marprelate dispute, he wrote and distributed *An Advertisement Touching the Controuersyes of the Church of England*. This time around he chose to enter anonymously; a sign of his acute awareness of the personal and professional stakes involved. Nevertheless, despite its anonymity, and despite its dissemination in manuscript form, *An Advertisement* enjoyed ‘considerable circulation’ amongst a target audience.⁸⁷ Bacon’s objective was not to appeal to the popular imagination, but rather to appeal to a select group of Protestants who might put a stop to the affair. Where the press was key to the success of the Martinist tracts, for *An Advertisement* Bacon recognized that the manuscript would serve his purposes far better.⁸⁸ His aim was not to ‘enter into’ the ‘Controuersyes’ themselves, but to contend that ‘the disease requireth rather rest then any other Cure.’⁸⁹

Although the identity of its author would remain unconfirmed until Spedding printed *An Advertisement* in 1861, a persona—that of the ‘aduertiser’—was attributed to the writer behind the tract as early as 1591.⁹⁰ As ‘aduertiser’ (i.e., ‘admonisher’), the author of *An Advertisement* appears to have been read as both rebuking the established Church and reproaching the incapacity of nonconformists to enter into civilized

⁸⁶ See Magnusson, ‘Imagining a National Church’, p. 245.

⁸⁷ A number of witnesses survive to confirm this, including Walter Mildmay, Henry Barrow, Thomas Nashe, and none other than Richard Bancroft himself (see OFB I, p. 136).

⁸⁸ The last two decades of Elizabeth’s reign was a period when non-print material, such as manuscripts, were still important to the intellectual culture of the time.

⁸⁹ ACE, OFB I, p. 161.

⁹⁰ OFB I, p. 138.

debate.⁹¹ This has led a number of commentators, both contemporary and modern, to interpret *An Advertisement* quite differently. For instance, the separatist Henry Barrow (c. 1550-1593), a colleague of Bacon’s both at Cambridge and Gray’s, wrote that: ‘[a] learned man and friend of the *Bishops* noteth as abuses, *Their urging of Subscription, Their oath ex officio, Their excommunication for trifles, and easie silencing of ministers.*’⁹² Barrow, and even Bancroft (who possessed his own manuscript copy), both saw the ‘aduertiser’, then, as critical of the Bishops, but a friend nonetheless. In recent times, Matthews has likewise argued that ‘the Puritans were subject to a much weightier censure in Bacon’s *Advertisement.*’⁹³ While at the other end of the spectrum, Stewart has suggested that Bacon’s apparent evenhandedness throughout the treatise ‘in fact involves a brave assault on what was becoming the dominant line’; that he took the side of the nonconformists in ‘condemning the anti-Martinist tracts.’⁹⁴ In the middle, finally, Vickers has concluded that, either way, ‘Bacon’s irenic stance was an admirably responsible one’; a view that is ultimately shared by Martin.⁹⁵

The basic fact of the matter is actually rather simple, and that is that Bacon is critical of both sides for different reasons. As we shall see, the ‘aduertiser’ is a friend to neither the bishops nor the Presbyterians, but he perceives the good (and the bad) in both, and on this knowledge seeks a path to reconciliation. In this sense, the tract carries on from his 1584/5 ‘Letter of Advice’, in that it seeks not to affirm or deny, but to distinguish the grounds for proper conduct in matters of religion, yet also because its conclusions are underpinned by a mixture of Christian humanist and Florentine political thought that share in, and yet at the same time renew, the moderate position of the Settlement. *An Advertisement* ultimately moves beyond his earliest work in one crucial respect, however; and that is how it reveals the fundamental sincerity of Bacon’s approach to matters of faith. This is not to say that his concern is theological ‘truth’, or rather which side is ‘right’, because it is not: his interests lie rather with those reasons which dictate how and why religion should be treated one way and not another,

⁹¹ For the meaning of ‘aduertiser’, see Vickers 1996, p. 501. The separatist John Barrow, for instance, used *An Advertisement* in his own work, *A Petition Directed to Her Most Excellent Maiestie* (Middleburg, 1591), in order to criticize the abuses of the bishops. On the other hand, John Whitgift’s chaplain at the time, Richard Bancroft, took the ‘aduertiser’ to be reproaching the nonconformists for not having ‘anie patience [to] endure, to heare either contradiction or argument to the contrarie.’ For both, see OFB I, pp. 137-138.

⁹² OFB I, p. 137. If he knew the identity of *An Advertisement’s* author, Barrow did an excellent job of keeping it to himself.

⁹³ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 22.

⁹⁴ OFB I, p. 132.

⁹⁵ Vickers, p. 500; Martin, *Francis Bacon*, p. 38.

and therefore where the bishops and the Puritans had gone astray, each in their own way.

* * * *

Bacon’s initial task in *An Advertisement* is to make it clear that he will not enter into the ‘Controuersyes themselves.’ The Marprelate disputes do not, in any case, ‘diuide the vnity of the spirit,’ he contends, but rather ‘do vnswade [‘the Church of England’] of her bandes (the bandes of peace).’⁹⁶ His treatise, Bacon notes from the outset, does not then concern the theological content of the Marprelate tracts (of which there is not much), but rather their ‘ciuill’ implications.⁹⁷ He identifies both sides involved within the first paragraph, as those who ‘haue sought the trueth in the Conventicles and Con-cilyables of heretiques and sectaryes’ (the Presbyterians) and those who have sought it ‘in the externe face and representacion of the Church’ (the bishops). ‘Both sortes,’ he says, have ‘ben seduced’: the Presbyterians because they have attempted to leave the Church, to establish their own ‘Conventicles’ (*classes*); the bishops because they have forgotten that the truth does not reside in the ‘externe face’ of the Church—its ceremonies and governance—but rather in ‘the unity of the spirit.’ Both sides, as such, are culpable for the current controversy. But worse still is the manner in which they have gone about their disagreements; a manner highly detrimental to religion.

The ‘extremityes vsed on both partes,’ Bacon says, have done serious damage to ‘the maiestie of relligion,’ and made ‘noe small’ contribution towards the progress of ‘Atheisme.’⁹⁸ Unlike earlier controversies, the ‘vnmodest and deformed manner of writing lately entertayned whereby matters of religion are handled in the stile of the stage,’ has turned the Christian religion into a ‘iest’. The Marprelate controversy was, as Bacon rightly noted, the first to involve ‘prophane scoffing.’ Although scoffing was to become a mainstay of religious criticism from the 1650s onwards, associated often

⁹⁶ ACE, OFB I, p. 160.

⁹⁷ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 20, has argued that *An Advertisement* is not just ‘a simple call for toleration and compromise,’ but also possesses more than a ‘little theological substance.’ Both of these points seem equally untrue, however: the treatise is quite sophisticated, as will be shown below; and there is little ‘theology’ (unless adiaphorism and allusions to the apostolic church count as ‘theology’), and Bacon makes it clear that he is not willing to enter into the subject matter of the controversy, which he does not.

⁹⁸ ACE, OFB I, p. 164: ‘Two principall causes haue I euer knowne of Atheisme: Curious contrauersyes and prophane scoffing. Nowe that these two are ioyned in one, noe doubt that sect will make noe small progression.’ Bacon’s suggestion that ‘prophane scoffing’ is one of the ‘principall causes’ of atheism anticipated the rise of the scoffing atheist in the Interregnum.

with the figure of the atheist, it was an altogether unprecedented ‘stile’ in the 1580s.⁹⁹ To Bacon, however, such was ‘*Temporis voces*, the language of the tyme’; a manner of speech which lacked the ‘character of zeale or love,’ and replaced it with ‘the Contempt & deformity of things ridiculous.’ To leave

all reuerend & religious compassion towardes euell or indignation towardes faultes & to turne religion into a comedy or Satyre, to search and ripp vpp woundes with a laughing countenance & to intermixte scripture and scurrillytye sometymes in one sentence, is a thinge farre from the devout reuerence of a Christian and scant beseeming the honest regard of a sober man. *Non est maior confusio quam serij et ioci*: there is noe greater confusion then the Coufounding of iest and earnest.¹⁰⁰

The tracts which comprised the Marprelate literature were full of ridicule, not just for the bishops—‘a brood of petty popes’—but for the established Church.¹⁰¹ The tracts, Bacon argues, should have been left alone, but the bishops, who should have ‘remember[ed] the prouerbe that the second blow maketh the fray,’ decided to reciprocate in ‘imitation of euell.’¹⁰²

What is needed, he writes, is rather that ‘admonition of Saint James, Let euery man be swift to heare, slowe to speake, slow to wrath.’¹⁰³ It is here that Bacon draws a distinction that will prove fundamental to his view of religion. Both sides need to recognize that their hostile words are being exchanged over ‘ceremonyes & thinges indifferent about the externe policie and gouernment of the Church.’¹⁰⁴ It is not a matter of ‘holy things’ over which they contend, yet ‘they esteme the compounding of contrauersyes to sauour of mans wisdom and humane pollicie and thinke themselues ledd by the wisdome which is from aboue.’¹⁰⁵ It is evident that his point of reference is the distinction between *adiaphora* (‘thinges indifferent’) and those necessary to salvation (‘holy things’). As we have seen, the question of *adiaphora* was common to the tradition of the humanists who produced the 1559 Settlement: in effect, it allowed them to insert a ‘buffer zone’, if you will, into the ecclesiastical law for the express purpose of

⁹⁹ See John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), pp. 29, 31-2.

¹⁰⁰ ACE, OFB I, p. 164.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Black (ed.), *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 54.

¹⁰² ACE, OFB I, p. 165.

¹⁰³ ACE, OFB I, p. 160. James 1: 19.

¹⁰⁴ ACE, OFB I, p. 161.

¹⁰⁵ ACE, OFB I, p. 175.

religious toleration and, by extension, political stability. For Bacon, this controversy is not about ‘holy things’, but about those he considered ‘indifferent’: about ceremonies, church government, and human policy.

Yet Bacon takes this distinction beyond its traditional boundaries, and makes it the basis for a general philosophical position which he then retains throughout the entirety of his written corpus. He states that ‘*Habet religio quae sunt æternitatis, Habet quae sunt temporis*: Religion hath partes which belong to eternity and partes which pertain to time.’ It is a distinction, put simply, between the ‘mysteries of faith,’ beyond time and the reach of ‘humane wisdom’; and ‘humane pollicye,’ temporal, political and, in its subjugation to natural reason, entirely fair game. For him, it demarcates the boundaries that separate those things which are beyond the capacity of the rational mind to comprehend—mysteries from creation to redemption, as revealed in the Bible—and those ‘accidentēs’ of time that transpire in the *sæculum*, and which are subject to manipulation, or reasons of state.

Bacon’s adoption of Machiavelli’s ‘utilitarian’ idea of religion is situated, then, within those ‘partes which pertain to time’; the subject proper to the ‘politique man.’ Whereas, those ‘partes which belong to eternity’, to ‘faith’, are proper to the ‘feeling Christian.’¹⁰⁶ But these are not two different people, rather two sides of the same person. For Bacon, the division of the Christian religion into the eternal and the temporal is justified by the humanist conviction that God has decreed that man establish a godly society; that the *vita activa* is the ‘truly Christian life’ (*vere Christiana vita*) and that it involves both faith and works.¹⁰⁷ Like Machiavelli, Bacon views the Christian as a citizen who serves the common good in order ‘to implement the divine plan on earth.’¹⁰⁸ The means of the ‘politique man’ are justified by holy ends; an ethic encapsulated in the division of religion into two ‘partes.’ Unlike his father, who had drawn the distinction in 1563, that ‘Matters of Religion’ were ‘divided into two parts’—‘one touching Religion for the setting forth of Gods Honour and Glory, and the other concerning Policy, for the Common-Wealth’—Bacon’s distinction relies on humanist, but also Florentine ideas about the extent to which civic means are appropriate.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ ACE, OFB I, pp. 162-3. Latin italicized.

¹⁰⁷ Luther, *De libertate Christiana*, sig. E ii^r. Bacon writes: ‘And saint Iames saith this is true religion to visit the fatherless & the widow ...’ (ACE, OFB I, p. 188; James 1: 27).

¹⁰⁸ Viroli, *Machiavelli’s God*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ See pp. 75-6 above.

Although this quote remains untraced, I suspect that Bacon may have derived it from a Neoplatonic source, and most likely from the German philosopher, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464).¹¹⁰ Cusa was not readily available to the English in the sixteenth century, but he was read, and cited in sources Bacon knew.¹¹¹ Immediately before his division of religion into two parts, Bacon writes ‘if we wold but comprehend that saying, *Differentia rituum commendat vnitatem doctrinæ*, the diuersity of Ceremonyes doth set forth the vnity of doctrine,’ then there might be peace.¹¹² It is a ‘saying’ that is remarkably close to a passage in Cusa’s *De pace fidei* (1453):

all peoples shall know in what manner there exists but one religion [*religio una*] amongst the variety of rites [*rituum varietate*]. But if, perchance, this diversity of rites [*differentia rituum*] cannot be abandoned nor is expendable, since the differences might themselves compel us to devotion, incite each region to cultivate its own ceremonies with even greater vigilance as those most pleasing to you, Lord: [then] even as you are one to us, let there be one religion, one worship.¹¹³

For the Cinquecento, what Cusa was suggesting was quite radical; that behind the accidents which characterize each people’s observable manner of worshipping, there was actually one ‘religion’ for one God. Cusa implored his contemporaries, for the sake of peace, to recognize that there existed one religion (*religio una*), and that the variety of rites which this ideal religion generated were to be expected, and therefore should be tolerated.¹¹⁴ The idea of adiaphora was, at its roots, Stoic, and the Platonism of Cusa drew heavily, as it did for most Renaissance Neoplatonists, on the ancient Stoa. That Bacon should come to a similar conclusion in urging the bishops and Presbyterians to ‘remember that the ancient & true bandes of vnity are one faith, one bap-tisme and not one Ceremony, one policy,’ is thus not all that surprising.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Despite the best efforts of Vickers (p. 502), Stewart (OFB I, p. 776), and myself, this quotation still remains untraced. Bacon mentions ‘the sayinge of a Platonist’ (ACE, OFB I, p. 179; see also p. 787).

¹¹¹ Cusa is quoted in John Jewel’s *A Defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande* (London: Henry Wykes, 1567), pp. 330, 331, 439, a work which Bacon in turn quotes throughout *An Advertisement* (OFB I, p. 134).

¹¹² ACE, OFB I, p. 162.

¹¹³ Nicolas of Cusa, *De pace fidei. Cum epistula ad Ioannem de Segobia*, ed. by Raymond Klibansky and Hildebrand Bascour (London: Warburg Institute, 1956), f. 114^v (on p. 7).

¹¹⁴ In the years proceeding the publication of his *De pace fidei* (1453), Cusa had supported Pope Eugenius’s (1383–1447) ongoing attempts to secure a council of union between the long-riven churches of the old eastern and western empires. While Eugenius’s efforts at reconciliation ultimately failed, Cusa’s involvement and support for the endeavour was itself not forgotten. In *De pace fidei*, Nicholas imagined what Eugenius himself could not make possible; namely, a council (albeit in Heaven) of all peoples and all faiths, dedicated to their own reconciliation as ‘one religion’ (*una religio*).

¹¹⁵ ACE, OFB I, p. 161. Ephesians 4: 3.

The problem, in light of Bacon’s division, is that the bishops have failed miserably in their handling of the temporal; while the Presbyterians have elevated these ‘accidents’ to the level of ‘holy things.’ It is a serious problem, not because it threatens the ‘vnity of spirit,’ but because, like Machiavelli, Bacon holds religion to be the ‘chiefe Band of humane Society.’¹¹⁶ For Machiavelli, ‘religious disunity’ was ‘symptomatic of political disunity and popular distress.’¹¹⁷ Bacon agreed. But, although he thought the Marprelate tracts ‘doth deface the gouernment of the church,’ he played down Bancroft’s provocative remark that such attacks on the Church would ‘proceede farther to the overthrowe of all government.’¹¹⁸ In fact, he viewed such claims as ‘in-discreet and dangerous amplifications as if the ciuill gouernment it self of this estate had neere lost the force of her synews.’ He admitted that Bancroft’s ‘meaninng is to enforce this vnreuerend & violent impugning of the gouernment of Bishops to be a suspected forerunner of a more generall contempt,’ and granted ‘there is sympathie betwene the states,’ but disagreed that the tracts posed a genuine threat to the state. It ‘were to be wished that these writinges had bin abortiue & neuer seene the sonne,’ but ‘their laughinge’ was but ‘a short madness’ which posed no serious threat.

* * * *

This does not mean that Bacon thought there was no danger of ‘faction and disorder,’ for he finds in the course of his second consideration in *An Advertisement* a number of ‘accidentes & circumstances’ which do threaten to dissolve the ‘bandes of peace.’ The latter aim of his treatise is to discover those accidents ‘wherein either parte deserueth blame & imputacion.’¹¹⁹ Where the bishops are concerned, Bacon says that ‘it cannot be denied but that the imperfections in the conversacion & gouernment of those which haue the chiefe place in the church haue euer bin principall causes and motiues of scismes & divisions.’ So long as the bishops ‘deale with the seculer states in all liberty & resolution according to the Maiesty of their calling,’ than ‘noe man maketh question of it or seeketh to departe from it.’ But ‘when these vertues in the fathers & leaders of the church haue lost their light and that they wax worldly louers of themselues

¹¹⁶ Ess, OFB XV, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Alison Brown, ‘Philosophy and religion in Machiavelli’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 157-72 (on p. 167).

¹¹⁸ Bancroft, *A Sermon*, p. 89. One of the manuscript witnesses (B³) notes in the margins: ‘I thinke he meaneth doctor Bancrafte in his sermon preached at the C[r]osse’ (see OFB I, pp. 146-7, 787).

¹¹⁹ ACE, OFB I, pp. 167-8.

& pleasers of men then men begin to grope for the church as in the darke.’ When the bishops ‘enter into assertions & posicions’ which detract from ‘liberty’ of ‘the seculer states,’ when they claim ‘an inward authority which they seeke ouer mens mindes in drawing them to depend vpon their opinions & to seeke knowledge at their lippes,’ they no longer ‘speake *tanquam auctoritatem habentes*.’¹²⁰ In other words, Bacon argues that the bishops have tried to deal with the accidents of religion in such a way as to limit the ‘liberty’ of ‘mens minds,’ but have in this way ‘lost their reputacion in the consciences of men.’

Resorting once more to Machiavelli, he adds that ‘it is truly noted by one that writeth as a naturall man [i.e., Machiavelli, who writes ‘what men doe and not what they ought to do’], that the hipocrisie of fryars did for a great tyme mainetayne & beare out the irreligion of Bushops and prelates. For this is the double pollicy of the spirituall enemy either by counterfait holynes of life to establish and authorize errors or by the corruption of manners to discreditt and draw in question truethe & lawfull thinges.’¹²¹ Applying Machiavelli’s *reductio ad principia*, Bacon urges the bishops to ‘returne whence they are fallen & confirme the thinges that remain,’ combining it with the Protestant emphasis on a return, *ad fontes*, to the primitive church.¹²² But he does not suggest that the bishops return to the theological and doctrinal positions of the ‘the apostles and fathers’ (when ‘it was an ingenious & subtile matter to be a Christian’), but instead to their manner of conduct, when, rather than ‘enter into assertions & posicions,’ the bishops ‘deliuer[ed] counselles & advice.’ For, he contends, ‘if that which you sett downe as an assertion you wold deliuer by way of aduice, there were reuerence due to your counsayle wheras faith is not due to your affirmacion.’ It is a terrible error of judgement, he subsequently concludes, to ‘say *Non ego sed dominus*, not I but the lord, yes and bind it with heauy denuntiations of his iudgmentes to terrifie the simple which haue not sufficiently understood.’¹²³ Bacon draws up short of the idea of ‘priestcraft’ here, but not by much: his censure is not intended to insinuate that the bishops are impostors, but that those who claim ‘seculer’ authority in the

¹²⁰ ACE, OFB I, pp. 162, 169-70, 173. Latin italicized. Anticipating Hobbes, Bacon writes that ‘the vniuersities are the seate & continent of this desease whence it hath bin & is deriued into the rest of the realme’ (ACE, OFB I, pp. 173-4).

¹²¹ AL, OFB IV, p. 144. ACE, OFB I, p. 170. Bacon is making reference to Machiavelli’s *Discorsi*, 3, 1 in *The Chief Works*, Vol. 1, p. 422. Cf. ACE, OFB IV, p. 15. See also Luciani, ‘Bacon and Machiavelli’, p. 31.

¹²² ACE, OFB I, p. 171. Rev. 2: 5.

¹²³ ACE, OFB I, pp. 161, 162-3. Bacon is quoting a passage from Jewel’s *A Defence of the Aplogie*, f. 2FI^v, which is in turn quoted from Erasmus (see OFB I, p. 776).

name of God (*non ego sed dominus*) should remember that ‘Credulity is the adamant of lyes.’¹²⁴ For Bacon, as for the anti-clerical thinkers of the mid-seventeenth century, bishops were to attend to the ‘pretious care of soules,’ to their flocks, not to seek after worldly advancement.¹²⁵

The ‘aduertiser’ is no enemy of the bishops, however. He in fact goes to some lengths to clarify that, no matter their faults, nothing ‘hath supplanted in me the reuerence I owe to their callinge, neither hath any detraction or calumny embased my opinion of their persons.’ His example of proper priestly conduct is, unsurprisingly, ‘Master Jewell’, who made a point not to imitate the ‘euell’ manner by which ‘the pretended catholiques’ assailed the Church, but confronted them with ‘the fathers.’¹²⁶ Bacon places himself, as such, in the tradition of his parents through his allusion to his mother’s translation of Jewel’s *Apologia*. The *Apologia* had served to reveal how ‘the principles and foundacions of oure religion’ were in full accord with those of the ‘primatiue Church.’¹²⁷ The idea that religion must be returned to its roots (*prisca theologia*) was a commonplace theme of Protestant polemic. Bacon makes no question of theology, however: he simply indicates that ‘our church is not now to plant it is settled & established.’¹²⁸ Theologically, he sees the ‘receaved religion’ as already a reflection of the primitive church. But there is also implicit in Bacon’s use of *reductio ad principia* another sense, derived wholly from Machiavelli, which is that religion is in need of renewal in order that it might serve the state. In Book III, 1 of the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli had argued that ‘in religious bodies ... renewals are also necessary’ to maintain the state.¹²⁹ To make a religion into the social bond necessary for a great nation, religion must be returned to its roots; and this is what Bacon means when he argues that the church should deliuer ‘counselles & advice,’ and remain ‘scituate as it were vpon a hill.’¹³⁰

¹²⁴ ACE, OFB I, p. 171.

¹²⁵ On anti-clericalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹²⁶ ACE, OFB I, pp. 165, 170-1. He continues to write that ‘I know some of them whose names are most perced with theis accusacions to be men of great vertues although the indisposicion of the tymes & want of correspondence many wayes is enough to frustrate the best endeouours in the edifying of the Church.’

¹²⁷ Jewel, *An Apologie*.

¹²⁸ ACE, OFB I, p. 177.

¹²⁹ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 3, 1, in *The Chief Works*, Vol. 1, p. 422.

¹³⁰ ACE, OFB I, p. 169.

Where the Presbyterians are concerned, Bacon likewise observes the instances in which he feels either blame or praise is deserved. In places, he identifies himself with those ‘which call for reformation.’ He disparages the fact ‘that some of those preachers which call for reformation (whom I am farre from wronging soe farre as to ioyne them with these scoffers) doe not publish somme declaration whereby they may satisfy the world that they dislike their [i.e. the ‘scoffers’] Cause.’¹³¹ It would appear, then, that he does not equate the scoffers with the Presbyterians, even if much of his criticism is directed at ‘the rascallitie of the Puritans,’ as one commentator noted.¹³² The only reasonable conclusion is that Bacon wished to distance those preachers who his mother supported (for instance, Cartwright and Travers) from the ‘scoffers’—and, indeed, there is no indication that either were actually involved in the publication of the Marprelate tracts.¹³³

Bacon next attempts to curtail the accusations of those—namely, Bancroft—who ‘haue sorted & coupled [the reformers] with the familie of loue whose heresy they haue labored to descry & confute.’ The Family of Love was an anabaptist sect, of which Jean de la Jessée (Bacon’s old acquaintance) was reputedly a member, who had called for the repudiation of private property and all bonds to one’s monarch. Bacon denies that the reformers have ‘denyed tribute to Cesar & withdr[awn] from the ciuill magistrate their obedience which they haue euer performed & taught’; on which point he is right (the Puritans of the 1580s and 90s were almost all devoted commonwealth men). But he also argues that there are limits to the rule of the magistrate:

It is very hard to affirme that the discipline which they say wee want is one of the essentiall partes of the worship of god, & not affirme withall that the people themselues vpon perill of salvation without staying for the magistrate are to gather themselues into it. I demaund if a Ciuill state shold receiue the preaching of the word & baptisme & interdict & exclude the sacrement of the supper were not men bound vpon danger of their soules to draw themselues to Congregacions wherein they might celebrate that mistery & not to content themselues with that parte of godes worship which the magistrate had authorized.¹³⁴

His argument here is meant to point out the logical error of the bishops, who refuse to alter the Church because they say what ‘wee want is one of the essentiall partes of the

¹³¹ ACE, OFB I, p. 166.

¹³² OFB I, p. 785: in the margins of B³.

¹³³ See Black, *The Marprelate Tracts*, p. xix.

¹³⁴ ACE, OFB I, p. 182-4. Bancroft, *A Sermon*, p. 3.

worship of god.’ But, Bacon notes, if it is essential, then it is also necessary to salvation, which means that the bishops deny the reformers ‘vpon danger of their soules.’ His point is thus not to argue that what the Puritans demand is ‘essentiall,’ but rather the opposite; that the bishops will claim that anything the reformers desire to alter is fundamental, and on the grounds of such logic, refuse them. If the desired alterations really were essential, as the bishops say they are, then the reformers’s transgression of the law would be justified. Bacon clearly aligns himself here with the reformers (what ‘wee want’), in his reproach of the bishops, who ‘haye reformed litle.’ Still, it is because he views the bishops’ refusal to alter even things indifferent as a danger to civic peace; for ‘a contentious retayneinge of custom is a turbulent thing aswell as innovation.’ ‘God forbid,’ he concludes, ‘that lawfull kingdomes should be tied to innovate and make alteration,’ but just as the reformers do not seek to alter things essential to worship, neither do they seek to establish ‘a republique,’ as Bancroft has claimed.¹³⁵

At first it appears that Bacon is on the side of the reformers, but his criticisms are equally as biting as those he levels at the bishops.¹³⁶ He lambastes those who think ‘it the true touchstone to trie what is good & holy by measuring what is more or lesse opposite to the institucions of Rome, be it ceremony, be it pollicy, or gouernment.’ For would this not lead ‘some good [to be] purged with the bad,’ he asks? This is not the view of a Puritan, but that of a conformist who sees the Church as already ‘setled & established.’ He insists, moreover, that ‘theise contrauersyes’ have been occasioned by ‘the partiall affectacion & imitacion of forreyne Churches,’ by those who have ‘sought to intrude the same vpon *our church*.’ It cannot be doubted but that this is a criticism of the Presbyterians, who, like Anne Bacon, were striving to impose a Genevan discipline on the Church of England.¹³⁷ With such a discipline, he continues, would come ‘the parity and equality of ministers,’ which will lead to a ‘wonderfull great confusion.’ Bacon then rejects a Presbyterian government altogether, where rule is according to a council: ‘in all causes but espetially in religion when voice shalbe nombred & not weighed,’ there is a danger of misrule; ‘for counselles abate not ill thinges but rather increase them.’ Finally, he attacks those who ‘are avanced to defyne of an onely & perpetuall forme of pollicy in the Church (which without consideration of possibil-

¹³⁵ ACE, OFB I, pp. 177, 183.

¹³⁶ Bacon never uses the term ‘Puritan’ in *An Advertisement*; although various (presumably hostile) manuscript witnesses have ‘Puritan’ written in the margins: his intended target was clear, it seems.

¹³⁷ ACE, OFB I, pp. 176, 177. Emphasis added.

lity or foresight of perill & perturbation of the church and state) must be erected and planted by the magistrate’: namely, those who mistake the temporal (i.e. church government) for the eternal.¹³⁸ If there is one constant throughout *An Advertisement* it is consequently Bacon’s defence of ‘our church’; that despite the abuses of the bishops, the Church of England remains the true church.¹³⁹

The ‘ffowrth’ and last point, however, is the most pivotal to why Bacon rejects the Presbyterian cause: namely, ‘calling the people to sedition & mutiny.’ Although he contends that ‘thei haue not cutt themselues of from the body and communion of the church,’ he nevertheless thinks ‘they affect certain cognisances & differences wherein they seeke to correspond among themselues & to be separate from others.’ In essence, he warns the Presbyterians of their ‘scismaticall fashions [&] opinions.’ This is due to their appeal to ‘the people,’ he writes, who they ‘incite ... to here contrauersyes and all pointes of doctrine,’ when ‘the people is no meet iudg or arbitratour.’ They first ‘improper to themselues the names of zealous sincere & reformed as if all others were cowld minglers of holy thinges & prophane,’ then spread their ‘opinions,’ to which they are ‘greatly addicted,’ to the multitudes. In the presence of the commoner, they ‘seeke [to] expresse scripture for euery thinge ... such as doe myne into all certaynety of religion.’ From Bacon’s viewpoint, such things should be kept to ‘the quiet modest & private assemblies and conferences of the learned.’¹⁴⁰ He draws this distinction, for example, with a cause that was, as we have seen, dear to his father: namely, the practice of ‘prophecyng.’ Bacon favours the practice in its scholarly form—as ‘conteyned within a private conference of ministers’—but admits that when it is ‘admitted to a populer auditory’ it becomes ‘suiect to great abvse.’¹⁴¹

His position follows closely upon that of his father’s, as delivered in the Lord Keeper’s speech to open Parliament in 1559. A limited religious toleration would be enshrined in the Settlement, Nicholas Bacon had argued, but ‘Seditious Factions and Sects’—‘those that be too swift, as those that be too slow; those I say, that go before

¹³⁸ ACE, OFB I, pp. 178, 180.

¹³⁹ ACE, OFB I, p. 180: Bacon is consistently critical of those Puritans who ‘refuse to communicate with vs reputed vs to haue noe Church.’

¹⁴⁰ ACE, OFB I, pp. 186, 187, 188, 191-4: ‘As for the lif of the good monckes and hermites in the primitive church I know they will condemne a man as half a papist if he shold maintayne them as other the prophane because they heard noe sermons’ (on p. 192). OFB I, p. 785: witness B³s writes in the margins of the manuscript: ‘the rascallitie of Puritans such are here mayntayned, only for faction, havinge otherwise neither honesty nor Learning, but onely seruiseableness [t]o the faction.’

¹⁴¹ ACE, OFB I, pp. 183-4.

the Laws, or beyond the Laws, as those that will not follow’—would be dealt with harshly. The bottom line was uniformity for the sake of the commonwealth, not uniformity of conscience.¹⁴² In his letter ‘On the Religious Policies of the Queen (Letter to Critoy),’ written at roughly the same time as *An Advertisement*, Bacon made this same policy unambiguous: ‘retayning two Rules,’ the Queen ‘in Dealing tenderly with Consciences, and yet in discouraging faction from Conscience, and softnes from Singularity,’ would abide no sect.¹⁴³ ‘On the Religious Policies’ was an official document, which Bacon appears to have been commissioned to write; either as genuine letter or on behalf of Walsingham and Whitgift, or (and even more likely) as a piece of propaganda.¹⁴⁴ The letter reads as a retrospective explanation of current events:

But now of late yeres when there yssued from them [the ‘Puritaines’], as it were, a Colonie of those that affirmed the Consent of the Magistrate was not to bee attended, when vnder pretence of a Confession to avoid Slaunders and imputacions, they combined themselues by Classes and subscriptions; when they discended into that vile and base meanes of degacing the goverment of the Church by ridiculous Pasquills; when they began to make many Subjects in doubt to take an Oath which is one of the fundamentall partes of Justice in this land, and in all places; when they began to vaunt of their strength and number of thier partizans and followeres, and to vse Communications that their Cause would preuaille though with vproare and violence; Then it appeared to bee noe more Zeale, noe more Conscience, but meere faction and division.¹⁴⁵

The above was clearly devised for political purposes, which are perceptible not only in its style, but likewise in those places where it diverges from *An Advertisement*. For one, the advertiser consistently denies that the reformers refused ‘the Consent of the Magistrate.’ Moreover, he attempts to dissociate the reformers from the scoffers, those who write ‘ridiculous Pasquills.’ Where the advertiser and Bacon agree, though, is their identification of Puritanism with the threat of popular faction. Bacon adheres, then, to the precedent set by his father in both texts, in so far as he upholds the distinction between conscience and faction upon which the 1559 Settlement was founded.

An Advertisement does not only admonish, but also suggests a number of alterations to policy that Bacon believes will help to abate any future controversy. These follow on from his ‘Letter of Advice to the Queen’ in most points. For instance, he

¹⁴² See pp. 61-2 above.

¹⁴³ RPQ, OFB I, p. 233.

¹⁴⁴ See OFB I, pp. 213-7.

¹⁴⁵ RPQ, OFB I, pp. 231, 232-3.

proposes that the interpretation of ecclesiastical laws be relaxed, in similar fashion to his suggestion for the ‘relenting’ of the oath; for ‘lawes are like to the grape that being too much pressed yeildeth an hard & vnholosome wyne.’ It is not worthwhile troubling a minister for ‘saying in baptisme *doe you beleeve*’ instead of ‘*doest thou beleeve*’; or to enforce the use of ‘Elizabeth’ instead of ‘her Maiesty’, while praying from ‘the booke of common prayer.’ The preachers, Bacon argues, should not be made to ‘feare Solons laws which compelled in factions every particuler person’ by an over-strict enforcement of the articles of the Settlement.¹⁴⁶ Rather, the bishops should ‘trayne’ the Puritans ‘to preach soundly & to handle the scripturs with wisdom and iudgment.’ They should be instructed to preach ‘with care & meditation,’ so as to teach ‘the people their lawfull liberty aswell as their restraints and prohibicions.’¹⁴⁷ In other words, the Puritans should inform the people of their ‘lawfull liberty’ of conscience, but also inculcate in them a sense of duty to the commonwealth and those ‘restraints and prohibicions’ of the law. Bacon's advice here is, in essence, the same as that given in his 1584/5 letter to the Queen, except instead of suggesting that the preachers be employed to aid in the catchezing of the ‘Papistes’, he proposes that they be used to inform men of both their liberties and limits in matters of religion so as to avoid future controversy.

* * * *

An Advertisement is a complex work which comprises Bacon’s personal and political views on the state of religion. It is this complexity that has led to such divergent interpretations of its central message; whether contemporary or modern. For instance, Alan Stewart, in his recent edition of the text, has rightly pointed to the fact that Bacon’s reproach of the bishops was brazen.¹⁴⁸ But this should not be taken as a wholesale confirmation of his preference for the Puritans: the anonymity of the tract, for starters, belies his concern that it might incriminate him, such that though he might share certain sympathies with the reformers, his belief in their cause was not fervent enough for him to own up to it. Moreover, Bacon consistently maintains against the Presbyterians that ‘our church is ... settled & established,’ and how nothing ‘hath supplanted in

¹⁴⁶ ACE, OFB I, pp. 186, 194. ‘The Athenian lawmaker Solon outlawed the option of maintaining individual neutrality during *stasis*’ (OFB I, p. 793, ll. 726-8).

¹⁴⁷ ACE, OFB I, pp. 183, 189, 190.

¹⁴⁸ OFB I, p. 132.

me the reuerence I owe to their callinge.’ Despite his criticisms of the bishops, then, it is clear that Bacon sees himself within the irenic and tolerant tradition of the 1559 Settlement; as a statesmen who seeks foremost ‘to inculcate and beat vpon a peace.’ This is not surprising, given his intellectual heritage.

Steven Matthews, on the other hand, has read *An Advertisement* as indicative of a turn on Bacon’s part from the Puritanism of his mother; as evidence that ‘Francis had left his Puritan heritage behind.’ But this is even more problematic. For one, there is the obvious problem that Bacon had no intention to make ‘his position known in a public statement’—the text was anonymous. A manuscript copy was also found in the collection of the reformer Walter Mildmay, who, it is reasonable to assume, was a recipient selected by the advertiser himself.¹⁴⁹ Matthews has argued, further, that Bacon’s ‘objections to the Puritans were theological, whereas his objections to the positions of the bishops centered on issues of casuistry and behavior.’¹⁵⁰ But, as we have seen, this is simply not the case. Questions about the authority of the bishops, about the place of the fathers and the primitive church, neither constitute theological subject matter, nor demonstrate Bacon’s departure from Puritanism: first, because he expressly denied in 1584/5 that he was of ‘the preciser sorte’; second, because despite denying that he is a Puritan, he frequently aligns himself with the position of those ‘which call for reformation’; and third, because his admonishment of the ‘reformers’ in the anonymous *Advertisement* is actually far less aggressive than his censure of the ‘Puritaines’ in the Letter to Critoy, which his contemporaries knew he had written. So, had Bacon abandoned his Puritan heritage, it would have been at least as early as 1584/5, but *An Advertisement* suggests that, as late as 1589, he had not turned his back on the ‘reformers’. Matthews concludes that Bacon thus ‘re-considered many of his society’s common theological assumptions,’ but this begs the question: surely the common theological assumptions of his society were not Puritan?

Julian Martin, finally, is in some sense closer in his appraisal of the tract as the work of a ‘statesmen.’ But he is ultimately mistaken in taking its irenicism as proof of Bacon’s adherence to a ‘pragmatic and secular point of view.’¹⁵¹ It is irenic, it is polit-

¹⁴⁹ OFB I, p. 140.

¹⁵⁰ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, pp. 21, 24. Matthews insists that ‘the *Advertisement* is indicative of more profound changes in Bacon’s beliefs as he reconsidered many of his society’s common theological assumptions. At the heart of his re-evaluation were questions about the nature of the relationship between God and creation, and the special place of human beings in the order of things’ (on p. 24).

¹⁵¹ Martin, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 38-9.

ical, but it is not secular. Bacon saw himself, in the footsteps of his father, as engaged in the trials of godly rule. Christian humanists, such as Nicholas Bacon, justified their use of civic means, as we have seen, with the argument that it was a scriptural mandate to actively pursue a good and godly society, and Bacon was following this example. His division of religion into the eternal and the temporal was meant to reflect his belief that God had sanctioned the civil as a space in which humans were to create such a society. A ‘feeling Christian’ and ‘politique man’ could co-exist in the same person. Bacon, we could say, thus approached the matter not merely as a statesman, but as a godly statesman. Although his concern lay chiefly in the political reasons why he believed the Presbyterians and bishops had gone astray, *An Advertisement* was the work of someone who was sincere when it came to matters of faith.

Libelling the 1559 Settlement

From 1585, the reformers had sought to effect the changes they desired in the Church from a grass-roots level. After 1589, however, all hope of further reformation of the Church was, at least for the moment, abandoned. Bancroft’s sermon at Paul’s Cross had made the Presbyterians enemies of the commonwealth, sectaries who sought the overthrow of the monarchy, and its replacement with a ‘republique’. In the eyes of the nation, the reformers had become, as Bacon noted in a ‘Letter to Critoy,’ the ‘Puritaines.’ The Puritans had no reasonable option but to withdraw to local enclaves, and to pursue their cause henceforth as an underground movement. Sponsored in no small part by Lady Bacon, this is just what they did. From Gorhambury, Anne continued her patronage of the godly, sheltering Presbyterians from Bancroft’s inquisition. Amongst those who she protected at home, were Percival Wiburn and Humphrey Wyblood. But she also sponsored the godly further abroad: Thomas Wilcox, one of the authors of the 1572 *Admonition to the Parliament*, writing to her in September of 1589, commended Anne for ‘the building up of the bodie of the fellowship of saints.’ ‘God’s saints,’ he said, were indebted to her for the ‘Christian kindnes’ and ‘sundrie favours’ she continued to show them. Wilcox urged her to stay true to ‘the course that you are entered into,’ for it is ‘as a mightie streame that will not be stopped.’¹⁵² Indeed, as Collinson

¹⁵² Thomas Wilcox to Anne Bacon (25 September 1589, in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 93-98 (on pp. 94, 96, 98).

has written, ‘St Albans was a place where radical puritans could still cock a snook at authority,’ and Anne Bacon was entirely responsible for this state of affairs.¹⁵³

Throughout the 1590s, Anne disparaged the condition of the Christian faith in England. She complained to Anthony that the priests around St Albans were ‘byting vipers, the hole pack of them,’ and advised her son to ‘burn this [letter], though I wryte tru.’¹⁵⁴ Whitgift, the ‘arch bishop’ (αρχη βισηοπ), and the man who had tutored her own children, was ‘the destruction of the Church among us, for he loves his own glory more than the glory of Christ.’¹⁵⁵ Of the Queen, she noted reproachfully, ‘God preserve her from all evell and rule her hart to the zeallus setting forth of his glory,’ and added that she had ‘dalied with the Lorde’ for too long now.¹⁵⁶ God was ‘styll wayting for our conversion.’¹⁵⁷ Despite Anne’s attempts to disguise her criticisms for the Queen and her Church, it was widely known from the 1580s that Lady Bacon was a Puritan. Her frustration, having waited more than thirty years since the Settlement for further reform, is understandable: the reformers had lost considerable ground since 1583, and Anne could no longer, even if she wanted to, advanced their cause through the official channels.

At the same time that she was lambasting the Queen, Whitgift and his bishops, Anne was involved in the compilation and publication of the Presbyterian manifesto, *A Parte of a Register* (1593). The *Register*, a collection of documents which relate the struggles of the godly between 1565 and 1589, was compiled by John Field, with the intention that it would emulate John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (1563).¹⁵⁸ There is evidence which suggests that the *Register* was produced with ‘the sanction and at the expense of Lady Bacon.’¹⁵⁹ The inclusion of a ‘Copie of a Letter with a Confession of Faith’ in the *Register*, written by Wilcox and Field to thank Anne for her kindness towards the Presbyterians, ‘and particularlie towards my selfe,’ has long been considered proof of her patronage of the work. Moreover, as Allen has argued, the ‘Confession of Faith’ was ‘offered to Anne in exchange for her support.’ It was intended to

¹⁵³ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 440.

¹⁵⁴ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (before 3 June 1594), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 180-1.

¹⁵⁵ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 February 1592), in *ibid.*, pp. 99-100. This strange spelling of αρχη βισηοπ, is original to the letter. Anne conceals her criticism of Whitgift in Greek.

¹⁵⁶ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (21 October 1595), in *ibid.*, pp. 234-5.

¹⁵⁷ Anne Bacon to Francis Goad (27 April 1596), in *ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

¹⁵⁸ See Allen, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ See William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts. Being Lectures upon the Non-Conforming Worthies of St Albans and Memorials of Puritanism and Nonconformity in All the Parishes of the County of Hertford* (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1884), p. 82.

show that the Presbyterians ‘make no separation from the Church of England’: theologically, Field and Wilcox were correct to contend that their doctrines were not much different from those outlined in, for instance, the *Apologia*; but their views on church government stood in stark contrast to the sanctioned episcopacy.¹⁶⁰ In effect, ‘Confession of Faith’ evidences, as Allen has shown, how ‘the translator of the Church of England’s *Apologia* later became the patron of the Presbyterian Confession.’¹⁶¹ Anne did not see herself as a ‘Puritaine’, but she was keenly aware of the danger she had placed herself in by supporting the *Register*: for writing to Anthony in 1593, she cautioned ‘I wolde have the two kallenders very saffly returned hether.’¹⁶²

Bacon now started to distance himself from his mother’s religious sympathies. In his 1589 letter to Anne, Wilcox had hesitated to ascribe godliness to all members of the Bacon family: he noted ‘your learned father, your honorable husband, your loving brother, your deare sisters some of them, and (*if I bee not deceived*) some also of your holie seede (all of them having yeilded up their spirites in the faith).’¹⁶³ Was his doubt in reference to Francis or to Anthony, though? It is difficult to know for sure, but there are reasons to think that he meant her youngest son. Although it was, to some extent, public knowledge that Anthony had been cavorting with Catholics on the continent, Bacon’s position in *An Advertisement* would not have pleased Anne (if she knew), and particularly not his commissioned work for Whitgift. Later, in a letter to Anthony of 1592, Anne would beseech her eldest that, ‘*in hoc noli adhibere fratrem tuum ad consilium aut exemplum, sed plus dehinc*’ (‘in this, do not follow your brother’s counsel or example, but more hereafter.’¹⁶⁴ Matthews has suggested that this letter offers evidence of Bacon’s turn from his mother’s on theological grounds.¹⁶⁵ However, Anne, in the sentence immediately proceeding, instructs Anthony to hear ‘those religious exercises of the syncerer sort, be they French or Englysh.’ And, in the sentence immediately after, refers to Archbishop Whitgift’s ruin of the Church.¹⁶⁶ Anne was frequenting the French Stranger Church whenever she visited London in the 1590s, and once

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Wilcox and John Field, ‘The Copie of a Letter, with a Confession of Faith, Written by Two Faithfull Servants of God, unto an Honourable and Vertuous Ladie’, in *A Parte of a Register*, ed. John Field (Middelburg: Richard Schilders, 1593), pp. 528-46 (on p. 528). Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, pp. 189-192 (on pp. 190, 192).

¹⁶¹ Allen, *The Cooke Sisters*, p. 192.

¹⁶² Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 July 1593), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 138.

¹⁶³ Thomas Wilcox to Anne Bacon (25 September 1589), in *ibid.*, p. 97. Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁴ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 February 1592), in *ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁵ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 February 1592), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 99-100.

Anthony took up residence with Bacon at Gray's in 1592, she repeatedly nagged him to go 'sometyme to the French Church.'¹⁶⁷ It is unlikely, and indeed there is no evidence, to suggest that Bacon ever joined her. Given his admonition of 'the partiall affectacion & imitation of forreyne Churches,' by those who have 'sought to intrude the same vpon our church,' it is not surprising either.

Moreover, it is to be wondered why Anne did not send *A Parte of a Register* to Bacon. Instead she had sent it to her eldest son, while Anthony was in fact living with his brother, with the plea that 'I pray yow shew your brother.'¹⁶⁸ It is remark that raises further questions: why would she not simply assume that Anthony would show it to his brother? Perhaps it was because she knew that Bacon did not want to be accused of complicity with the Puritans. Further, there are extant very few letters between Bacon and his mother, especially when compared to those between her and Anthony: did Bacon have them destroyed, or was it that they were simply never sent? Unfortunately, this is not a question that can be answered. Based on the available evidence, however, it is possible to wager an informed guess: that, around 1589, Bacon made the decision to distance himself from his mother, not on theological, but on political grounds.

What has become evident from the above examination of *An Advertisement* is Bacon's concern with faction, on the one hand, but also his tacit defense of 'receaved religion,' on the other. There can be little doubt that the 'aduertiser' was sympathetic to the call for further reform of the Church. But he was equally concerned, just as his father had been, to maintain strict boundaries between freedom of conscience and the forbearance of religious faction. 1589 had marked a watershed for the Presbyterians: after Bancroft's sermon, they had been forced to take their cause underground; an action that many perceived to only further incriminate them. Bacon must have be aware that, according to his own distinction, the Presbyterians appeared to many to persist in 'noe more Zeale, noe more Conscience, but meere faction and division.'¹⁶⁹ The fact of Anne's undeniable involvement with enemies of the commonwealth was a considerable problem (for his career prospects, least of all). Just as Bacon joined his voice in a spirited defence of the Established Church, his own mother became one of its most ardent critics.

¹⁶⁷ See Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 17, 225, 231 (on p. 225).

¹⁶⁸ Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon (3 July 1593), in *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 138.

¹⁶⁹ RPQ, OFB I, p. 233.

As the *Register* was being printed at Lady Bacon’s expense, her son composed and circulated an apology for the Elizabethan Settlement. *Certaine Obseruations upon a Libell* (1593), Bacon’s defence of his father’s, uncle’s, and mother’s contribution to 1559 Settlement and Church, was not a response to the *Register*, but it highlights the fact of his mother’s departure from the path of conformity. *Certaine Obseruations* was occasioned rather by an anonymous tract, entitled *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles ... against the Realme of England* (1592). This defamatory tract was actually written by the recusant Richard Verstegan (although Bacon did not know this), whose central line of argument was that England had been visited with troubles after the ‘plot and fortification’ in 1559 to usher in ‘this newe erected synagog,’ which had been masterminded by none other than ‘*Cecill and Bacon.*’ Verstegan was more or less correct in his assessment of the authorship of the Settlement. But his slanderous accusations—that the Lord Treasurer was responsible for every evil that had befallen England—‘incensed’ Cecil. What incensed Bacon, on the other hand, was Verstegan’s claim that Elizabethan Protestantism was in fact ‘a composition of his [Cecil’s] owne invention’ (which was clearly incorrect—the Lord Keeper had contributed no small part!), but even more so his characterization of Nicholas Bacon as a man ‘of exceding craftie witt,’ who was, everyone knew, ‘of meane birth.’¹⁷⁰ It is possible that Cecil commissioned Bacon’s response. But as Alan Stewart has noted, *Certaine Obseruations* was ‘a highly personal defence.’¹⁷¹

Bacon dedicates much of the tract to responding to the ‘infectious weedes’ that have sprung up against his family and the Queen; often replying point by point.¹⁷² He also goes to some effort to defend the name of his father.¹⁷³ Of most importance here,

¹⁷⁰ For a detailed account of context of *Certaine Observations*, see Stewart, OFB I, pp. lii, 313-18, 323-4. Verstegan, *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles*, pp. 9, 12.

¹⁷¹ OFB I, p. lii. It was also circulated anonymously.

¹⁷² OL, OFB I, p. 346.

¹⁷³ OL, OFB I, p. 406: ‘he saith Sir Nicholas Bacon that was lord keeper was a man of an excedinge craftie witt which sheweth that this fellow in his slaunders is no good mark-man, but throweth out his wordes of defacinge without all leuell. ffor all the world noted Sir Nicholas Bacon to be a man plain, directe and constant without all finesse or dublenes and one that was of the mind, *That a man in his priuate proceedinges, and a state in the proceedinges of state should rest upon the soundnes and strength of their owne courses and not vpon practize, to circumvent others accordinge vnto the sentence of Saloman Vir prudens advertit ad gressus suos, stultus autem diuertit ad dolos.* Insomuch that the Bushop of Rosse a sutle and obseruinge man said of him *That he cold fasten no wordes vpon him, and that it was impossible to com within him because he offred no plaie.* And Queen mother of france a verie pollitique princesse said of him *That he should haue bin of the Counsell of Spaine because he despised the occurrences and rested vpon the first plott.* So that if he were craftie it is hard to say who is wise.’

however, is his defence of how ‘this Nacion was never more flourishinge’ in ‘religion’ since God’s ‘Seruante our Queene Elizabeth’ came to the throne.¹⁷⁴ He writes of

the puritie of Religion which is a benefite inestimable and was in the times of all former princes vntill the daies of her Maiesties father of famous memorie vnheard of, out of which puritie of Religion have since ensued besides the principall effects of the true knowledge and worship of God... of great consequence vnto the Civill state.¹⁷⁵

The true religion, he contends, was ‘restored and reestablished by her Maiesties self.’ Bacon consistently maintains that ‘the establishment of religion in the begininge of the *Queens* time,’ is the ‘pure religion,’ and vindicates his family’s role in the creation of the 1559 Settlement at every opportunity.¹⁷⁶ It is in stark contrast to his mother’s repeated lamentations for the decline of religion in England throughout the 1590s, and once again serves to confirm Bacon as a conformist.¹⁷⁷

Of the Bacons, then, it was Anne rather than her son who was libelling the Settlement. It has been argued that Bacon turned from his mother, from his Puritan heritage. But if anything, the evidence suggests that it was Anne Bacon who was turning away from her heritage. Her frustration with the pace of reform had turned into dissatisfaction with the Church she had helped to establish, and then, finally, into full blown support of the nonconformists. Bacon, as we have seen, was critical of the bishops on a number of points, but he continued to support the Church of England even after his mother decided it was no longer the true Church. His attempts to dissociate himself from her religious opinions were political; based upon his fear that the Presbyterians might soon become a faction, and thereby an enemy of the commonwealth.

* * * *

Between 1579 and 1601, Francis Bacon responded to the religious controversies that emerged largely in response to Elizabeth’s unwillingness to further the Reformation in England, but also to his parents, and the social, political, and intellectual contexts that he had, in no small part, inherited from them. Bacon emerged from these years as a

¹⁷⁴ OL, OFB I, p. 352

¹⁷⁵ OL, OFB I, p. 359. Bacon writes of the benefits of religion to a ‘Civill state’ as financial and the ‘infranchizinge of the Regall dignitie’ from the Pope.

¹⁷⁶ OL, OFB I, p. 406.

¹⁷⁷ See Allen, *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 17.

defender of the Settlement and of the Established Church, but also as an advocate of limited reform, and of toleration, irenicism, and freedom of conscience. In a sense, he stepped into his father's shoes; developing a strong sense of the need for a 'civic' and moderate religion in service to the eternal. Where he diverged from Nicholas Bacon was arguably in his adoption and adaptation of the political thought of sixteenth-century Florence to his homeland. But even here he subsumed the theories of Machiavelli and Guicciardini—of reason of state and the balance of power—within the humanist fold, as the instruments of a 'Christian pollitique Counsellor.'¹⁷⁸ His twofold division of religion into 'partes which belong to eternity' and 'partes which pertayne to time,' would have a major impact on his programme for the reformation of human learning in the early seventeenth century. But, in the 1590s, it had already served to inform his decision to dissociate himself from the increasingly factious religion of his mother.

¹⁷⁸ OL, OFB I, p. 406.

3 ‘Broken Knowledge’:

Religion and the Limits of Human Knowledge

For the contemplation of Gods Creatures and works produceth (hauing regard to the works and creatures themselues) knowledge, but hauing regard to God, no perfect knowledg, but wonder, which is broken knowledge.

— Francis Bacon
The Advancement of Learning

The one kind of reform that Francis Bacon would not come to be recognized for was that of religion—the Reformation to which his parents had given their lives. This does not mean that he was not interested in religious reform, but rather that he understood the theological aspect of the Reformation to have been achieved already. By the turn of the seventeenth century, Bacon would in fact come to the conclusion that no further theological reform was necessary, even if he felt that the religious policies of England could still use more work: when King James I took the throne in 1603, for instance, he again set out his views about the state of religion, but with much the same advice and much the same response: a tolerant, irenic, and moderate course was to remain his preference. Instead, Bacon turned his mind to the reformation of human knowledge. This does not mean that he abandoned religion to the periphery of his thought, for he did not, but his last tract on the subject of the politics of English religion would be his 1604 *Certaine Considerations ... touching the Church of England*.¹

Where the eternal was concerned, Bacon had published a collection of ‘sacred meditations’ in 1597, and then penned his only genuinely theological writing at some point in the years leading up to 1603.² After this date, he would continue to reflect on the nature of religion, but always within the broader context of his programme for the

¹ Francis Bacon, *Certaine Considerations Touchinge the Better Pacification and edification of the Church of England* (1604) published in SEH X, pp. 99-127. Vickers, pp. 500-1, has noted the many similarities between *An Advertisement Touching the Controuersyes of the Church of England* and *Certaine Considerations*. See also Stewart’s comments on *Certaine Considerations* in OFB I, pp. 134-5. For a more recent examination, see Richard Serjeantson and Thomas Woolford, ‘The Scribal Publication of a Printed Book: Francis Bacon’s *Certaine Considerations Touching ... the Church of England* (1604)’, *The Library* 10 (2009), pp. 119-156.

² Francis Bacon, *Essayes. Meditations. Places of Perswasion & Diswasion* (London: Humfrey Hooper, 1597). The *Meditationes sacrae* were included in this volume with his first set of essays.

reformation of knowledge. His first foray into the deficiencies of human learning, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), would treat with revealed religion, but only in so far as it concerned nature, the mind, and the limits of human knowledge.

A Confession of Faith

If there is one work amongst Francis Bacon's religious writings that is not expressly political, it is his *A Confession of Faith* (c. 1603). But even this is questionable. There can be no doubt whatsoever that *A Confession* is a theological tract, written with the clear intent to outline Bacon's beliefs, but it is also a highly unusual work, which raises more questions than it answers. *A Confession* was not printed in Bacon's lifetime. It was first published in 1641, with the subtitle 'Penned By an Orthodox man of the reformed religion.'¹ It was subsequently included in *The Remains of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam* in 1648, and then in William Rawley's 1657 *Resuscitatio*. *The Remaines* notes that Bacon composed it 'about the time he was Sollicitour Generall to our late Sovereign Lord King James,' which would date its composition to some point between 1607 and 1613.² Rawley, who was Bacon's chaplain (and later chaplain to both King Charles I and II), states only that he composed it 'many years before his Death.'³ Spedding, on the other hand, dated it to 1603, based on the fact that BL Harl. MS 1893, the earliest extant manuscript, describes it as written 'by M^r Bacon,' and thus prior to his knighthood.⁴ The difficulty with Spedding's dating, however, is the Harl. MS 1893 text of *A Confession* appears to be in the same hand as other texts in the manuscript compilation, the earliest of which is from the 1610s. Does this mean then that *A Confession of Faith* should be dated to when Bacon was 'Sollicitour Generall,' as the *Remaines* claim? I would argue not; that it is still more likely that it was written sometime around, and probably before, 1603. The obvious point in favour of

¹ See, for instance, Francis Bacon, *A Confession of Faith* (London: Printed for William Hope, 1641). As Vickers, p. 560 notes, the 1641 printing included three different editions, two of which included this subtitle.

² Francis Bacon, *The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam* (London: B. Alsop, 1648). See also Vickers, p. 560.

³ Bacon, *Resuscitatio*, ed. Rawley, f. 2b^v: 'that *Treatise*, of his *Lordships*, Inscribed, *A Confession of the Faith*; I have ranked that, in the Close, of this whole *Volume*: Thereby, to demonstrate to the *World*; That he was a *Master*, in *Divinity*, as well as in *Philosophy*, or *Politicks*; And that he was Versed, no lesse, in the *saving Knowledge*; Than, in the *Vniversall*, and *Adorning*, *Knowledges*. For though, he composed the same, many years, before his Death, yet I thought that, to be the fittest place; As the most acceptable Incense unto *God*, of the *Faith*, wherein he resigned his *Breath*; The Crowning, of all his other Perfections.'

⁴ BL Harl. MS 1893, ff. 1^r-4^v (on f. 1^r). SEH VI, p. 216.

this dating is that the text found in Harl. MS 1893 could be a copy of an earlier, now lost, manuscript, from which the copyist simply failed to amend 'by Mr Bacon'—such things happened all the time.⁵ Other reasons for dating it to 1603 or earlier, are both textual and contextual in nature.

A Confession of Faith is a very personal text. It sets forth Bacon's theological views, his religious beliefs, in both a succinct and idiosyncratic manner. It begins, for instance, with the lines: 'I believe that nothing is without beginning but God; no nature, no matter, no spirit, but one only and the same God. That God as he is eternally almighty, only wise, only good, in his nature, so he is eternally Father, Son, and Spirit, in persons.'⁶ A series of articles outlining Bacon's beliefs then follow, preceded by 'I believe,' over the course of the work. Its theological contents are usually described as Calvinist, though with the occasional deviation from what might be termed 'hardline' Calvinism.⁷ More recently, Matthews has asserted that *A Confession* shows traces of Bacon's preference for the Church Fathers and, in particular, for Irenaeus.⁸ Although Matthews is correct to note the similarities between *A Confession* and the theologians he cites, his further claim that these evidence Bacon's turn towards the 'ancient faith' is unfounded. For instance, Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* (c. 180), while undoubtedly a source that Bacon was familiar with, was also a text with which nearly all apologists for the English Church, such as Jewel, were cognizant.⁹ Theologically, it seems that Bacon is for the most part 'an Orthodox man,' in that he is not far from mainstream

⁵ Peter Beal also suggests that the date of composition is c. 1600s (Peter Beal, *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700*, BcF 154).

⁶ CF, SEH VII, p. 219.

⁷ The earliest description of its theological contents is, of course, *The Remaines*, which notes it is 'Penned By an Orthodox man of the reformed religion.' Vickers and Basil Hall have argued that *A Confession* is Calvinist, though with certain idiosyncratic deviations (See Vickers, pp. 562-5).

⁸ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 41 writes that *A Confession* is 'the clearest evidence in Bacon's own texts of a profound movement away from Calvinism during the late 1580s and early 1590s.' Matthews continues to argue that 'the doctrines of the *Confession* would have raised serious concerns among the Reformed theologians of Bacon's day had he gone so far as to publish them.' It appears that Bacon's contemporaries, the editors of *The Remaines*, did not think so, however, and labelled him 'of the reformed religion.' This argument also, as we shall see, runs contrary to any of the given reasons why someone would write a confession of faith in the first place.

⁹ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, pp. 45-50: '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.' The first edition of the *Adversus Haereses* was edited by Erasmus and printed in Basel in 1526, and was available in England.

theological positions of the Church of England. However, his emphasis on the bonds between God and the natural world is certainly unique.¹⁰

On most points Bacon, then, would not have been considered heterodox by his contemporaries. Where *A Confession* would have—and still does—raise a fair amount of suspicion, though, is in the reasons for its composition. In the sixteenth century, the confession of faith emerged as a Protestant response to accusations from the Catholic Church; as an attempt to define their beliefs (or 'faith') against Rome.¹¹ Confessions, such as the *Augsburg Confession* (1530) of the Lutherans, and those of the Reformed churches, such as the *First* (1536) and *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), as well as Calvin's own *Confessio Gallicana* (1559), evolved into key theological documents for their respective congregations; as consolidated statements of the doctrines that defined any one group of Christians against another. It was therefore both a theological *and* a political document, intended to circumscribe the teachings of a church rather than an individual, and which was often occasioned by 'an important turning point in the life of the community.'¹² This shift, by which Protestant churches came to be institutions governed by their doctrinal commitments rather than their community of believers, is subsequently referred to by historians as 'confessionalization.'¹³

In England, the definitive instance of this process of confessionalization is often considered to be the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, a legal document formalized under the supervision of Archbishop Parker in 1563, and revised in 1571. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* were, in effect, England's response to the continental confession; even if they reflected more the government's beliefs than those of its people or its church.¹⁴ Although the *Thirty-Nine Articles* do not contribute that much to our understanding of Bacon's *Confession*, there are at least two further English 'confessions,' each of which has a personal connection: his mother's translation of Jewel's *Apologia* and 'a Copie of a Letter with a Confession of Faith' in the *Register*, composed by Wilcox and Field. The *Apologie* is actually closer in many respects to the continental confession of faith

¹⁰ As Vickers, p. 563 has suggested, *A Confession* appears to contain the first usage of the idea of the 'laws of nature' in its modern sense. The emphasis on the relation between Creator and created is the best internal evidence we possess to prove *A Confession* was actually written by Bacon.

¹¹ See Vickers, pp. 560-561.

¹² Vickers, p. 561.

¹³ The confession of faith developed from the thought of Luther on the nature of the church (See Robert Kolb, 'Luther's Function in an Age of Confessionalization', in *The Cambridge Companion to Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 209-226 (on p. 210).

¹⁴ See Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 267.

than the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. It ratifies what 'We beleeve' in a series of articles which define what is accepted in the *Ecclesia Anglicanae* by faith.¹⁵ Bacon's *Confession of Faith* shares many points of contact with the *Apologie*, with its emphasis, for instance, on Christ as 'Mediatour.' But this just reflects the fact that Bacon was a conformist. It can hardly be doubted, moreover, that Bacon was familiar with the *Apologie* as an instance of a *confessio fidei*.

Wilcox and Field's 'Confession of Faith,' by contrast, may not have been read by Bacon, as intimated in Anne's letter to Anthony, where she 'pray[s] yow shew your brother.' Like the *Apologie*, which was intended to defend the nascent English Church against Rome, this Presbyterian confession is a political document that sets out what 'We beleeve,' as well as the true form of God's Church.¹⁶ Both of these confessions, as such, follow the continental model. Bacon's diverges, however, on one major point: he replaces 'We beleeve' with 'I believe,' in what appears to be a move for which there is no other contemporary exemplar (the Apostle's Creed being the obvious historical model). As Basil Hall commented, a confession of faith was not a document written by 'a private person (even a cleric of standing).'¹⁷ As a declaration of the beliefs of a church (i.e., a community), a confession was not something written for an individual. This leaves us with the question of for what purpose Bacon composed his own private *Confession of Faith*?

Although he has not provided an answer, Brian Vickers has posed a germane question: 'What events in Bacon's life, external or internal,' he has asked, 'provoked him to set down his personal *Confession of Faith*'?'¹⁸ The obvious answer, in light of the historical context of Bacon's early life, would be his mother's association with the Presbyterian movement in the 1580s and 1590s. While a confession was not written for an individual, there is a surprisingly pertinent instance: the confession of Wilcox and Field, which was dedicated to Anne Bacon. The purpose of their confession is, as they defined it, so that 'your honor migh[t] have at all times in a readinesse by you, some short writing of ours, by which you might stoppe the mouths of suche persons, as, without any knowledge of us or our judgements, spare not uppon light credite to lewde reports many times to condemne as wicked men and heretickes.'¹⁹ In other

¹⁵ Jewel, *An Apologie or Answere in Defence of the Churche of Englande*, trans. Anne Bacon, Sig. Bviii ff.

¹⁶ Field, *A Parte of the Register*, pp. 531-546.

¹⁷ Vickers, p. 560.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

¹⁹ Wilcox and Field, 'The Copie of a Letter, with a Confession of Faith', p. 528.

words, it was intended as proof of the fact that, in her beliefs, Anne made 'no separation from the Church of England.'²⁰ Hall notes that 'someone regarded as a heretic or a dangerous thinker might present in writing an account of his beliefs to an authorized court,' but this was exceedingly rare, and there is no evidence that either Anne or her son were ever brought before a court on charges of heresy.²¹ So, on this model, perhaps Bacon intended it as protection against anyone who might associate him with the Puritanism of his mother. It is certainly possible, if not altogether convincing, since communication between mother and son appears to have become slight in the 1590s and 1610s, around which time Bacon's *Confession* was most likely written. But with no further evidence, this must remain conjecture.

* * * *

There is, however, another plausible explanation for *A Confession of faith*; and this is that it should be considered a part of *The Advancement of Learning*, and perhaps even a part of the larger project Bacon called the *Instauratio magna*. For there is an explicit correlation between the two texts which only becomes apparent in light of contextual evidence. To put forth the argument that these works are connected finds, for starters, corroboration in Spedding's dating of *A Confession* to the summer of 1603, two years prior to the publication of *The Advancement*.²² Given, however, that this date is rather speculative, any argument for a relation between the two must rest on other evidence. That evidence, I propose, is to be found in the *Institutio Christianae religionis* (1536) of Calvin, as well as the content of *A Confession*, and revolves around Bacon's belief that the 'misteries of faith' should be understood as 'broken knowledge.'²³

For centuries, Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* has been considered by scholars as the most systematic of all early modern, Protestant theological treatises, with Melanchthon's *Loci communes* (1521) a near second. This interpretation persists

²⁰ Ibid., p. 529: 'We are not (as they say Puritanes, Anabaptists, Donatists, Libertines, of the Family of love, or anye such like, for wee confesse our selves before God to bee greivous sinners, wee daily pray for, and duetifully reverence Magistrates, as God's word appointeth: we make no separation from the Church of England, acknowledging it, notwithstanding the manifold deformities wherewith it is spotted (all which we earnestly wish, desire, and pray, might be removed) to be the church of God. We like of other men, use their companie, and account them as our brethren, though they agree not with us in points of sinceritie and reformation.'

²¹ Vickers, pp. 560-1.

²² For the date of *The Advancement of Learning*'s composition, see Michael Kiernan's introduction to OFB IV, pp. lvii-lxxxii.

²³ AL, OFB IV, p. 8.

today.²⁴ But, as Charles Partee has recently argued, the *Institutes* was actually meant in the opposite sense; as an attempt to show how theological matter resists systematization by its nature.²⁵ In just the same way that Bacon defined his programme for the advancement of learning against the scholastic method, so too was the *Institutes* a rejection of mediaeval *summae theologicae*. So what, then, was its purpose? It appears that Calvin intended it to be a confession 'in defence of the mysteries of God's revelation.'²⁶ As he wrote to Luther in January 1545, the work was a testament to the fact that divine truth cannot 'do otherwise than break forth in the confession of faith.'²⁷ It was not meant to be an explanation of faith; not 'a logically unassailable system of ideas,' but rather as 'a heartfelt confession of faith attempting to *protect* the mystery of God's revelation.'²⁸

Bacon, who draws upon Calvinist ideas throughout *The Advancement*, may well have conceived the *Confession* similarly; as a defence of the 'mysteries of faith,' prior to setting out to make 'a small Globe of the Intellectual world.'²⁹ For one, he goes to considerable lengths at the beginning of Book I to 'sette foorth the true bounds and limitations, whereby humane knowledge is confined and circumscribed.' What are the 'true bounds and limitations'? None other than the 'points of faith' he outlines in the *Confession*.³⁰ Calvin's purpose in the *Institutes* was literally to confess that there are mysteries which can only be known by faith, and that are not subject to human reason. *The Advancement* does not address 'sacred Theologie,' but only that knowledge which is grounded upon human reason, or 'vpon the light of nature.' This does not mean that Bacon rejects the ineffable in not including it in his reformation of human knowledge; but rather that tries to protect it, since, as he writes, 'diuers great learned men haue bene hereticall, whilst they haue sought to flye vp to the secrets

²⁴ See, for instance, David C. Steinmetz, 'The Theology of John Calvin', in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 113-129 (particularly p. 114). Steinmetz is correct to note that the *Institutes* was intended as a 'sum of religion', but it was meant not to reduce faith to an easily digestible form, but rather to reveal its total ineffability.

²⁵ Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville; London: Westminster John Know Press, 2008).

²⁶ Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. xiv.

²⁷ 'Jean Calvin to Martin Luther, 21 January 1545', in *Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. 1, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. David Constable, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co, 1855), pp. 416-17 (on p. 416).

²⁸ Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. 31. Emphasis added.

²⁹ AL, OFB IV, p. 192. Bacon oddly does not quote from Calvin's *Institutes*, but he nevertheless adopts a number of crucial ideas and beliefs from Calvin, whether directly or indirectly, which appear in *The Advancement*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 79.

of the Deitie by the waxen whinges of the Sences.³¹ The *Confession*, like the *Institutes*, forestalls inquiry into the nature of the divine through its admission that, though some things cannot be known, they must be still be accepted by faith: *da fidei, quae fidei sunt* ('Give to faith the things which are faith's').³² It thus serves a double function: both as a defensive act and as an act of humiliation; a 'voluntary confession to men,' which 'is conducive to the divine glory or our humiliation,' as Calvin explains it.³³

Is this, then, the chief function of *A Confession of Faith*; to make it clear that there are things which are 'grounded onely vpon the word & oracle of God'? Does he first outline 'those points of faith, which concerne the great misteries of the Deitie, of the Creation, of the Redemption' in the *Confession* as a means to protect them from the 'Lampe' of human reason?³⁴ Or might the *Confession* have been an aborted effort on Bacon's part to ward off accusations that he sought to inquire into things he should not? Evidence for of the latter comes in the form of a letter to Tobie Matthews, where Bacon cites 'Bishop Andrewes' as 'my inquisitor.'³⁵ Lancelot Andrews (1555-1626), the Bishop of Winchester, and a friend of Bacon's since his days at Cambridge, seems to have read *The Advancement* to make sure that there were no theological errors.³⁶ It appears, on this evidence, that Bacon was anxious that the work conformed to orthodox prescriptions. He does, in the first few pages, single out the 'ignorance ... appearing sometimes in the zeale and ielousie of Diuines, sometimes in the seuerities and arrogancie of Politiques, and sometimes in the errors and imperfections of learned men themselues,' as those causes why the reformation of knowledge has yet to proceed. Could this have been because he was concerned that he might meet similar resistance with the publication of *The Advancement of Learning*, and thus sought to preempt it with a confession? Such an interpretation would place his *Confession* between Calvin's *Institutes* and the confession written by Wilcox and Field for his mother.

There are reasons to think, then, that the two are related; that the *Confession of Faith* has a function within Bacon's larger programme of reform, as a propaedeutic to

³¹ Ibid., p. 8.

³² Ibid., pp. 5, 79. As Kiernan (OFB IV, p. 279) notes, Bacon paraphrases Matt. 22: 21, changing the secular ('Caesar') for the sacred ('faith').

³³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.4.10, p. 413.

³⁴ AL, OFB IV, pp. 7, 182.

³⁵ Francis Bacon to Tobie Matthews (7 November 1605), in SEH X, pp. 255-6 (on p. 256). See also OFB IV, pp. 207-8.

³⁶ For the relationship between Bacon and Andrewes, see Matthews, *Theology and Science*, pp. 28-31.

human knowledge. Why, though, did Bacon not publish it then at the same time as *The Advancement*? Perhaps because he heeded his own advice that one should 'not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together,' and so made the decision prior to the publication of *The Advancement* to retract *A Confession*.³⁷ This would explain why the latter was never published, as well as confirm Spedding's dating.

* * * *

Given the available manuscript evidence, it is difficult to offer a completely satisfying answer to the problem of the *Confession*'s purpose. There can be no doubt that it was Bacon's—a copy of the text appears in Hardwick MS 51; a collection produced for William Cavendish under Bacon's direction—but his reasons for its composition can only be conjectured.³⁸ At this time, we will have to wait and see whether Volume II of the Oxford Francis Bacon is able to locate further witnesses which shed light on this question. What it is possible to say now, is that *A Confession of Faith* was not written on a whim; it was either part of the larger project commenced in *The Advancement of Learning*, or occasioned, as Brian Vickers has suggested, by a transitional moment in Bacon's life, such as his mother's final turn to nonconformity in 1589.

Natural Religion and the Limits of Knowledge

In order to understand the developments in the idea of religion that provided the groundwork upon which Bacon's conception of religion was formed, we must first turn towards another dominant idea in the seventeenth century; namely, 'nature'. For, of the two concepts, it was that of nature which ended up delimiting, over the next two centuries, much of the range of possible meanings with which religion was invested. Yet the question remains, how far could religion rightly be said to derive, for Bacon, from a natural fount? The light of God's grace as enclosed in the scriptures was alone sufficient to guarantee our salvation, but had this always been the case? The seventeenth century, as Peter Harrison has observed, gave rise to three distinct conceptions of nature, upon which three corresponding notions of religion were to develop: nature as a source of religious corruption; nature as the innate basis of human reli-

³⁷ AL, OFB IV, p. 9.

³⁸ I would like to thank Richard Serjeantson for directing me to this important manuscript.

giosity; and religion as obtainable through the study of nature.³⁹ The question, then, remains to situate Bacon's thoughts on the interrelation of religion and nature within these historical parameters.

The most conventional of the three conceptions of religion was established by the Protestant reformers, who, unlike their medieval predecessors, maintained a strict bifurcation between the natural and the supernatural. 'Natural religion', or piety based in the capacity of human reason to secure knowledge of God, was, in this view, opposed to 'revealed religion', or supernaturally grounded faith.⁴⁰ Rejecting natural religion as an inadequate basis for genuine piety, the reformers subsequently converted it into a source of degenerate and heretical religious notions, employing it as a censor against the erroneous faith in human reason which they perceived to have been sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church. Although this division was not original to the Protestants, it was largely through their denunciations of Catholics—who, the reformers felt, had presumed to have knowledge of God despite the reprobate nature of the mind—that this distinction was drawn most sharply.⁴¹

The second and third concepts of nature, which Francis Bacon himself spelled out in *The Advancement of Learning*, were to become nearly ubiquitous over the following two centuries. The 'light of Nature,' Bacon explained, 'is vsed in two seuerall senses':

The one, that which springeth from Reason, Sense, Induction, Argument, according to the lawes of heauen and earth: The other that which is imprinted vpon the spirit of Man by an inward Instinct, according to the lawe of conscience, which is a sparkle of the puritie of his first Estate: In which later sense onely, he is participant of some light, and discerning: touching the perfection of the Morall lawe.⁴²

Leaving aside the first sense which Bacon ascribes to nature, the second—'that which is imprinted vpon the spirit of Man by an inward Instinct'—is derived foremost from the philosophical tradition of the Stoa. Both Greek and Roman Stoics had seen nature

³⁹ Peter Harrison, *Religion and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 5-7.

⁴⁰ It should be kept in mind here that 'natural religion', for both Catholics and Protestants alike, carried the sense of 'natural piety', i.e., piety based on human reason, while 'revealed religion' signified piety according to the gift of God's grace. Neither carried the modern sense associated with the word 'religion' today.

⁴¹ Harrison, *Religion and the Religions*, p. 6.

⁴² AL, OFB IV, p. 183.

as one particular mode of God's divine operation.⁴³ When manifest in its creative aspect (identified as 'nature'), the Greek Stoics had referred to the divine as the *logos spermatikos* and the Romans, in its Latin form, as either *semina virtutis* or *semina scientiae*. In referring to nature as 'a sparkle', Bacon was thus drawing upon a tradition that stretched as far back as Heraclitus (c. 535–475 BCE); the pre-Socratic who had identified nature with the primary element fire, and in so doing had planted the roots for the Stoic identification of *logos spermatikos* with the divine spark.⁴⁴

There are a number of possible sources from which Bacon's own identification of natural religion as a 'sparkle' could have derived, including the Roman statesman Cicero (106–43 BCE), who speaks of nature as implanting *igniculos* ('little flames' or 'sparks') in humans.⁴⁵ Cicero was one of the first thinkers to identify *igniculii* as the original sparks of the natural law; a depiction congenial to Bacon's own view that the this spark is nothing other than the 'Morall lawe'.⁴⁶ Cicero's identification, however, was soon largely overshadowed by the Christian equivalent, *syneidêsis* (or *syntêrêsis*, *synderesis*); a fusion of the Hebrew *lev* ('heart') and the Greek *logos spermatikos* that originated in the writings of St Paul.⁴⁷ In translating Paul, St Jerome substituted *scintilla conscientiae* ('spark of conscience') for *synderesis*; a modification similar again to Bacon's 'lawe of conscience'.⁴⁸ In fact, three of Jerome's four terms are retained in Bacon's description of the light of nature, though *synderesis* is replaced with 'inward Instinct'.⁴⁹ Through the reconfiguration of the Stoic notion by Paul and Jerome, the Christianized concept was subsequently to become a common element in the writings of medieval theologians, such as the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard (c. 1095-1160) and

⁴³ See, for example, Cicero, *De natura deorum*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, [1933] 1951), 2.27-30 (on pp. 145-53); Diogenes Laertius, 7.135-138, 7.148, Vol. 2, pp. 239-43, 253).

⁴⁴ For the development of the identification of the *logos spermatikos* with fire, see Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 32.

⁴⁵ Cicero, *De re publica; De legibus*, 1.33, trans. Clinton W. Keyes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 333: '... the sparks of fire [*igniculos*], so to speak, which Nature has kindled in us...'

⁴⁶ Cicero, *De Legibus*, 1.18-19, pp. 53-7: 'Well then, the most learned men have determined to being with Law, and it would seem that they are right, if, according to their definition, Law is the highest reason, implanted in Nature, which commands what ought to be done and forbids the opposite...'; Bacon uses Cicero's *igniculos*: 'ille igniculus luminis primi' ('that spark of the first light') in *MedS*, SEH VII, p. 239.

⁴⁷ See Horowitz, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge*, p. 45.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴⁹ See Robert A. Green, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991), 195-219 (p. 214).

the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).⁵⁰ It is, as a result of this lengthy transmission, somewhat difficult to determine from whence Bacon derived his particular views, for the original Stoic tradition branched out in such a way that the identification of divine seeds or sparks with natural law became a widespread theological motif during the Middle Ages.⁵¹

What is clear, is that, unlike the interpretation of the reformers, this Stoic view of nature does not emphasize any innate antagonism, but rather nature's intimate and complementary relationship to the supernatural. Our natural inclination to piety—that 'sparkle of the puritie of [man's] first Estate'—becomes a legitimate spring of piety, for God has ordained it through his continued presence in creation. Here, divine power pervades nature, a view that Bacon wholeheartedly accepts, interpreting Psalm 19: 1 ('the Heavens declare the glory of God'), as a statement of God's omnipotence in the realm of nature. Bacon rejects, however, the view of those who interpret nature as laying bare the will (*voluntas*) of God: the divine will, he maintains, is written neither upon the order of nature nor upon the nature of man, and those who seek it in such places endanger both the purity of religion and the worth of natural philosophy.⁵²

Although his second interpretation of nature stems from the medieval form of the Stoic idea, it was not until the fifteenth century that the identification of religion with the light of nature became explicit. In fact, it was the Neoplatonists of cinquecento Italy who first invested the idea of religion with the Stoic interpretation of the 'light of nature.'⁵³ While this may sound somewhat odd, it should be kept in mind that, for both the ancient Stoics and medieval theologians, *igniculi* did not constitute natural religiousness, but rather natural law; in other words, our 'conscience'. So in rejecting the scholastic interpretation of the essence of nature as rooted in *natura naturata* (nature created), and investing religion with the platonized Stoic principle of *natura nat-*

⁵⁰ Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum libri iv.* trans. by Giulio Silano. 4 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2007-2010), vol. 2, pp. 197-8; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 91, A. 2: 'The light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is a function of natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light'; see also I, Q. 79, A. 12, II-II, Q. 47, A. 6.

⁵¹ Bacon probably was drawing on a number of sources, but it seems that Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. by Sears Jayne (Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1985), Speech 4, Chapter 4 (on p. 75) and Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.4.4, 2.2.3, 2.2.19, 4.20.16 (on pp. 13-4, 158-9, 169, 980) are the most likely.

⁵² AL, OFB IV, p. 182.

⁵³ As Horowitz notes, the Stoic view of *logos spermatikos* is not entirely original to them, and bears the footprints of Platonism. To make matters more complicated, the Renaissance Neoplatonists often attributed many Stoic ideas to the Platonic Academy, making it hard to 'distinguish Stoicizing Platonism from Platonizing Stoicism' (*Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge*, p. 21).

urans (nature creating), the Renaissance Neoplatonists raised nature above its station by virtue of its participation in God's creative process and, moreover, created an authentic form of Christian piety which was rooted in the Earth.⁵⁴ It was this identification which would ultimately facilitate the growth of 'natural religion'—that religious sensibility implanted in each and every man and woman by the divine *physis*.

When we turn to fifteenth-century England, it becomes clear that the word religion referred, as it had throughout much of the Middle Ages, mainly to the discipline of the monastic life. Central to the medieval church's theological instruction had been 'faith' (*fides*); a rather difficult idea to pin down, as it was meant to capture an organic relationship thought to exist between the man and God. The word religion, by way of contrast, carried a much more specific meaning; referring primarily to 'the state of life bound by monastic vows.' Thus, to speak of the religions of England was, up until the sixteenth century, to refer to the various monastic orders.⁵⁵ The first move in redefining religion as—in Bacon's words—an 'inward Instinct', originated with the efforts of a Renaissance Platonist, who wished to show what he believed to be the universality of religiousness: the humanist, Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499). In Ficino, the shift away from religion as the life monastic and towards a concept of religion which belonged foremost to the ideal, led to a profound change in the manner in which society understood religion.

* * * *

Ficino posited a concept of religion with which he believed he could account for the many faces of religious expression. In *De Christiana religione* (1473), he made the claim that *religio* was a fundamental characteristic of humankind: it was the instinct, he argued, which raised us above the animals and defined our humanity.⁵⁶ But, in the *Theologia Platonica* (1469–1474), he took this idea further, and emphasized his belief that 'the worship of God' was 'as natural to men, as is neighing to horses or barking to

⁵⁴ See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1951] 2009), pp. 40-1.

⁵⁵ See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, [1962] 1991), pp. 31-2; Harrison, 'Religion' and the Religions, p. 11.

⁵⁶ See Marsilio Ficino, *De Christiana religione*, in *Opera omnia*, Basel: ex officina Henricpetrina, 1576), p. 2; and Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, ed. James Hankins et al., 6 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001-2006), 14.9, Vol. 4, pp. 293-5.

dogs.’⁵⁷ The ‘religion centred on one God, the religion all peoples share,’ he wrote, was ‘entirely natural to the human species.’⁵⁸ The pursuit of the divine originated in a universal instinct, he concluded, which prompted in us a yearning that was epitomized in the sense to which he assigned the word *religio*.⁵⁹

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ficino had no qualms with the ostensible diversity of religious rites. Quite to the contrary, he celebrated their multiplicity, and believed that the ‘Divine providence ... permits, to various peoples and ages, diverse rites of adoration [*ritus adorationis*] to be observed.’ Perhaps, he argued, ‘diversity of this kind, ordained by God, actually adorns the universe with a certain marvellous beauty.’⁶⁰ The light of the ideal *religio*, cast as it was through clouds of matter, could produce only distorted shadows in the form of humankind’s various rites of adoration, but Ficino believed that these shadows nevertheless decorated the world with a certain ‘marvellous beauty.’⁶¹ Speaking once more of our natural inclination to religion in the *Theologia Platonica*, he observed that:

we can see religion being affirmed by the fact not only that it is man’s alone but also that all the opinions, feelings, and customs of men change while religion does not. When I say religion [*religio*], I mean that instinct [*instinctum*] which is common and natural [*naturalem*] to all peoples and which we everywhere and always use to think about providence and to worship it as the queen of the world.⁶²

For Ficino, this natural ‘instinct’, a vestige of the Platonic form *religio*, had remained constant through time, while the actual embodied imitations of religion—all the ‘opinions, feelings, and customs of men’—were transient and ephemeral. Religion was thus understood as belonging to two separate, but interconnected, spheres of reality: the ideal and eternal form in the mind of God; and our approximate and temporal versions of the incorruptible original. As a result, the naturalness of religion consisted not in its conspicuous diversity, which was a mere signpost to the divine, but in the fact that a fragment of that higher reality of religion’s preformed Platonic ideal was to be found in man. Indeed, the idea of religion—that perfect, superlative, and most natural adora-

⁵⁷ Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 14.9, Vol. 4, p. 293.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.10, Vol. 4, p. 317: ‘communem ipsam omnium gentium ad deum unum religionem esse humanae speciei admodum naturalem.’

⁵⁹ Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 34.

⁶⁰ Ficino, *Opera*, I, 4, (on p. 4).

⁶¹ See Harrison, ‘Religion’ and the religions, pp. 12-13.

⁶² Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* 14.9 (in Vol. 4, p. 295).

tion of the divine—could, Ficino believed, be found reflected in one manner or another throughout the entire human race.

Bacon likewise thought that, insofar as this inward instinct was concerned, there was no place in the world where religion could not be found. In his essay 'Of Atheisme', for instance, he explained that:

the *Indians* of the *West* have Names for their particular *Gods*, though they have no name for *God*: As if the *Heathens*, should have had the Names *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, *Mars*, &c. But not the Word *Deus*: which shewes, that even those Barbarous People, have the Notion, though they have not the Latitude, and Extent of it.⁶³

Familiar with the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590) of José Acosta, Bacon believed that Acosta's observations confirmed the ancient opinion that even amongst barbarous peoples there was to be found some sense of God.⁶⁴ Even Calvin approved of Cicero's statement in the *De natura deorum*, that 'all men of all nations... have engraved in their minds an innate belief that the gods exist.'⁶⁵ Having accepted what had rapidly become the received, Platonic idea of religion, Calvin claimed that 'there never has been, from the very first, any quarter of the globe, any city, and household even, without religion.'⁶⁶ But Bacon took one step further and, despite Ficino's contempt for the idea that animals might be in possession of natural religion, argued that there was 'to be found a certain shadow and image even in noble beasts; for, concerning lions it is common knowledge that, towards those who yield and prostrate themselves, their fury is curbed.'⁶⁷ Employing the supposed charity (*caritas*) of lions who abate their hostility towards another should their prowess be acknowledged superior, Bacon thus argued that even the noblest of beasts possessed—albeit, to a very limited extent—some natural spark of religiousness.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ess, OFB XV, p. 52.

⁶⁴ José de Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall History of the East and West Indies*, trans. E. G. (London: Valentine Sims, 1604), pp. 333-35; Bacon mentions Acosta's treatise in *NO*, OFB XII, p. 231.

⁶⁵ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.17, 2.4, pp. 45-9, 133-5; Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.1, p. 9 writes that 'as a heathen [Cicero] tells us, there is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God.'

⁶⁶ Calvin makes a similar argument in *Institutes*, 2.2.26, p. 174; Calvin's view of religion is quite similar to Ficino's, for example in 1.3.2, p. 10, he writes: '... had the minds of men not been previously imbued with that uniform belief in God, from which, as from its seed, the religious propensity springs.'

⁶⁷ *MedS*, SEH VII, p. 235.

⁶⁸ *DAS*, SEH IV, pp. 398-9; Jerome, who believed *syntérêsis* was a characteristic that humans possessed over animals, identified Cain as the symbol of postlapsarian humanity, who, even though fallen, nevertheless possessed his original *scientilla conscientiae*; see Horowitz, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge*, p. 52. Bacon seems to be somewhat unusual in his view that animals possess a limited religiosity in the form of *caritas*.

While Bacon accepted the underlying philosophical views of both Cicero and Ficino on the light of nature, he was quick to reject the metaphysical trappings of both the ancient Stoics and Neoplatonists: the divine, he thought, was not immanent within the order of nature, as the Stoics had believed; nor was the Platonic form *religio* anything other than a fanciful idea.⁶⁹ All the same, it is clear that his idea of religion was indebted in at least two significant ways to his Renaissance predecessors. In the first instance, he retained at least some vestige the twofold, Neoplatonic concept of *religio*; for, in the same passage of *An Advertisement* quoted in Chapter 2, he remarked that 'Religion hath partes which belong to eternity and partes which pertayne to time.'⁷⁰ As we have seen, Bacon too believed the diversity of ceremonies (*differentia rituum*) to be a signpost of the uniform and eternal religion. In the second instance, he shared with Ficino the opinion that belief in the divine was an instinct entirely natural to the human race.

The similarities stop here, though. For, the largely positive interpretation that Ficino had accounted our natural inclination to piety was largely reversed by Bacon, the origins of whose pessimism is unmistakable. Calvin, who had caused Anne Bacon more than a few night-terrors over the salvation of her sons's souls, also influenced Bacon in his emphasis on the degeneracy of the light of nature. Although he agreed with his Renaissance predecessors that the light of nature was a genuinely universal characteristic of humans, Calvin thought that, more often than not, this remnant of the divine spark incited us not to piety, but rather to superstition and idolatry. This interpretation, as we shall see, would have a profound impact on Bacon.

* * * *

The concept of *synderesis* which had been situated, as we have seen, at the heart of the medieval natural law tradition, was well known to Bacon.⁷¹ Yet, in his interpretation of the natural light through which *synderesis* was imprinted, Bacon was indebted largely to Calvin. For scholastic theologians, *synderesis* had come to be narrowly defined as self-evident propositions about the general principles of moral action. Such principles as 'avoid evil, do good' were considered to be constituent of those dictates

⁶⁹ See AL, OFB IV, p. 83; DAS, SEH IV, p. 360.

⁷⁰ ACE, OFB I, pp. 162-3.

⁷¹ Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', p. 214.

of practical reason which preceded all moral action.⁷² The *locus classicus*, Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, for example, defines *synderesis* not as a power of the intellect, but rather as a 'special natural habit' to which belong all the general truths of goodness.⁷³ Although Bacon accepted that there existed a 'habit of Goodness,' his elimination of the principal term was, as we shall see, indicative of a larger shift in his understanding of the interrelated notions of nature and religion.

In interpreting the light of nature as a divine spark, it will be remembered that Bacon had adopted three of Jerome's four terms, having dispensed only with *synderesis* itself. The two words with which he replaced the Greek derivative—namely, 'inward instinct' (*instinctus internus*)—do not hint at a straightforward substitution, but rather a fundamental shift in the sense that he ascribes to the light of nature.⁷⁴ In fact, the term instinct, which was central to Ficino and Calvin, expresses here the far more general sense of 'a natural impulse.'⁷⁵ So in contrast to the scholastic notion, Bacon's inward instinct advances a view shared generally by Ficino and Calvin, wherein humans, 'like an animal,' are said to 'follow the inclination of [their] nature, without reason, without deliberation.'⁷⁶ This same shift is also observable in Calvin's employment of Jerome's 'spark of conscience' (*scintilla conscientiae*); for by the seventeenth-century, the idea of 'conscience'—a notion which had become tightly woven into the fabric of English Calvinism—was commonly understood as a corrective 'awareness' rather than a deliberative faculty of the mind.

Although Aquinas and other prominent schoolmen had incorporated the idea of *conscientia* into their elaborate systems of theology, its close association to the faculty of reason and its judgment of right and wrong rendered it largely superfluous within the scholastic fold.⁷⁷ Calvin, on the other hand, had stressed the importance of human conscience as separate from, and even superior to, our faculty of reason, and in doing so defined it more as a 'punitive' or 'corrective' sense than an active instrument for discerning good from bad.⁷⁸ In the *Institutes*, for example, he argued that 'when

⁷² Thomas Slater, 'Synderesis', Vol. 14, in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., 17 vols (New York: Encyclopaedia Press, 1907-1918).

⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, Q. 79, A. 12.

⁷⁴ DAS, SEH I, p. 831.

⁷⁵ Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', p. 204.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.1, p. 5; Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', p. 204.

⁷⁷ Aquinas, *Summa*, III, Q. 27.

⁷⁸ Robert S. White *Natural Law in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 39.

men grasp the conception of things with the mind and the understanding they are said "to know", from which the word "knowledge" is derived.' However, when

men have an *awareness* of divine judgment adjoined to them as a witness which does not let them hide their sins but arraigns them as guilty before the judgment seat—this *awareness* is called 'conscience'. It is a certain mean between God and man, for it does not allow man to suppress within himself what he knows, but pursues him to the point of making him *acknowledge* his guilt.⁷⁹

Calvin even went so far as to claim that, through our 'tiny little spark of light,' man recognized his 'conscience to be higher than all judgments' of his reason.⁸⁰ Our conscience, as such, was not tied to the faculty of reason: it was an innate 'awareness' of moral and immoral acts. This remnant of the light of nature through which there was a natural connection between God and man was perceived then as more fundamental to the sphere of human morality than the judgments of reason precisely because it was, for Calvin, an 'inward integrity of [the] heart.'⁸¹ Although our conscience could tug at the strings of our heart when we erred, for Bacon too it could never inform us how we *ought* to behave.⁸² It was 'sufficient to check the vice,' he agreed, 'but not to informe the dutie'.⁸³ The very fact that the light of nature did not provide the mind with positive knowledge of the law, but only a punitive sense of transgressing it, was verification enough for him of the faintness of our spark. Although it might be argued that such a natural awareness of having transgressed the law does constitute 'knowledge' of the will of God, this is only be correct in an extremely weak sense; as, for instance, when a worker bee is said to 'know' how to return to the hive after collecting nectar.

It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that Bacon did not in the end rule out the scholastic notion of habit. Instead, he drew a sharp distinction: there was not 'only a habit of Goodness, directed by Right Reason,' he argued, 'but there is in some Men, even in Nature, a Disposition towards [goodness]'.⁸⁴ The first article clearly refers to *synderesis*, for the intellectualive soul is said to retain a 'habit' susceptible to the motions

⁷⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10.3, pp. 781-2. Emphasis added.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.10.5, pp. 782-3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.19.16, pp. 557-8.

⁸² White *Natural Law*, p. 58.

⁸³ AL, OFB IV, p. 183.

⁸⁴ Ess, OFB XV, p. 40.

of 'Right Reason'.⁸⁵ Bacon also makes it clear that he accepts Aristotle's claim '*that virtues and vices consist in habit,*' and argues that whether one develops habits which incline one towards goodness or malevolence depends entirely upon the way in which one's reason is employed.⁸⁶ Although it is true that the light of nature was traditionally associated with natural reason, Bacon chose to connect natural reason only with his first sense in *The Advancement*; namely, 'that which springeth from Reason, Sense, Induction, Argument.' He stresses this distinction again in the *De augmentis*, where he highlights the fact that the law can be grasped either '*lumine naturae aut rationis dictamine*' ('by the light of nature *or* the dictates of reason').⁸⁷ Bacon turns out, then, to be more optimistic than Calvin on this point, who had believed the light of reason to have been overtaken by such a 'darkling gloom' that it could not even reach out in the general direction of the divine.⁸⁸

It is clear that Bacon understood the intellect as affording humans with some 'notions' and 'conceits' (i.e., knowledge)—in the traditional sense—of God's eternal law. But, it is also evident that he did not associate the schoolmen's *synderesis* with his second interpretation of the *lumen naturae*.⁸⁹ A genius for intellectual precision, Bacon's familiarity with the intricacies of the scholastic notion, on the one hand, and the particular phraseology he employs, on the other, attest to his knowledge of the medieval tradition, but also point to a very different, if somewhat idiosyncratic, view of the light of nature. For, when he does provide further insight into his second sense, it reveals him to be sufficiently original in his thought as to be without any precedent. In his essay dedicated to the subject of '*Philanthropia*', for starters, Bacon argued that our 'inclination to Goodness' is imprinted so 'deeply in the nature of man,' that 'if it issue not towards men, it will take unto other living creatures; as it is seen in the Turks, a cruel people, who nevertheless are kind to beasts, and give alms to dogs and birds.' This interpretation accounts for the 'Goodness of Nature' then insofar as it is

⁸⁵ This is very close to Hugo Grotius's celebrated formulation of the natural law: 'the law of nature is a dictate of right reason, which points out that an act, according as it is or is not in conformity with rational nature, has in it a quality of moral baseness or moral necessity; and that, in consequence, such an act is either forbidden or enjoined' (*De iure belli ac pacis libri tres*, I.1.10.1).

⁸⁶ AL, OFB IV, p. 151; Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, X, 9, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 597.

⁸⁷ *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), published roughly eighteen years before *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623), did not include 'the dictates of reason'; see AL, OFB IV, p. 182; DAS, SEH I, p. 830.

⁸⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the New Testament*, trans. by John Owen (1844-56), John 1:4; see also Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, p. 92.

⁸⁹ By the end of the sixteenth century, Calvin's 'instinct' had become a straightforward substitution for *synderesis* in England; see Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', p. 215.

an ‘inclination’.⁹⁰ As one of the ‘instincts of the spirit’, our natural proclivity for the law is conceived as an entirely non-rational impulse.⁹¹ Bacon believes this instinct of the spirit to be so deeply rooted, in fact, that he even designates it a participant in one of the *modi operandi* of nature itself.

In the course of *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon argues that ‘there is fourmed in euery thing a double Nature of Good’:

the one, as euery thing is, a Totall or substantiue in it selfe; the other, as it is a parte or Member of a greater Bodye; whereof the later is in degree the greater, and the worthier, because it tendeth to the conseruation of a more generall fourme. Therefore we see, the Iron in particular sympathye mooueth the Loadstone; But yet if it exceede a certayne quantity, it forsaketh the affection to the *Loadstone* and like a good patriot mooueth to the *Earth* which is the Region and Countrye of Massiue Bodyes ... But rather then to suffer a diuulsion in the continuance of Nature they wil mooue vpwards from the Center of the Earth; forsaking their dutye to the *Earth* in regard of the duty to the *World*. This double nature of Good & the comparatiue thereof is much more engrauen vpon Man, if he degenerate not.⁹²

Not only are humans and ‘noble beasts’ endowed with an instinctual awareness of the moral law, but even matter, such as iron, possess some appetitive motion towards the good. It is here that the importance of the bond between Bacon’s metaphysics and our spark of conscience is disclosed: the instinct with which we recognize the moral law originates in ‘the appetite or instinct of primal matter’; the most primordial and ‘*natural motion of the atom*’.⁹³ Although there are innumerable occurrences in which our inclination is oriented towards an instance of the good (i.e., when the ‘Iron in particular sympathye mooueth the Loadstone’), there exists an underlying law in the universe through which all things tend, at one point or another, to the greater good (as when iron ‘forsaketh the affection to the *Loadstone* and like a good patriot mooueth to the *Earth*). Our instinctual grasp of the moral law is thus that which guides our general inclination towards the greater good, but also that which informs our reason in individual cases of ethical choice. As a consequence, there is little difference, for Bacon,

⁹⁰ Ess, OFB XV, p. 39.

⁹¹ DAS, SEH V, p. 9.

⁹² AL, OFB IV, p. 136. This passage is re-articulated in *The Advancement* from Bacon’s slightly earlier *Brief Discourse Touchinge the Happy Union of the Kingdoms* (1603). I should like to thank Richard Serjeantson for pointing this out.

⁹³ DSV, SEH VI, p. 729.

between the moral and the physical law of the universe: both originate in the mind of God, both issue through creation, and both belong to 'the secret instincts of nature'.⁹⁴

Bacon also identified the superior sense of the good to which we are instinctually tethered as charity (*caritas*). For him, the idea of charity was located between the medieval view of *caritas* as unconditional love for God and one's neighbours (for the sake of God) and the late-Renaissance idea of charity as philanthropy (selfless deeds for the betterment of society).⁹⁵ The latter sense originated largely from the Calvinist tradition and, in particular, from Calvin's belief that charitable acts should be read as visible 'marks' of election.⁹⁶ Even Bacon's identification of benevolence with our 'duty to the World' is likely derived from the *Institutes*, for it was in this work that the medieval view of charity as one of the three Cardinal virtues was first replaced with a view of charity as a 'duty acceptable to God.'⁹⁷ Charity retains its original sense of a 'theological virtue' in Bacon's thought, and yet comes to denote a love that is directed less towards God than in imitation of God's (*imitatio divinitatis*) all-encompassing love.⁹⁸ The divine here is seen as the superlative of *caritas*; that Being from which charity is understood to permeate depths as low as the atomic substratum of material nature. Bacon likewise equates the *imago Dei* with 'holiness and charity': to cultivate charity, he says, is to 'attend to the image of God,' which 'exists in all.'⁹⁹ In this way, he associates the image of God less with the substantive view, which understood the *imago Dei* to be mirrored in human reason and our freedom of will, and more with his own distinctive interpretation of *caritas*, in which elements of both the scholastic and Calvinist traditions are fused together.¹⁰⁰ Although Calvin may have viewed charity as a duty pervading the depths of nature, Bacon was alone in developing a fully-fledged matter theory in which the Protestant notion of *caritas* was retained as a governing principle of the universe. It is, as a result, a concept of natural law as 'the summit and

⁹⁴ SS, SEH II, p. 666.

⁹⁵ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 168-9; for the medieval notion see Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, XIV, 7, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 556; Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II, Q. 23.

⁹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.8, pp. 677-8.

⁹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.18.8, pp. 545-6.

⁹⁸ Ess, OFB XV, p. 40; MedS, SEH VII, p. 235.

⁹⁹ DIMP, SEH VII, p. 224. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.7.6, p. 453.

¹⁰⁰ Bacon does, in fact, view the image of God as consisting, 'in a reasonable soul, in innocency, in free will, and in sovereignty,' but also in *caritas* (CF, SEH VII, p. 221); Melancthon also thought that the ability to recognize good and evil represented one of the *vestigia* of God left in man: see Charlotte Methuen, 'Lex Naturae and Ordo Naturae in the Thought of Philip Melancthon', *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 3 (2000), pp. 110-125 (on p. 118).

exaltation of charity' that—within the bounds of nature—binds humans to the word of God's promise.¹⁰¹

Bacon was quite exceptional, I believe, in equating natural law with the laws of nature.¹⁰² The medieval schoolmen had perceived the law as 'natural' in so far as natural reason was believed to be capable of grasping God's original commandments. But Bacon did not, as we have just seen, wholeheartedly subscribe to this view: while the moral law could be apprehended through a habit directed by right reason, he read our 'inward instinct' as a natural inclination which we shared with stones; albeit one that ultimately manifests itself in humans as a sense of conscience. There are, in fact, numerous passages scattered throughout his works, which—as his explanation of the natural motion of iron towards goodness—affirm his belief that good and evil are genuinely the 'colours' of the physical world.¹⁰³ Conversely, there are to be found in his legal publications, instances of policy which suggest the same. For example, in his celebrated argument in *Calvin's Case* (1608), Bacon asked:

Is it not a common principle, that the law favoureth three things, life, liberty and dower? And what is the reason of this favour? This, because *our law is grounded upon the law of nature, and these three things do flow from the law of nature*; preservation of life, natural; liberty, which every beast or bird seeketh and affecteth, natural; the society of man and wife, whereof dower is the reward, natural.¹⁰⁴

When he writes that common law, 'our law', is grounded 'upon the law of nature' and, moreover, that the 'preservation of life', 'liberty', and 'the society of man and wife' flows from nature, Bacon is in fact making reference to their analogues in the material appetites of nature: these are matter's underlying primordial 'tendency to self-preser-

¹⁰¹ SEH VII, p. 235.

¹⁰² See Vickers, p. 563. Philip Melanchthon may have been approaching the view that *principia practica* of natural law were parallel to the *principia speculativa*, that is, the laws of mathematics, but it is doubtful that he identified the natural law implanted in human minds with the laws of nature *per se*; see Methuen, '*Lex Naturae and Ordo Naturae*', p. 116. On the other hand, Melanchthon clearly believed that natural philosophy could provide the first principles of moral action, which would seem to suggest the possibility of moral order in the universal. See also Sachiko Kusukawa, 'Nature's Regularity in Some Protestant Natural Philosophy Textbooks 1530-1630', in *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolles (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 105-122 (on pp. 112, 115).

¹⁰³ CGE, SEH VII, p. 77. See also White, *Natural Law*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ ArPN, SEH VII, pp. 663-4. Emphasis added. Bacon had a manuscript of his speech delivered in Calvin's Case produced and delivered to King James I (in BL Royal MS 17 A 56). I should like to thank Richard Serjeantson for pointing this out to me.

vation' (*oikeiosis*), its 'motion of liberty,' and, finally, its 'motion of union'.¹⁰⁵ The term *oikeiosis* (self-preservation) and *syneidesis* ('consciousness') are, in fact, closely associated in Diogenes Laertius, who relates that Chrysippus had maintained that our inclination to self-preservation arose from the consciousness of our existence and its inherent goodness.¹⁰⁶ It might also be wondered to what extent Hobbes was drawing upon Bacon here, for his idea in the *De cive* (1642, 1647) that humans seek self-preservation with 'a real necessity of nature as powerful as that by which a stone falls downwards' belongs to the vein of seventeenth-century thought that increasingly began to identify the natural law with nature *per se*, and of which, it seems, Bacon was an early advocate.¹⁰⁷

For Bacon, as for other Protestants, the pressing question was how could the corrupted human mind possess any knowledge of the natural law whatsoever? Even the conventional view of the reformers, in which fallen reason was thought capable of grasping at least some spark of the law, bears witness to theological discomfort in its ambivalence towards the Medieval notion of *synderesis*. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the celebrated Dutch jurist, who had likewise begun to dissociate natural law from the intellect, is a prominent example of the shared uneasiness of Protestants in attributing too much moral aptitude to the intellect. Bacon was of much the same mind: at one moment he affirmed reason's ability to grasp the moral law, while at the next he emphasized what he took to be the indisputable fact of its corruption. His movement towards the order of nature, rather than the nature of the mind, as the fount of natural law is conspicuous. In criticizing both natural and 'positive' lawyers in *The Advancement*, for example, he contended that 'there are *in nature* certain fountains of justice, whence all civil laws are derived but as streams.'¹⁰⁸ He does not view the streams and fountains that are found in nature in an allegorical sense, but takes it that the natural law is, in fact, identical to the laws of nature. Natural philosophical convictions thus

¹⁰⁵ Guido Giglioni, 'Mastering the Appetites of Matter. Francis Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum*', in *The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge. Embodied Empiricism in Early Modern Science*, ed. Charles T. Wolfe and Ofer Gal (Heidelberg; Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 2010), pp. 149-167 (on pp. 153-5, 160); Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694) holds a very similar position to Bacon, that self-preservation and mutual cooperation as the fundamental principles of natural law (*De jure*, II, iii, §14 & 15).

¹⁰⁶ Diogenes Laertius, 7.85-6, pp. 193-5. See Guido Giglioni, 'Justus Lipsius and the Notion of *oikeiosis*: A Note on the Early Modern Notion of Self-Preservation', in *Justus Lipsius and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Hiro Hirai and Jan Papy (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Seadewe van België Voor Wesebschappen en Kunsten, 2001), pp. 33-52 (on p. 39).

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. Richard Tuck, trans. Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ AL, OFB IV, p. 4. Emphasis added.

lie beneath his second sense of the light of nature here, which disclose his willingness to attach authority more to the natural world than to the human mind.

As far as I can see, Bacon never used the two words 'natural law' together. In fact, in the passage we have just examined, it will be remembered that he writes of the 'Morall lawe' (*lex moralis*), which has been implanted in us by an inward instinct. The traditional sense can certainly be read into this passage, and yet the nuances of his philosophy suggest a more idiosyncratic interpretation. Harrison has suggested that Bacon's 'two seuerall senses' foreshadow Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) distinction between pure and practical reason.¹⁰⁹ But I would argue otherwise; that rather than *reine* and *praktische Vernunft*, Bacon understood the two senses to be something more like 'reason' (*ratio*) and 'instinct' (*instinctus*). And, moreover, that although he did not place much confidence in either, he ultimately felt that it was 'in the latter sense principally' (namely, our inward instinct), that the mind was able to 'partake of some light to intuit and discern the perfection of the moral law.'¹¹⁰ Bacon did afford the faculty of reason a distinctive role in matters of religion; yet reason, for him, did not concern itself with the moral law as imprinted through the *lumen naturae*, but rather with the moral law as revealed in scripture. Before concluding this section, there is one further aspect of Bacon's substitution of inward instinct that warrants some attention, for it likewise extends beyond the traditional concept of the light of nature.

Calvin wrote that 'there are two main parts in that light which yet remains in corrupt nature. Some seed of religion is sown in all; and also the distinction between good and evil is engraven in their consciences.'¹¹¹ The first, some 'seed of religion', while not present in Bacon's two senses in *The Advancement of Learning*, is nevertheless a conspicuous feature of his thought about the light of nature. In a number of passages, Bacon says that our inward instinct also impresses something akin to an awareness of God upon our mind; it inscribes, he contends, *ille igniculus luminis primi, quo divinitatem agnoscimus* ('that spark of the primal light through which we recognize the divine').¹¹² Moreover, in his essay 'Of Atheisme' it will be remembered that he asserted that 'even those Barbarous People, have the Notion' which is signified by the

¹⁰⁹ Harrison, *Religion' and the religions*, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ DAS, SEH I, p. 831; 'In quo posteriore sensu praecipue particeps est anima lucis nonnullae ad perfectionem intuendam et discernendam legis moralis.'

¹¹¹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the New Testament*, John 1:5.

¹¹² MedS, SEH VII, p. 239.

word *deus*, 'though they have not the Latitude, and Extent of it.'¹¹³ It was Calvin, as we have seen, who had invested *instinctus* with the sense that Ficino had attributed to *religio*. This very diluted interpretation of the divine spark as a natural impulse, recurs in fact quite frequently in the *Institutes*. For instance, Calvin writes 'that there exists in the human mind and, in fact, by [a] natural instinct (*naturali instinctu*), some sense of the deity, we hold to be beyond dispute.'¹¹⁴ The light of nature here is no longer identified solely with the natural law, but also carries the much more diffuse notion of a 'sense of divinity' (*divinitatus sensum*). The fact that humans 'choose to worship wood and stone rather than be thought to have no God,' Calvin writes, is evidence of 'how very strong this impression of a deity must be.'¹¹⁵

Bacon was largely of the same mind, and it becomes clear in his exposition of atheism that the light of nature is constituent of more than just the law. While atheism can be professed, argues Bacon, our instinct of divinity renders it impossible to 'thoroughly believe' or even to be 'persuaded of it'.¹¹⁶ He insists that 'since it would liberate him if God did not exist,' the atheist

endeavours in every possible manner to convince himself of it and to plant such a thought in his mind... Nevertheless there remains in him that spark of the primitive light through which we recognize the divine, an instinct which he attempts in vain to extinguish and pluck out of his heart.¹¹⁷

The similarities with Calvin's *divinitatus sensum* are conspicuous: in the *Institutes*, for example, Calvin had written 'that this belief [in God] is naturally engendered in all, and thoroughly fixed as it were in our very bones, is strikingly attested by the contumacy of the wicked, who, though they struggle furiously, are unable to extricate themselves.'¹¹⁸ Rather than an genuine philosophical position, atheism is understood as a symptom of the reluctance of our will to affirm the existence of God.¹¹⁹ On account of the spark by which we acknowledge the reality of the divine, the capricious attempts of self-proclaimed atheists come to no avail. In *A Confession of Faith*, Bacon makes it

¹¹³ Ess, OFB XV, p. 52.

¹¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.1, p. 9; Greene, 'Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance', p. 204.

¹¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.1, p. 9.

¹¹⁶ Ess, OFB XV, p. 51.

¹¹⁷ MedS, SEH VII, p. 251.

¹¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.3, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁹ See Benjamin Milner, 'Francis Bacon: The Theological Foundations of Valerius Terminus', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (2007), pp. 245-64, (on p. 249); AL, OFB IV, p. 182.

clear that the law which was 'first imprinted in that remnant of light of nature, [and] left after the fall,' is, at the very least, 'sufficient to accuse' those who feign that there is no God.¹²⁰ We find, as such, ample evidence to indicate that Bacon saw the spark through which we possess some notions of 'vertue and vice' to be the same as 'that spark of the primal light through which we recognize the divine.'

What is not entirely clear, is whether Bacon understood the same instinct to be, at least in part, constitutive of religion. Ficino had explicitly identified our natural instinct with the word *religio*, and Calvin had even used the Latin *semen religionis* (seed of religion) rather than the Stoic *semina virtutis* (seed of virtue) or the Jeromian *scintilla conscientiae* (spark of conscience). However, it is clear from his *Institutes* that Calvin did not view doctrines, church practices, and the interpretation of scripture to constitute religion; such things were 'instructions' and 'instruments' (hence the title *Institutio Christianae religionis*) to help us to confess our faith. As Smith noted some years ago, the closest equivalent to Calvin's religion in modern English is 'piety'; the sense of godliness which prompts a man to worship.¹²¹ Although this may be true, it seems that the word religion was not strictly synonymous with piety for Calvin, for in a number of passages he writes of 'that piety [*pietas*] which is instilled into the breasts of believers, and from which alone true religion springs.'¹²² Hence, although Calvin identified piety with our natural sense of divinity, he considered religion to be something that required further cultivation.

Bacon likewise held the view that piety and religion were separate entities: in his essay 'Of Superstition', for example, he wrote that self-proclaimed atheists remain in possession of 'Naturall Piety' despite the fact that they lack genuine 'Religion'.¹²³ And again, in 'Of Unity in Religion', he suggested that 'it is better that Religion should deface mens vnderstanding, then their piety and charitie.'¹²⁴ Such natural piety, said to diminish in old age 'through the tepidness of charity, extended interaction with evil, and the difficulty of believing,' can nevertheless be tempered by nurturing reli-

¹²⁰ CF, SEH VII, p. 222.

¹²¹ Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, pp. 36-7, 39.

¹²² Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.4.4, pp 13-4.

¹²³ Ess, OFB XV, p. 54.

¹²⁴ Ess, OFB XV, p. 14; Bacon, responding to the line in Lucretius's *De natura rerum*: 'So great is the power of religion for evils,' is suggesting that since religion can lead to evil, it is better for it to impair our understanding, than to extinguish our sense piety and charity; Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. by Ronald Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), I, l. 101, p. 6.

gion in the mind.¹²⁵ It seems quite natural that Bacon should have interpreted our instinct as inclusive of both the natural law and our sense of divinity, since both notions are intimately connected by virtue of their inherent goodness: the natural law prompts men to seek goodness, and the 'Goodness of Nature' is after all the 'character of the Deity.'¹²⁶ The identification of goodness and deity is a supposition that extends back more than two-thousand years, yet it does not seem as though the medieval theological tradition drew any explicit connection between *synderesis* and a sense of divinity, such that this connection seems subsequently to have been drawn with the redefinition of religion in the works of Ficino and Calvin. Moreover, even though Bacon retains both reason and instinct in his 'two severall senses,' it is important to recognize that the general nature of Bacon's programme is to identify deficiencies in the state of learning rather than to provide firm answers.¹²⁷ It is tempting, in concluding this section, to read into Bacon's instinct the notion of 'natural religion' that was to become an authoritative stand-in in the English Enlightenment, but this would be to misinterpret him; for he rejected, as we shall now see, much of the efficacy of those underlying commitments which made natural religion so attractive to later generations.¹²⁸

The Light of Nature Corrupted

Adam and Eve had known no religion before the Fall. The biblical narrative recounts how the first humans had 'walked' with God in the Garden of Eden in their pristine condition.¹²⁹ For Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, prelapsarian man had known 'the heavenly light' first-hand through the divine gifts with which he had been endowed at Creation.¹³⁰ This closeness to God and creation was a theological *topos* which many prominent Protestants came to emphasize with a renewed enthusiasm in the sixteenth

¹²⁵ HVM, SEH II, p. 212. MedS, SEH VII, p. 239: '... seni defervescentia in pietate, ob charitatis teporem, et diutinam conversationem inter malum, necnon ob credendi difficultatem.'

¹²⁶ Ess, OFB XV, p. 40.

¹²⁷ See White, *Natural Law*, p. 59.

¹²⁸ 'Natural religion', that is, the religion of people in a state of nature, would become one of the central attempts hypothesis of the seventeenth century to wrestle with the newly-discovered multiplicity of 'religions': see David A. Pailin, 'The Confused and Confusing Story of Natural Religion,' *Religion* 24 (1994), pp. 199-212 (on p. 205).

¹²⁹ Gen. 3: 8.

¹³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.2, pp. 16-7; Philipp Melancthon, 'Preface to the *Commentary on the Soul*, in *Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusukawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 146f.

century. Both Luther and Calvin, for example, maintained that the supernatural gift of ‘righteousness’ was that which accounted for the original state in which the first man and woman had been graced with the immediacy of God. There was ‘no need of being justified and made upright,’ since Adam had righteousness ‘in full measure.’¹³¹ In his ‘pristine and primitive purity [*pristina et primitiva puritas*],’ Bacon likewise adopted the view that, before the Fall, Adam had known ‘God’s presence’ directly.¹³² His original ‘incorruption and glory’ had enabled him to enjoy ‘infinite happiness’ as he tended to his duties in the garden. As such, our first ancestors had been able, in their ‘true perfection,’ to ‘knowe as we are knowne.’¹³³ For Bacon, this amounted to a recognition, not only of the fact that we had once known God as he knows us, but also of the fact that we had once possessed a near-omniscient knowledge of the natural order.

The relationship between the prelapsarians and their Creator was not exclusive of nature, but rather embraced it as a dynamic force which tethered them together. In its perfected order, nature was nearly as translucent to Adam as it was to God: both the natural motions of the celestial heavens and the internal essences of plants and animals could be grasped clearly by the senses with which man had been endowed. ‘The first Acts which man performed in Paradise,’ recorded Bacon, ‘consisted of the two summarie parts of knowledge, the view of Creatures, and the imposition of names’.¹³⁴ Ruling over the flora and fauna of the garden, Adam’s perceived vocation as ‘natural philosopher’ and governor over nature enabled Bacon to sanction the acquisition of natural knowledge in *The Advancement of Learning*.¹³⁵ Although Luther had not held natural philosophy in high regard (with the exception of mathematics and astronomy), his concession—that so ‘he might not be idle, the Lord had given [Adam] work; to cultivate and to protect the garden’—was later adopted by Protestants who, like Bacon, wished to legitimize their own earthly vocations.¹³⁶ As a result, God was believed not only to have bestowed upon Adam the supernatural gift of righteousness, but also

¹³¹ Luther, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*, ‘An Analogy’; Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.12, pp. 165-6.

¹³² DAS, SEH I, p. 831; DINP, SEH III, p. 217.

¹³³ CF, SEH VII, p. 222; AL, OFB IV, p. 182.

¹³⁴ AL, OFB IV, p. 34.

¹³⁵ AL, OFB IV, p. 34; See Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 100.

¹³⁶ Luther, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*, ‘An Analogy’. Paracelsus, for instance, believed that the career of natural philosopher and physician was sanctioned by the Gospels because they involved a commitment to the light of nature; see Charles Webster, *Paracelsus: Medicine, Magic and the Mission at the End of Time* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 29.

those natural gifts—for instance, reason, will, and imagination—that had allowed him to perform his duties as steward of the natural world.

Protestant theologians stressed what they believed to have been these natural abilities: Adam's eyesight, it was claimed, was thought to have been sharp enough to pierce into nature's essential forms, while his reason was perfected such that he was able to name the myriad creatures according to the taxonomical divisions instituted by God himself. Yet, there was another natural gift afforded to the prelapsarian—the ability to sense the goodness which was embedded in the fabric of nature. Melancthon, in particular, held that Adam was capable of grasping not only the internal motions of natural bodies, but even their inherent moral order.¹³⁷ Bacon likewise claimed, in his fragmented work *Colours of Good and Evil* (1597), that a 'universal knowledge of the nature of things' alone would suffice to guarantee the verity of moral judgments.¹³⁸ Holding that 'colours', or shades of good and evil, had been imprinted upon creation, he understood a parallel *ordo moralis* to be, to a limited extent, perceptible to humans. Because 'this configuration (before the Fall [*ante praeverificationem*]) was the best of which matter (as it had been created) was susceptible,' Adam, Bacon believed, could literally see good and evil in the motions of nature.¹³⁹ Although somewhat curious, we might recall here the fact that the Bible situates the definitive knowledge of good and evil within a tree!¹⁴⁰ As a result, it was thought to be on account of his natural gifts, rather than his supernatural righteousness, that Adam had once been capable of distinguishing between the degrees of morality embedded in material nature.

What had been forbidden to Adam and Eve was a knowledge of the 'originals of good and evill'; that is, the reasons why God had decreed some things permissible, while others were prohibited.¹⁴¹ The fact that the tree was off limits to humankind was intended as evidence of God's commandment to the prelapsarians to accept his word. In defence of the pursuit of natural philosophy, Bacon explained that

as for the knowledge which induced the fall, it was, as was touched before, not the naturall knowledge of Creatures, but the morall knowledge of good and evill, wherein the supposition was, that Gods commaundments or prohibitions were not the originals of good and evill, but that they had other beginnings

¹³⁷ See Methuen, '*Lex Naturae* and *Ordo Naturae*'; Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, p. 101.

¹³⁸ CGE, SEH VII, p. 77.

¹³⁹ DPAO, OFB VI pp. 250-2; SEH V, p. 491.

¹⁴⁰ Gen. 2: 9.

¹⁴¹ AL, OFB IV, p. 34.

which man aspired to know, to the end, to make a total defection from God, and to depend wholly vpon himselfe.¹⁴²

It was the first man's 'aspiring desire to attain to that part of moral knowledge which *defineth* of good and evil' which caused his fall; not 'digging further and further into the mine of natural knowledge,' but 'intruding into God's secrets and mysteries' that was 'rewarded with a further removing and estranging from God's presence.'¹⁴³ In his attempt to uproot the foundations of the law, Adam yearned to depend 'upon himself and his own light, as a God.'¹⁴⁴ It becomes clear that, for Bacon, Adam and Eve did not possess genuine knowledge of good and evil: while they knew *if* something was good or evil, they had no knowledge of the *why* it was so. This points us towards an understanding of the restricted sense in which even the primal man, in the 'puritie of his first Estate,' was thought to have possessed knowledge of God's law: Adam could perceive the moral 'colour' of any given natural entity, but in venturing to discover a 'morall knowledge of good and evill,' he wickedly 'induced the fall.'¹⁴⁵

It is telling that, when Adam and Eve transgressed the moral law, the entirety of the natural order degenerated.¹⁴⁶ 'By the curse, which notwithstanding was no new creation, but a privation of part of the virtue of the first creation,' wrote Bacon, were the 'constant and everlasting laws which we call *Nature*' corrupted.¹⁴⁷ In his *Commentary on Genesis*, Calvin offers the identical interpretation: 'before the fall, the state of the world was a most fair and delightful mirror of the divine favour and paternal indulgence towards man. Now in all the elements we perceive that we are cursed.'¹⁴⁸ In so far as Adam had once been able to perceive the colours of good and evil, he argued that now we witnessed our own curse in the fact that the 'elements' which comprised nature had turned red in tooth and claw. Bacon, too, felt that 'after the fall of Adam' the state of the world (*status mundi*) was 'exposed and subjected to death and corruption.'¹⁴⁹ For both Calvin and Bacon, the moral bond between man and nature was so cohesive, that all of 'heaven and earth' was thrown 'into confusion by our sins.'¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ DINP, SEH III, p. 219; 217. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁴ CF, SEH VII, p. 222.

¹⁴⁵ AL, OFB IV, p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 250-1; See Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, p. 180-1; CF, Vickers, p. 109.

¹⁴⁷ CF, SEH VII, pp. 220-1.

¹⁴⁸ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Gen. 3: 17; see also Gen. 3: 3.

¹⁴⁹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 637: 'sed post lapsum Adami, morti et corruptioni expositum et obnoxium factum.'

¹⁵⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Jer. 5: 25; Susan Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thoughts of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), p. 28.

From this it is possible to elaborate, then, that Bacon understood the moral law with which God had endowed the entirety of creation as obstructed from humanity on two counts: nature itself, in the first, had degenerated such that it became disinclined to adhere to the law—both the natural and moral—which underlay it, and, in the second, our natural ability to recognize the colours of good and evil was nearly extinguished.

It is important to acknowledge that Bacon did not think the universal laws of nature had been perverted; a fact that equally holds true for the moral law. It is, rather, the matter of which the universe is comprised that was corrupted as a result of our sin. In *De sapientia veterum* (1609), for instance, Bacon interprets the fable of Orpheus as an allegorical exposition on the intractability of material nature. Although he assigns to Orpheus the 'image of a universal Philosophy [*Philosophiæ universæ*],' the fable nevertheless offers an illustration of the moral state of man and nature before and after the Fall.¹⁵¹ Renaissance humanists routinely read Orpheus as a divinely-inspired poet who civilized the barbarous.¹⁵² Bacon took their interpretation further. By the 'sweetness of his lyre,' Orpheus, he writes,

drew to him all kinds of wild beasts, in such a manner that, putting off their particular nature, forgetting all their quarrels and savageness, nor driven headlong by the sting and furies of their lust, nor even caring to satiate their voraciousness or to hound their prey, they all encircled him amenably and gently, as in a theatre, listening very intently to the harmony of his lyre. Nor was this all, for the virtue and sway of his music was so great that it moved the woods and even the stones, such that they too rearranged themselves, taking their positions around him in a suitable and orderly manner.¹⁵³

From this image, it is easy to imagine the original concordance of matter in Eden. Yet, after Orpheus was torn apart by Thracian women, continues Bacon, 'the bond of that order and just alliance' was immediately undone and 'chaos ensued': each and every 'beast returned to his own nature and turned one upon the other,' nor did 'the stones and woods remain in their proper places.'¹⁵⁴ Matter was corrupted after the Fall, such that its 'appetites' (*appetitus*) refused to adhere to the original harmony of the divine

¹⁵¹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 646.

¹⁵² Daniel P. Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953), pp. 100-120 (on p. 100).

¹⁵³ DSV, SEH VI, p. 647.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

order.¹⁵⁵ Although it was Adam who transgressed, the law itself did not falter; rather, material nature became recalcitrant to the divine will as manifest in the law.

The insubordinate appetites of matter have, as a consequence, rendered nature a veil obscuring the will of God. Bacon is emphatic that, while heaven and earth declare the omnipotence of God, they do not reveal his will. This holds true, he states, 'not onely in those points of faith, which concern the great misteries of the Deitie, of the Creation, of the Redemption, but likewise those which concerne the law Moral truly interpreted.'¹⁵⁶ Seeking knowledge of either those points of faith which circumscribe religion or the 'law Moral' from nature is almost impossible because of its corruption. 'Since the light of nature does not suffice to affirm either the will of God, or to reveal the correct worship of God,' writes Bacon, such knowledge must be sought elsewhere.¹⁵⁷ His utopian fable the *New Atlantis* (1626) implies as much, wherein he acknowledges that the inhabitants of Bensalem had acquired some knowledge of 'divine miracles' through natural philosophy; that is, through a knowledge of the secrets of nature.¹⁵⁸ Even the denizens of Bensalem, who are members of the 'elect', are nevertheless unable to acquire saving knowledge.¹⁵⁹ At most, Bacon understands natural knowledge as a *praeparatio evangelica*, for the people of Bensalem are depicted in the same passage as having received an ark containing the Bible and a letter from the Apostle Bartholomew. Given that the ark appears under a mysterious, cross-like pillar of light and, moreover, that the miracle of the 'gift of tongues' is given to them so that they might read the letter, it is clear that the Bensalemites were, in fact, chosen to receive a 'special benediction,' which occurred not through natural means, but through the direct intervention of God.¹⁶⁰ It is subsequently clear that natural theology cannot substantiate true religion.¹⁶¹

Knowledge of the divine acquired through human reason investigating nature had, of course, long been labelled natural theology. Yet Bacon was hesitant to attribute too much utility to natural theology on account of his beliefs about the intractability of matter to the laws of nature. In Book III of the *De augmentis* he conceded that 'there are several admirable secrets concerning [God's] attributes, and even more that refer

¹⁵⁵ CDNR, SEH III, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ DAS, SEH I, p. 545; AL, OFB IV, p. 182.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ NA, SEH III, p. 137.

¹⁵⁹ AL, OFB IV, p. 137.

¹⁶⁰ McKnight, *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought*, p. 15

¹⁶¹ See DAS, SEH I, p. 544: '... ad religionem autem astruendam non proferantur.'

to His regulation and stewardship over the universe, which can be soberly elicited and disclosed’ from observing the natural world.¹⁶² But he stressed that it is an extremely precarious enterprise: however cautious the natural theologian may be, to even ‘attentively inspect’ (*curiosius introspicere*) nature is ‘by no means safe.’¹⁶³ This is because

in this division of Natural Theology I observe so little deficiency, that I instead find an excess... in fact, it is the greatest detriment [*maxima incommoda*] and menace [*pericula*] which impedes both religion and philosophy; for it is that which will render religion heretical and philosophy imaginary and fabulous.¹⁶⁴

Since the world is no longer ‘an image of God,’ beliefs about God’s providence which have been acquired through nature can easily become ‘imaginary’ and ‘fabulous’, corrupting both religion and philosophy.¹⁶⁵ What Bacon is very clear about, then, is that those natural theologians who have come before him have never managed to attain an unadulterated natural theology—if such a *scientia* should even be possible.

If we turn to the *New Atlantis*, the question arises as to how Bensalem could have been a nation ‘compounded of all goodness’ prior to receiving the ‘heavenly light.’¹⁶⁶ Though the fallen world order could not reveal the ‘great mysteries of the Deitie,’ Bacon nevertheless acknowledged that the inhabitants of God’s chosen island were able to acquire some ‘information about the law of nature.’¹⁶⁷ The result is a society whose goodness has been cultivated through the correct method of interpreting nature. Since matter is no longer inclined to obey the laws of nature, the philosophers of Salomon’s House have learnt to shackle material nature in such a way to make it reveal ‘the secrets of nature and the conditions of matter.’¹⁶⁸ Bacon reads the mythological Proteus as an image of matter, for Homer had written that the only method of making the Great Seafarer divulge his secrets was ‘to secure his hands with manacles and shackle him in chains.’¹⁶⁹ In his *Parasceve*, Bacon had argued that the proper ‘vexations of art are truly as the chains and manacles of Proteus, which reveal the ul-

¹⁶² DAS, SEH I, p. 545; ‘...et admirabilia complura secreta circa attributa ejus, et multo magis circa regimen et dispensationem universum, etiam sobrie ex iisdem elici et manifestari queunt.’

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 545-6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 545; DAS, SEH IV, p. 341.

¹⁶⁶ NA, SEH III, pp. 137, 147.

¹⁶⁷ DAS, SEH I, p. 544.

¹⁶⁸ DSV, SEH VI, p. 651.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

timate struggles and trials of matter.’¹⁷⁰ The philosophers of Bensalem therefore instituted ‘trials’ and ‘experiments’ meant to provoke matter ‘into all kinds of strange and miraculous forms,’ through which they were able to determine some of its underlying regularity.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, such binding must be accomplished with ‘respect’ and ‘reverence’, as material nature, despite being fallen, remains the craftsmanship of God.¹⁷² The conjunction between the Baconian method, through which knowledge of the laws of nature is able to be acquired, and a well-ordered society is conspicuous in Bensalem: the island is inhabited by a nation ‘compounded of all goodness’ precisely because its philosophers have procured knowledge of the moral law at the same time as they have revealed the secret motions of material nature. Although they may have restored something of the original purity of Eden, Bacon remains emphatic that even this elect house of science requires the light of the Gospels. There is, as a result, some hope of reconstructing a law-abiding society through natural philosophy—indeed, this is the vital motivation for undertaking an advancement of learning in the first place—yet, in the end, God’s grace remains the only genuine prospect for moral rectitude.

The second obstacle to acquiring knowledge of the moral law is the mind. The human mind is impaired twice over in its pursuit of the moral law, because our faculty of reason is corrupt, but also because—as we have just seen—the object of reason’s natural investigations is itself obdurate in the face of the law. Without the proper tools of interpretation, nature will never yield its secrets. Without the appropriate medicine for the mind, humanity will remain unable to construct a knowledge of those ‘colours of good and evil’ which had once been perceptible to us. All that now remains to the lapsarian is a ‘sparkle of the puritie of his first Estate,’ a reminder of ‘uncontaminated human nature’ before the Fall.¹⁷³ What the philosophers of Bensalem discovered, in essence, was a viable method to seize upon what little natural light remained active; both in themselves and the order of nature, and, thereafter, how to augment it to their advantage. In his praise for King James I, Bacon discloses his conviction that the ideal society of Bensalem does not have to remain a mere fiction: ‘Such a light of nature I have observed in your Majestie ... a readinesse to take flame and blaze from the least

¹⁷⁰ DAS, SEH I, p. 399.

¹⁷¹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 651; ‘... in omnes formas atque rerum miracula.’

¹⁷² Peter Pesic, ‘Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the “Torture” of Nature’, *Isis* 90 (1999), pp. 81-94 (on p. 84).

¹⁷³ AL, OFB IV, p. 183; Kari Saastamoinen, ‘Pufendorf and the Stoic Model of Natural Law’, in *Grotius and the Stoa*, ed. Hans W. Blom and Laurens C. Winkel (Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), p. 260.

occasion presented, or the least sparke of another knowledge delivered.'¹⁷⁴ James I is openly compared to King Solomon, whose divine wisdom Bacon believes to hold the seeds of human restoration.¹⁷⁵ It is not by accident that Salomon's House is described as 'the lanthorn' of Bensalem: 'The Spirite of Man,' even warped by sin, remains the 'Lampe of God, wherewith hee searcheth the inwardnesse of all secrets.'¹⁷⁶ Bacon, despite his flattery, sees a 'sparke' in King James I, which, with 'divine assistance,' might truly become the 'lanthorn' of England.¹⁷⁷

Pandora, the mythical giver of all earthly gifts, is interpreted by Bacon as a metaphor for that 'relic' (*reliquus*) of our original awareness of the moral law.¹⁷⁸ Originating in Greek mythology, Pandora was shaped out of the earth upon Zeus's command as retribution for Prometheus's theft of the secret fire. There are obvious parallels between Eve, who persuaded Adam to eat fruit from the tree of good and evil and the enchantress Pandora and her 'jar' (*pithos*), which was fabled to contain the mysteries of the earth. Bacon, more specifically, interprets Pandora to signify that aspect of matter from which human 'pleasure and sensual appetite' arise.¹⁷⁹ The corruption of material nature is also the corruption of human nature: from Pandora, writes Bacon, 'infinite mischief has flowed forth upon the minds, the bodies, and the fortunes of men, along with a repentance when too late.'¹⁸⁰ As Guido Giglioni has said, for Bacon material nature consisted principally in the appetitive motions of matter, and 'man's essence was rooted in appetite.'¹⁸¹ It is, moreover, worth enquiring whether 'repentance' (*poenitentia*) denotes, for Bacon, 'conscience'? It would seem so, as that innate sense of regret after having erred (*conscientia*) is said to derive, as we have already seen, from the light of nature. It thus becomes clear just how it is that some spark yet remains, even after the near-total corruption of humanity: the mythic Pandora paints a picture of matter in which pleasure, sensual appetite, and repentance arise from the same wellspring.

¹⁷⁴ AL, OBF IV, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-4); Rose-Mary Sargent, 'Bacon as an Advocate for Cooperative Scientific Research', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*, ed. Markku Peltonen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 150-1.

¹⁷⁶ NA, SEH III, p. 145. AL, OFB IV, p. 7. In *Sylva sylvarum*, Century X, Bacon also writes that '*lucerna Dei spiracular hominis*': the lamp of God is the breath of man (SS, SEH II, p. 641).

¹⁷⁷ SS, SEH II, pp. 19-20.

¹⁷⁸ DAS, SEH I, p. 831.

¹⁷⁹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 674.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 674.

¹⁸¹ Giglioni, 'Mastering the Appetites of Matter', p. 150.

To a large extent, then, Bacon agreed with those Protestant reformers who had maintained that God had withdrawn both Adam's 'supernatural' and 'natural' gifts.¹⁸² Scholastic theologians had suggested that only our supernatural gifts (righteousness) had been lost, and that we still retained our original, unadulterated faculties. Luther, however, was quick to diagnose the schoolmen's reverence for the Philosopher: 'Here appeared the great light of nature,' condemned Luther from the pulpit; the one 'who now rules in Christ's stead in all the universities, viz.: the great famous Aristotle.'¹⁸³ Inordinate faith in unaided, human reason, criticized the reformers, was a reflection of the widespread moral decrepitude of the Church. Reacting to this perceived impurity, early Protestants insisted upon the degenerate nature of the human mind and the necessity of justification by faith alone. Calvin, for example, was adamant that 'man's natural gifts had been corrupted, and his supernatural gifts withdrawn.'¹⁸⁴ While this Augustinianism no doubt influenced Bacon's view, his thought reveals a lingering reluctance—perhaps even a certain optimism—about the power of humankind to kindle their own *philanthropia*.¹⁸⁵ Although Bacon retained more than a little hope in human nature, he appears to have been doubtful that the light of nature was an authentic fount of piety. This was likewise true of Calvin, whose indecisiveness about the efficacy of human reason was probably only tempered by the fact that, while he could debase human reason, in the practicalities of day-to-day life he was, like everyone else, dependent upon it.

A Voice Beyond the Light of Nature

However excellent our once 'true perfection' might have been, for Bacon the light of nature was no longer sufficient 'to informe the dutie' that was owed to the Creator.¹⁸⁶ Moral rectitude now needed to be attained through faith in 'the Son of God.' Since the Fall, the *lex moralis* had been dispensed to Adam's reprobate progeny according to a providential scheme, in such a manner that it would not be perfected until the coming of Christ. In *A Confession of Faith*, Bacon outlined his belief that

¹⁸² See Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, p. 157.

¹⁸³ Quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.12, p. 165.

¹⁸⁵ Ess, OFB XV, p. 40; On 'Augustinianism' in seventeenth-century England, see Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, pp. 8, 53-4; for the argument about Bacon's later-life optimism, see Briggs, 'Bacon's Science and Religion', pp. 186-7.

¹⁸⁶ AL, OFB IV, p. 183.

the law of God as the word of his promise endure the same for ever: but that they have been revealed in several manners, according to the dispensation of times. For the law was first imprinted in that remnant of light of nature, which was left after the fall, being sufficient to accuse: then it was more manifestly expressed in the written law; and was yet more opened by the prophets; and lastly expounded in the true perfection by the Son of God, the great prophet and perfect interpreter of the law.¹⁸⁷

The construal of the Son of God as the 'perfect interpreter of the law' originated with Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians*, where the 'Law of Christ' is mentioned.¹⁸⁸ The notion that Christ perfected the law of the Old Testament was commonplace in medieval biblical interpretation. Aquinas, for instance, interpreted the Law of Christ as the grace of the Holy Ghost which perfects the natural law which was first 'instilled in our hearts.' As a consequence, the 'New Law' is the identical to the old, natural law, yet perfected through the grace given to those who believe in Christ.¹⁸⁹ This view is consonant with the scholastic belief that we had retained our original natural gifts after the Fall.

Bacon, who believed that our natural gifts had been corrupted, tended towards the Protestant view that redemption was only possible for those who possessed 'grace, as a seed incorruptible'; that is, the elect.¹⁹⁰ Although he claimed that mankind could attain a partial restoration of his nature through learning to harness the secret power of matter, human labour could never provide either the knowledge, or grace necessary for salvation. 'The sufferings and merits of Christ,' he wrote,

as they are sufficient to do away the sins of the whole world, so they are only effectual to those that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost; who breatheth where he will of free grace; which grace, as a seed incorruptible, quickeneth the spirit of man, and conceiveth him anew that son of God and the member of Christ.¹⁹¹

While Bacon claims here that grace 'quickeneth the spirit of man,' he does not mean, like Aquinas, that Christ fulfils the natural law implanted in our hearts, but rather that grace 'reneweth in us the image of God in holiness and charity'; that is, that Christ provides an 'open passage' through which our original righteousness is restored. He

¹⁸⁷ CF, SEH VII, p. 222.

¹⁸⁸ 6: 2. Quoted from the 1560 Geneva Bible; the 'Law in Christ' also appears in 1 Corinthians 9: 21.

¹⁸⁹ Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II, Q. 106, A. 1.

¹⁹⁰ CF, SEH VII, p. 220; 1 Peter 1: 23; It seems most likely that Bacon is deriving the image of 'grace, as a seed incorruptible,' which is implanted in the elect, from Calvin's *Institutes*, where it is mentioned several times: 2.10.7 (pp. 276-7), 3.2.11 (p. 362), 3.2.21 (pp. 368-9), 3.24.11 (pp. 645-6).

¹⁹¹ CF, SEH VII, p. 224.

contends, as such, that 'that faith which was accounted to *Abraham* for righteous-ness was of such a point, as whereat *Sarah* laughed, who therein was an Image of Naturall Reason.'¹⁹² Akin to the interpretation of other prominent Protestants, human reason is, for Bacon, too degenerate to be perfected, such that 'the work of the Spirit be not tied to any means in heaven or earth.'¹⁹³ Bacon is in fact close here to Luther's view that, although faith alone can guarantee salvation, charity is nevertheless a witness to grace which 'fulfils the Law of Christ.' As a result, the supernatural gift of righteousness is restored through faith in Christ, the 'perfect interpreter' of the law, who is thereby an 'open passage' for our salvation.

Bacon was entirely typical in his view that the scriptures offered a testament to God's 'dispensations' throughout history.¹⁹⁴ 'The doctrine of Religion, as well Morall as Misticall,' he wrote, was 'not to be attained, but by inspiration and reuelation from God.'¹⁹⁵ God's most recent revelation was, of course, that which had been recorded in the scriptures. The ethical teachings of Christ recorded in the New Testament were not ones that had been 'imprinted in that remnant of light of nature' after the Fall. For, 'a great part of the Lawe Morall' was 'of that perfection, whereunto the light of Nature cannot aspire.'¹⁹⁶ Quoting the *Aeneid*, Bacon wrote '*Nec vox hominum sonat*' ('this voice has not a human ring').¹⁹⁷ Fallen matter possessed too much liberty to provide the moral knowledge required for salvation: 'we see that the heathen poets,' he wrote, 'particularly when they speak with *pathos*, often object to the laws and moral doctrines ... as though they were repugnant and malignant to the liberty of nature.' So as Ovid observed, 'What nature will allow,/ Their jealous code forbids'.¹⁹⁸ In the end, it was only 'from the word & oracle of God' that genuine religious knowledge could be acquired.¹⁹⁹

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¹⁹² AL, OFB IV, p. 182; DAS, SEH V, p. 112.

¹⁹³ CF, SEH VII, p. 224.

¹⁹⁴ DAS, SEH V, p. 118.

¹⁹⁵ AL, OFB IV, p. 183.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ DAS, SEH I, p. 831; Virgil, *Aeneid*. I, l. 328, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, 2 vols (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999-2000), Vol. 1, p. 121: 'Siquidem vox est quae lumen naturae superat.'

¹⁹⁸ DAS, SEH I, p. 381; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 330, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 235): 'Quinetiam videmus poetas ethnicos, praesertim cum pathetice loquantur, expostulare non raro cum legibus et doctrinis moralibus... ac si naturae libertati cum malignitate quadam repugnant: "Et quod Natura remittit, Invida jura negant".'

¹⁹⁹ DAS, SEH V, p. 112; AL, OFB IV, p. 182.

Much has recently been made of Bacon’s reading of the so-called ‘Two Books’: that is, the ‘Book of Nature’ and the ‘Book of Scripture’.²⁰⁰ Bacon does depict nature allegorically as a book.²⁰¹ But, as Guido Giglioni has rightly pointed out, he regarded this metaphor neither as particularly ‘felicitous’, nor even as ‘promising’.²⁰² In the initial instance, while nature did, in fact, possess an underlying ‘alphabet’ (*abecedarius*), it corresponded to the appetites of matter. Interpreting nature was thus a very challenging task precisely because it was not very readable: the recalcitrant nature of fallen matter had rendered it a veil, obscuring the immutable laws of God. Additionally, the human intellect was far too corrupt to comprehend nature in a straightforward, literal sense: ‘to the human intellect that contemplates the edifice of this universe,’ Bacon wrote, ‘nature looks like a labyrinth, where from every corner the eye is dazzled by ambiguous paths, equivocal signs, similarities among things, twisted and entangled “spirals and knots” of natures.’²⁰³ Bacon certainly did not see nature as ‘factual and inherently clear.’²⁰⁴ On the contrary, to grasp nature’s hidden *abecedarius* necessitated a nuanced hermeneutic akin to the deciphering of ancient fables, not a naïve literalism.²⁰⁵ It should also be noted, that Bacon was highly critical of the schoolmen, whom he perceived as slaves to the extremely stagnant institution of book-learning.²⁰⁶ It was the *vita activa* (active life), he maintained, that legitimated the *interpretatio naturae*; a method very much unlike the contemplative reading of a book. If nature was so readable, so open to interpretation, then why did Bacon go to such pains to delineate a method neither ingenuous nor self-evident?

Nature rightly interpreted could draw ‘us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God,’ but it was the scriptures which encapsulated the true ‘voice’ of God.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ There are a number of publications on this theme: see Steven Matthews, ‘Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon: Interpreting God’s Will and Power’, in *The Word and the World: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Science*, ed. Killeen and Peter J. Forshaw (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 61-77; also in the same volume, Peter Harrison discusses Bacon in ‘Reinterpreting Nature in Early Modern Europe: Natural Philosophy, Biblical Exegesis and the Contemplative Life’, pp. 23-44; see also Harrison, “‘The Book of Nature’ and Early Modern Science’, in *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History*, ed. Klaas van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 1-26.

²⁰¹ See AL, OFB IV, p. 9.

²⁰² Guido Giglioni, ‘Reading Nature without Making a Book of It: Francis Bacon’s *Novum organum*’ in *Mémoires / Misbooks. Études sur l’envers et les travers du livre*, ed. Pascale Hummel (Paris: 2009), pp. 31-45 (on p. 34).

²⁰³ Quoted in Giglioni, ‘Reading Nature without Making a Book of It’, p. 35.

²⁰⁴ Matthews, ‘Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon’, p. 67.

²⁰⁵ Giglioni, ‘Reading Nature without Making a Book of It’, p. 34.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ AL, OFB IV, p. 182; DAS, SEH I, p. 831.

This does not mean that biblical interpretation was uncomplicated: though God’s book was much more reliable than the book of nature, Bacon nevertheless recognized that, as in nature, there were real impediments to understanding its contents. Not least of such obstacles was the condition of the human mind. If the mind were ‘a cleare and equall glasse,’ then there would be no problem comprehending God’s revealed word. But because the mind was ‘an enchanted glasse,’ inclined to mistaken judgments, the interpretation of Scripture—just as the *interpretatio naturae*—required explicit guidelines.²⁰⁸ And, an adequate hermeneutic was vital, as nearly the entire sphere of moral and religious knowledge rested ‘vpon the true & sound Interpretation of the Scriptures,’ which were as ‘the fountains of the water of life’.²⁰⁹

Interpretive difficulties derived chiefly from the fact that Christ spoke directly to the ‘thoughts’ of men ‘of every age and nation’ through Scripture, and ‘not their words.’²¹⁰ So, while the teachings of the Gospels were levelled at thoughts, their divine author had to ‘speak’ to men *per verba* in order to accommodate the degenerate condition of their minds. The word of God was forever perfect, but the words of men in which it was couched were not. Communication between humans and God had, of course, broken down even further after the ‘second curse’; the confusion of tongues at Babel.²¹¹ Bacon proposed that, as a solution, this curse might be overcome in at least one of two ways: in the first instance, through learning the language of nature, ‘which extends to all corners of the earth, and has not suffered the confusion of Babylon’; and, secondly, through the construction of ‘Characters Real’—not unlike those from ‘China’ or the ‘High Levant’—which ‘express neither letters nor words in gross, but Things or Notions.’²¹² Should the Bible have been written in real characters, then, in principal, its meaning would have been transparent. Yet, as this was clearly not the case, scriptural hermeneutics needed to provide a reliable means to navigate ‘the innumerable brooks and streams of doctrine,’ in order that they might ‘nourish each part of the Church and the souls of the faithful.’²¹³ It was a mistake to suppose the perfec-

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

²¹¹ Gen. 11.

²¹² Ibid., p. 120; See Rhodri Lewis, *Language, Mind and Nature: Artificial Languages in England from Bacon to Locke, Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 13-19; Harrison, *The Fall of Man*, p. 176.

²¹³ DAS, SEH I, p. 836.

tion of the scriptures in their historical configuration, moreover.²¹⁴ A view such as this went against the grain of Puritan convictions, which often upheld the Bible as identical to the word of God. But the kind of literalism that girded Puritan readings of the Bible was not, as we shall see, amenable to Bacon's own views on the widespread defects of human language.

It was imperative that a sociable comprehension of the scriptures be instituted. Should God's word be wrongly interpreted, serious consequences were likely to befall the communion of believers. Indeed, such consequences were, for the late-Tudor, all too apparent. It needed to be recognized, first of all, that the Gospels were fundamentally dissimilar to any book in which human learning was enclosed: 'I doe much condemne that Interpretation of the Scripture,' Bacon wrote, 'which is onely after the manner as Men vse to interpret a prophane booke.'²¹⁵ The scriptures, he continued,

being giuen by inspiration, and not by humane reason, doe differ from all other books in the Author: which by consequence doth drawe on some difference to be vsed by the Expositor. For the Inditer of them did knowe foure things which noe man attaines to knowe, which are the misteries of the kingdome of glorie; the perfection of the Lawes of Nature: the secrets of the hearts of Man: and the future succession of all ages.²¹⁶

In other words, the Bible contained, and yet simultaneously cloaked, the providential decrees of God to each and every age precisely because the divine mind had chosen to accommodate his word to man through language. Bacon was acutely aware that the Church, since its earliest days, had been plagued with controversies which often arose from minute differences of biblical interpretation. Many a heresy had resulted from the misinterpretation of the Bible, which was why he thought it so crucial that it was reverently handled.²¹⁷

'There are unquestionably far too many books of Controversies to be found amongst theological texts,' he wrote: 'an immoderate mass of Theology which I have declared Positive; Common Places; Special Treatises; Cases of Conscience; Sermons and Homilies; and lastly, many prolix books of Scriptural Commentary.'²¹⁸ Such an overabundance of 'positive' theology, rather than being an asset in his opinion, com-

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 835.

²¹⁵ AL, OFB IV, p. 189.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 187.

²¹⁷ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 33.

²¹⁸ DAS, SEH I, p. 836.

prised a source of serious division amongst the faithful. Many of these writings were merely 'chaseing after controuersies,' kindling acrimony from the minutest points of doctrine.²¹⁹ With such an 'immodest and deformed manner of writing,' where matters of religion were dealt with 'in the style of the stage,' it was no wonder that such bitter divisions should arise.²²⁰ In response, Bacon argued that the lesser senses of scripture should be left more or less open to individual interpretation; for it was better that 'the tares in the field be not pulled up,' rather than the whole crop be spoiled.²²¹ Only the most fundamental points of doctrine, or those which required further refinement, he argued, should be enlarged with commentary:

Here againe I may rather giue it in aduise, then note it as deficient, that the points fundamentall, and the points of further perfection onely ought to bee with piety and wisdome distinguished: a subiect tending to much like ende, as that I noted before: for as that other were likely to abate the number of contro-versies: So this is like to abate the heate of manie of them.²²²

The problem remained, of course, which points were fundamental and which were not. Who possessed the 'piety' and 'wisdome' needed to tackle the critical doctrines, and so abate the heat of controversy? It was of 'the highest consequence to the peace of the Church, that the Christian covenant, prescribed by the Saviour, be well and clearly explicated.'²²³

Although he regarded Martin Luther as the great liberator of biblical interpretation, Bacon nevertheless believed that the basic authority of interpretation resided 'in the consensus of the Church [*in consensus Ecclesiae*].'²²⁴ Here, he is referring to both the Church of England and to the 'Fathers of the primitive church.'²²⁵ Even for Luther, the principle of *sola scriptura* had not been indicative of an outright rejection of authority, but rather the belief that no authority could supersede what was written therein. Bacon agreed. While he retained Luther's belief that only the Bible could reveal God's will, his criticism of the Puritans, who rejected all mediation of ecclesias-

²¹⁹ AL, OFB IV, p. 190.

²²⁰ CGE, SEH VIII, p. 76.

²²¹ DAS, SEH I, p. 834. Bacon is referring here to the *Parable of the Tares* from Matthew 13: 24-30: '... at zizania in agro non protinus evellenda.'

²²² AL, OFB IV, p. 185.

²²³ DAS, SEH I, p. 834: 'Interest admodum pacis Ecclesiae, ut foedus Christianorum, a Servatore praescriptum, ... benet clare explicetur.'

²²⁴ AL, OFB IV, p. 21; DAS, SEH I, p. 835.

²²⁵ ACE, SEH VIII, p. 75; See Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon', pp. 62-3.

tical tradition, indicates his support of the Established Church: 'they haue in a manner depriued themselues and the church of a special help and support by embasing the authority of *the* fathers,' he contended, and have resorted 'to naked examples, concept-ed inferences, & forced allusions such as doe myne into all certaynety of religion.'²²⁶ He thus endorsed what was becoming the dominant Church of England line; the position that, while 'the Church hath no power over the Scriptures to teach or command anything contrary to the written word,' it nonetheless was like

the Ark, wherein the tables of the first testament were kept and preserved: that is to say, the Church hath only the custody and delivery over of the Scriptures committed unto the same; together with the interpretation of them.²²⁷

One of the foremost apologists of the English Church, Richard Hooker (1554-1600), was concerned to delineate a moderate course between the extremes of Puritanism and Roman Catholicism (much like Nicholas Bacon), and so outlined a view which is, unsurprisingly, similar to Bacon's.²²⁸ Published just after *An Advertisement*, Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Piety* (1594) stressed that, while the Bible, as the 'oracle of God,' defined all knowledge 'necessary unto salvation,' the character of the message contained therein required the Church to act as an arbiter.²²⁹ Hooker was undoubtedly known to Bacon, and at the very least they would have travelled in shared social circles.

By and large, Bacon accepted the traditional, fourfold hermeneutic which had dominated the Middle Ages. The four senses—the literal, allegorical, moral, and analogical—each make an appearance in his discussion of the interpretation of the Bible at the end of *The Advancement of Learning*. Harrison has argued that the Protestant emphasis upon the literal sense of the Bible came to be transferred into the sphere of natural philosophy.²³⁰ However, this holds true neither of Bacon's interpretation of the scriptures nor, as we have seen, of his interpretation of nature. While it is clear that Bacon saw Luther—who had been 'conducted (no doubt) by a higher prouidence'—as

²²⁶ ACE, OFB I, p. 192.

²²⁷ CF, SEH VII, p. 225.

²²⁸ Lee W. Gibbs 'Biblical Interpretation in Medieval England and the English Reformation', in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, 2 vols (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), Vol. 2, pp. 392-3.

²²⁹ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. A. S. McGrade and Brian Vickers (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1975), pp. 155, 156.

²³⁰ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 8.

having re-established the centrality of the scriptures 'against the Bishop of *Rome*, and the degenerate traditions of the Church,' he did not have in mind the literal sense *per se*.²³¹ In truth, Bacon viewed Luther as having restored the reading of the Bible, above the 'prolix' wanderings of the Roman Church, to its rightful place as the true fount of religious knowledge. To return to the source, *ad fontes*, was to restore the Bible to its rightful place: it was not a call to literalism, but a call to stick to the scriptures, and thus avoid the snares placed by scholastic usurpers. This, in essence, was why Bacon felt that, where Luther had championed the scriptures, he would champion the interpretation of nature. It was imperative to adhere to nature, so as to avoid fallacies of the mind, but such an adherence did not entail a literal hermeneutic. Quite to the contrary, to think that nature could be interpreted literally was a grave mistake, for nature concealed far more below the surface than a literal approach could perceive. This was equally true of the Bible: although adherence to the scriptures was essential to prevent corruption entering into true religion, Bacon never associated the literal interpretation of the scriptures with the faith he believed was centred upon it.

Where Luther had reserved a special, albeit measured, place for the allegorical, Bacon followed suit. Matthews has pointed out that, while he read some passages—notably, Genesis—literally, Bacon's *Instauratio* was legitimated chiefly through allegorical interpretations of the scriptures.²³² Matthews is very much in the right: Bacon was far from advocating a strict, biblical literalism. His writings reveal, rather, a zest for figurative readings of the Bible, as well as the fables of the ancient world. Bacon believed that each of the four senses was capable of yielding fruit, if wisely and piously applied to the scriptures. Yet, he remained mindful of what he took to be the hazards present in three of the four senses. The only sense excepted was the moral, and this was due, on the one hand, to the fact that he felt it offered the greatest benefit to society and, on the other, because it was, in theory, the least susceptible to misuse. The 'Morall sense chiefly,' he wrote, 'and sometimes the *Allegorical* or *Typicall* are they whereof the Church hath most vse.'²³³ Given his insistence upon the charitable character of religion, his belief that the moral interpretation of the Bible was of the greatest benefit to the public good is not particularly surprising. Since nature could no

²³¹ AL, OFB IV, 21.

²³² Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon', p. 64; see also Peter Harrison, 'Reinterpreting Nature in Early Modern Europe: Natural Philosophy, Biblical Exegesis and the Contemplative Life', p. 38.

²³³ AL, OFB IV, p. 189.

longer be interpreted morally, the scriptures—as the written testament of God's will—were required to amend the paucity of our moral knowledge. Our natural light could offer an awareness that we ought not to have just stolen the communion chalice, but only Scripture could provide us with a knowledge of what ought to be done. Lacking an alternative source, a proper appreciation of the moral lessons set forth in the Bible was, in Bacon's opinion, paramount to the success of the Church of England and to the salvation of its largely *mécontent* flock.

In addition to the four senses of the Bible, Bacon identified what he took to be the deficiencies and dangers of the 'two sorts' of acquiring knowledge from the Bible: the 'Methodical' (*Methodicus*) and the 'Solute' (*Solutus*).²³⁴ There is a large amount of overlap between the methodical and literal, as well as between the solute and allegorical. Nonetheless, for Bacon these two approaches preceded the application of the fourfold hermeneutic and, as a result, need to be understood independently. In order to distinguish between them, Bacon fashioned a metaphor in *The Advancement* out of an image taken from the Book of John:

this diuine water which excelleth so much that of *Iacobs* Well, is drawne forth much in the same kinde, as Naturall Water vseth to bee out of Wells and Fountaines: either it is first forced vp into a Cesterne and from thence fetcht and de-riued for vse: or else it is drawne and receiued in Buckets and Vessels immediately where it springeth. The former sort whereof though it seeme to be the more readie, yet in my iudgement is more subiect to corrupt.²³⁵

He associated the methodical approach—that which is 'forced vp into a Cesterne'—with the method of 'scholasticall diuinitie'; and the solute approach—that which is 'drawne and receiued in Buckets and Vessels'—with Paracelsus and the 'cabbalists'.

The schoolmen, from Bacon's point of view, had reduced the interpretation of the scriptures 'into an Art,' channeling 'streames of doctrine' in the same manner that one forced water 'into a Cesterne.'²³⁶ The problem was that the scholastic method compartmentalized the word of God in the same false manner that it systemized all knowledge. Bacon did not fail to notice this likeness, and to point out what he took to be the widespread corruption of knowledge; regardless of 'whether it descend from

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 186f.; DAS, SEH I, p. 834f.

²³⁵ AL, OFB IV, 186. John 4: 5.

²³⁶ Ibid.

diuine inspiration, or spring from humane sense.'²³⁷ Divine knowledge itself could not be subject to perversion, but the scholastic method, whereby the contents of the Bible were warped and distorted to fit an artificial system, had the effect of filtering out the true message, leaving only the dregs of the human imagination for consumption. The result was that the scriptures were diced up and 'abridged', stimulating unnecessary 'dilation' or exposition. The sole culprit mentioned by Bacon is Peter Lombard, the twelfth-century professor of theology at Paris, whose *Libri quattuor sententiarum* (c. 1150) went on to become the standard text for all masters students. Countless glosses on the *Sententiae*—including those of Aquinas, Ockham, and Scotus—were produced over the centuries following its publication, such that, whether or not Bacon encountered it first-hand at Cambridge, he would certainly have been aware of its contents and general approach. He argued that

the summe or abridgement by contraction becommeth obscure, the obscuritie requireth exposition, and the exposition is diduced into large comentaries, or into common places, and titles, which growe to be more vast then the originall writings, whence the summe was at first extracted. So we see the volumes of the schoole-men are the greater much then the first writings of the fathers, whence the Maister of the sentences made his summer or collection. ... So as this course of summes & commentaries is that which doth infallibly make the body of Sciences more immense in quantitie, and more base in substance.²³⁸

Put differently, this was a problem of quantity over quality. Certain passages, having been detached from their context, were enlarged to such a great extent that the original sense became wholly obscured. The 'volumes of the schoole-men' so vastly outnumbered 'the first writings of the fathers,' that an overabundance of misleading commentary now polluted men's true perception of God's word. The fathers, who lived closer to the time of Christ, and were thus more reliable interpreters, were to be favoured over the watered-down texts of the schoolmen.

Instead of God's original commandments being imparted to men, the crooked teachings of the Roman Church, conceived in the furnaces of men's corrupt minds, were disseminated as the true word. By excerpting and isolating passages, one from another, the methodical method unfurled vast lacunae in which 'reading between the lines,' so to speak, was actively encouraged. Since isolated passages produced obscu-

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

²³⁸ Ibid., 186-7.

rity, and 'obscuritie requireth exposition,' what had begun as an attempt to simplify through classification turned into a mammoth labyrinth of error. In the 'inquire of the diuine truth,' Bacon said, the schoolmen's 'pride enclined to leave the Oracle of Gods word, and to vanish in the mixture of their owne inuentions, which the vnequall mirrour of their owne minds, or a few receiued Authors or principles, did represent vnto them.'²³⁹ They had abandoned the oracle of God's word for the oracle of their own making; the same sin which had transformed Lucifer from the *lucem ferre* (the 'light-bearer') into the prince of darkness. For Bacon, the message of the scriptures on offer was no longer that of its divine author, but rather that of the theology faculties. To 'contract' and 'abridge' in order to accommodate men's feeble minds was to approach the Bible as one would approach any book of 'humane learning'; an error with major consequences and, for Bacon, 'the second disease of learning'.²⁴⁰

Bacon did, however, retain one legitimate use for the methodical method. The 'true vse of these Summes and Methods,' he conceded, 'hath place in Institutions or Introductions, preparatorie vnto knowledge.' As long as the methodical approach was restricted to a preparatory role in the universities it could be of some benefit: to privilege it, however, would be 'preiudiciall' and 'dangeous', not just to divinity, but to 'all Sciences.'²⁴¹ Lombard and his scholastic posterity would have agreed, of course, with Bacon, and acknowledged that their presentments of biblical scholarship amounted to nothing more than a preparation for higher theology. Still, it is easy to see why Bacon thought the university system cultivated an immoderate fondness for commentary. A further point which merits some attention, is the fact that the 'second disease of learning' crossed the boundaries, for Bacon, between the *interpretatio scripturae* and the *interpretatio naturae*: the proclivity to systemize the natural world stemmed from the same corrupt inclination of the human mind to unwittingly falsify the divine message. An overly methodical approach to either nature or the scriptures was a recipe for disaster. Conversely, though, to approach the Bible in too liberal a manner, without a critical awareness of its rightful uses and limitations, could reverse the providential order decreed therein.

In his discussion of the second manner of handling the Bible, the 'Solute' (or liberal) approach, Bacon was chiefly concerned to refute 'mosaic philosophy,' or what

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 187.

he took to be the attempts of natural philosophers to acquire a knowledge of nature from the scriptures. Though Bacon interpreted Genesis literally, he was, on the whole, critical of those who sought to read the Bible as though it was a textbook of natural philosophy.²⁴² Two 'excesses' arose from the free method: the one, which 'presupposes perfection in the Scriptures'; and the other, 'when the divinely inspired Scriptures are explained in the same manner as Human writings.'²⁴³ Concerning the former excess, while it is true that Bacon identified the Puritans with those who 'presuppose perfection in Scripture' on account of their literalism, his chief target was in fact Paracelsus and the broader, hermetic tradition in which the celebrated alchemist was steeped. As a result, he classified what he called the 'Philosophicall or Phisicall' interpretation of Paracelsus and his followers under this method.²⁴⁴

The Bible was neither perfect nor imperfect; but contained everything that was necessary for salvation and no more. 'The scope or purpose of the spirit of God,' Bacon wrote, 'is not to expresse matters of Nature in the Scriptures, otherwise then in passage, and for application to mans capacitie and to matters morall or Diuine.'²⁴⁵ The seeming absence of information pertaining to the order of nature was not a reflection of any insufficiency on the part of the scriptures, but rather a consequence of its much greater, salvific purpose. What knowledge of nature was enclosed, was present only in so far as it might aid in 'morall' or 'diuine' instruction. Nature might be reluctant, but subjecting it to the right kind of experimentation could yield a knowledge that was foreign to the Bible. Consequently, to mine its depths in search of the hidden passages of material nature was a fool's errand. It was an approach that Bacon understood as having 'beene extreamely set on foote of late time by the Schoole of *Paracelsus*, and some others,' who had

pretended to finde the truth of all naturall Philosophy in the Scriptures; scandalizing and traducing all other Philosophie: as Heathenish and Prophane: But

²⁴² In this way, Bacon himself was actually quite typical of the 'mosaic' philosophers. But, while he shared their 'agenda' of a Christian natural philosophy, he rejected the belief, widespread amongst thinkers such as Comenius and Paracelsus, that philosophical naturalism was in any way impious (see OFB IV, pp. 5-8, for instance). Bacon was consistently concerned that his own philosophy should not be perceived as irreligious, and argued that the mosaic philosophers' pursuit of nature in the scriptures was equally as impious. For the general background, see Ann Blair, 'Mosaic Physics and the Search for a Pious Natural Philosophy in the Late Renaissance', *ISIS* 90 (2000), pp. 32-58.

²⁴³ DAS, SEH I, p. 835: '... ejusmodi praesupponit in Scripturis perfectionem'; '... quando Scripturae divinitus inspiratae eodem quo scripta Humana explicantur modo.'

²⁴⁴ AL, OFB IV, 189.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-9.

there is noe such enmitie betweene Gods word, and his workes. Neither doe they [i.e., God's works] giue honour to the Scriptures, as they suppose, but much imbase them.²⁴⁶

The works of Paracelsus (1493-1541) are strewn with passages of scriptural quotation intended to legitimate his chemical philosophy. Salt, for instance, one of three primary principles, is substantiated as a member of his chemical trinity by virtue of its literary presence in the Bible.²⁴⁷ For Paracelsus, the light of nature was very much mirrored in the light of the scriptures. From Bacon's point of view, though, the knowledge which Paracelsus and his followers claimed to derive from the Bible was simply not there. Such 'philosophical' interpretations did not reflect the order of nature, but rather the depravity of the mind, and its predilection to grasp things *in absentia*.²⁴⁸

The second excess of the solute method is identified with the anagogical, by which Bacon denotes the reduction of the divine mysteries for the purpose of assisting human comprehension. Like the philosophical method, Bacon saw overly-anagogical interpretations of the scriptures as arising from the widespread corruption of the mind. 'In the minde,' he explained, 'whatsoever knowledge reason cannot at all worke vpon & conuert, is a mere intoxication and indangereth a dissolution of the minde and vnderstanding.'²⁴⁹ In other words, knowledge beyond the grasp of reason operated in the same way as 'Poyson': it gradually putrefied the 'minde and vnderstanding' until its inner representation of things became disjointed with reality. The mysteries alluded to in the scriptures were never intended to be reduced to accommodate our mind. They were meant to be accepted on grounds of faith. But, following Adam's sin the mind has been driven by a heedless cupidity to understand that which was not meant to be understood. For Bacon, such attempts are a surefire guarantee of misinterpretation.

Although Bacon singled out contemporaneous Paracelsians and Puritans as the principal perpetrators, he believed that both excessively-liberal methods had originated earlier. These 'two Inter-pretations, the one by reduction of Aenigmaticall, the other Philosophicall or Phisicall,' he explained, have 'beene receiued and pursued in imitation of the *Rabbins* and *Cabalists*.'²⁵⁰ The 'rabbis', by which he probably meant the

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 188.

²⁴⁷ Webster, *Paracelsus*, pp. 126, 138.

²⁴⁸ In the *De augmentis*, Bacon suggests that this free method of interpretation is a 'distemper' (*intemperies*) of the mind (DAS, SEH I, p. 835).

²⁴⁹ AL, OFB IV, p. 188.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

Pharisees, are identified as the originators of the philosophical approach on account of their overly-great reverence for the Bible; while the 'Cabalists', most likely followers of the Christianized Kaballah that originated with the thought of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), are associated with the anagogical, because of what Bacon sees as their attempts to systemize the mysteries. The four groups identified with the free method were, however, just the tip of the iceberg: 'as to the Interpretation of the Scriptures solute and at large,' he wrote, 'there haue beene diuers kindes introduced and deuised; some of them rather curious and vnsafe, then sober and warranted.'²⁵¹

The above quote underlines the fact that, for Bacon, a sober mind was needed to rightly fathom the more obscure passages of the Bible. His allegiance to the moderate position of the Church of England, in whose 'consensus' the true interpretation resided, becomes evident throughout his discussion of the scriptures. The 'excesses' that he perceived as surrounding the Church—from Roman Catholicism to Cabalism, and even to Puritanism—no doubt encouraged him to adopt a moderate hermeneutic to avoid the polemic of the prolix theological publications of his age.

What Bacon himself wanted was a form of 'positiue Diuinitie collected vpon particular Texts of Scriptures in briefe obseruations, not dilated into common places: not chaseing after controuersies, not reduced into Methode of Art,' but rather 'a thing abounding in Sermons.'²⁵² Sermons, in Bacon's 'Iudgement,' were the 'most rich and precious' of all types of theology because he understood them to provide concrete moral lessons to the listener. Matthews has already commented upon the fact of Andrewes's plethora of sermons, and the likelihood that his fondness for them was communicated to Bacon via their friendship.²⁵³ While this certainly seems plausible, there is another, somewhat curious, aspect of Bacon's hermeneutic that merits some attention. In the *De augmentis*, Bacon replaces the words 'a thing abounding in Sermons' with the phrase 'completely disconnected and natural.'²⁵⁴ The description from the later work is more characteristic of Bacon's natural historical method than of the form of a sermon. His proposal for largely disconnected histories, through which he felt the discovery of new material relations within nature would be encouraged, is well known. But the notion that the scriptures should be handled in an analogous manner

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 187.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 190.

²⁵³ Matthews, *Theology and Science*, p. 10.

²⁵⁴ DAS, SEH I, p. 836.

to that proposed in his *Sylva sylvarum*, as a 'forest' of wisdom to be juxtaposed in illuminating ways, is not.

* * * *

Bacon held onto the belief that nature and the bible were intended to complete one another: although one pertained to life here and the other to the life hereafter, both were indispensable for human wellbeing.²⁵⁵ It is an idea which extends at least as far back as Hugh of Saint Victor (1096-1141), but likewise one which became influential amongst many of Bacon's contemporaries.²⁵⁶ Yet, Bacon was clear that the two lights—our 'spark' and the restorative word enclosed within the scriptures—should never coalesce. For 'to seeke heauen and earth in the word of God,' he warned,

Whereof it is saide, *Heauen and Earth shall passe, but my worde shall not passe*, is to seeke temporary things amongst eternal; And as to seeke Diuinitie in Philosophy is to seek the liuing amongst the dead; So to seeke Philosophy in Diuinitie is to seek the dead amongst the liuing.²⁵⁷

A natural remnant of our once-pristine condition might yet remain, but the advance of atheism and superstition plainly demonstrated that our spark was not sufficient. The planes of material nature and heavenly spirit were too disjointed for nature to function as a mirror unto God. Some comfort could be taken from the fact that interpretation of nature encouraged devotion, but knowledge was limited here to only divine power. As a consequence, while humans might be in possession of some sense of divinity, a truly religious mind was something which required cultivation.

²⁵⁵ Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon', p. 69.

²⁵⁶ Harrison, *The Bible*, p. 57. For example, Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, p. 158.

²⁵⁷ AL, OFB IV, 188; DAS, SEH I, p. 835; Matthew 24: 35.

4 ‘A Theory of the Universe’

From Mythos to Cosmos

I shall therefore construct a Theory of the Universe myself, according to the history so far known to us, reserving my judgment on all matters for when history, and through history my inductive philosophy, is more mature.

— Francis Bacon
Thema cœli

Scholars of the history and philosophy of science have dedicated a great deal of time over the past century to discussing Francis Bacon’s impact on the rise of modernity. Terms such as ‘induction’, ‘empiricism’, and ‘objectivity’ have entrenched themselves firmly in the ‘-ism’ of popular Baconianism. These notions, we are taught, are responsible for heralding a revolution in the manner in which the natural world was understood. And, of course, it was the natural world and its vast potential for intelligibility to which the successful application of such ideas bequeathed to us a scientific culture. If, for the sake of illustration, however, nature can be compared to the Sun and terms such as empiricism to its planets, then what quickly becomes clear is that our understanding of Bacon’s philosophical achievements is chiefly the result of planetary observation. It would be rather counter-intuitive to argue against the perfectly justifiable centrality accorded to such notions—after all, Bacon himself dedicated a considerable amount of his literary output to their development. But it is also important to point out that the very centrality of these methodological ideas have, until very recently, overshadowed examination of the thing to which Bacon dedicated the majority of his intellectual life after 1611; namely, a systematic account of nature.¹ More than just overshadow it, though, a quick glance at the historiography reveals that the received image of Bacon’s universe has, more often than not, been the consequence of the dominance of such methodological terms and their retrospective application to his thought. In order to do justice to the concept of nature that Bacon advanced, it is cru

¹ A number of scholars have produced studies focussing upon Bacon’s conception of matter and the universe: these include, but are not exclusive to, Guido Giglioni, Silvia Manzo, Graham Rees, and Sophie Weeks. See the bibliography for further details.

cial, then, that we return first to the sources which influenced it and, in turn, to those particular works in which Bacon deliberately set out to discuss the nature of the universe. For how, it might be asked, is it possible to adequately comprehend Bacon's understanding of notions such as induction and experiment without a reliable concept of that to which he understood them to refer? The dry, empirical image of nature taught to undergraduates might very well constitute one kind of 'Baconianism', but as well shall see, it is one that is far removed from that which Bacon himself had in mind.

Ancient Wisdom, the Bible, and the Origins of Baconian Nature

The creation of the Baconian cosmos might be said to have begun in earnest sometime around the year 1611, a time during which Bacon began to engage himself—or, at the very least, admitted to have been engaged—in the dangers of theoretical philosophy. Although evidence of Bacon's beliefs regarding the nature of the world exist in fragments scattered throughout both his earlier and later writings, it is unquestionably in the series of short treatises composed between the years 1611 and 1619 that his most self-contained attempts at (nonfictional) world-building took place. After all, it is in the second sentence of the *Thema cæli* that he very uncharacteristically writes: 'I shall therefore construct a *Theory of the Universe* myself.'¹ Included amongst the writings of this period are the *Phaenomena universi* (c. 1609-1611), *Thema cæli* (c. 1612), the *De fluxu et refluxu maris* (c. 1611-1618), *De vijs mortis* (c. 1611-1620), *Descriptio globi intellectualis* (c. 1612), and *De principiis atque originibus* (c. 1612).² The reasons for Bacon's turn towards the cosmogonical, cosmological, astronomical, and chemical characteristics of the universe in these works are not entirely known, though it has been argued persuasively that their inclusion in the *Instauratio magna* had been intended from the beginning. Indeed, Graham Rees, to whom we owe their contextualization, demonstrated that this collection of six treatises, containing what he labelled Bacon's 'speculative philosophy', was not incidental to the larger programme.³

While Rees was right to have noted that, had Bacon lived longer, these system-building exercises would ultimately have comprised Part Five of the *instauratio*,

¹ TC, OFB VI, p. 173.

² See Graham Rees's introduction to OFB VI, pp. xvii-xxxvii for the dates of Bacon's speculative works.

³ OFB VI, pp. xvii-xix.

his decision to categorize them under the heading of 'speculative philosophy' was something of a misnomer.⁴ For, nowhere in these six treatises does Bacon refer to himself as engaged in 'speculation' (*speculatio; contemplativa*). The label, quite to the contrary, appears to be employed in an exclusively pejorative sense, as when Bacon refers to Democritus as having founded 'a huge and dazzling speculative edifice' or when he condemns Telesio's philosophy as 'frantic speculation'.⁵ The *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623) does employ the term speculative as an affirmative aspect of Bacon's philosophical endeavours, but this may be the result of the preference of its translators rather than its author.⁶ It is worth pointing out, subsequently, that while from a modern point of view the contemporary connotations of 'speculation' may very well apply, it is a term that Bacon rigorously avoided. It may therefore be more suitable to refer to these system-building treatises as Bacon's 'theoretical' works.

In order to better understand the development of these texts, as well as Bacon's turn towards the theoretical in general, it is worth taking note of his intellectual engagement just prior to their composition. For, it turns out that he had been pondering the origin and structure of the created world—albeit, in a substantially different literary genre—both in, and a number of years prior to, the publication of *De sapientia veterum* (1609): his belief that the earliest humans had possessed a veridical knowledge of the primal structures of nature which, having subsequently been veiled in allegory, required the interpretation of fables such as 'Pan' (Nature), 'Cælum' (the Heavens), 'Proteus' (Matter), and 'Cupid' (the Atom), indeed traverse much the same territory as the 1611-1619 works.⁷ Possibly from the composition of his *Cogitationes de scientia humana* (1605?), Bacon had become increasingly interested in cosmogony,

⁴ Graham Rees, 'The Fate of Bacon's Cosmology in the Seventeenth Century', *Ambix* 24 (1977), pp. 27-38 (on p. 29).

⁵ DGI, OFB VI, p. 115; DPAO, OFB VI, p. 223.

⁶ See DAS, SEH IV, pp. 343-65. The *Advancement of Learning* does not use the term 'speculative', which suggests that Bacon either changed his mind or that the word was employed by his translators (including Bacon's chaplain William Rawley and his friend and poet George Herbert (1593-1633)). Seeing, however, as Bacon continued to employ the word speculative in a pejorative context, it appears more likely to have been a result of the latter. The term *speculatio*, in fact, does not refer to the deductive logic of Aristotelian natural philosophy, as is evidenced by Bacon's specific use of the term against the Paracelsians. It seems, by and large, then, to refer more simply to a broken chain of inductive reasoning: a universal belief not grounded in particulars.

⁷ Bacon had undoubtedly been thinking about larger cosmogonical and cosmological themes quite early, as Spedding suggests both the fables *Calum sive origines* and *Proteus sive materia* had been composed before 1605. See DSV, SEH VI, p. 607.

cosmology and the particular viability of applying mythography to its elucidation.⁸ His belief that the mythopoetic past veiled truths specific to nature was not an uncommon presupposition of sixteenth-century mythographers. The Italian humanist Natale Conti's popular *Mythologiae* (1567), for instance, which has been shown to have exercised particular influence upon Bacon, is explicit in its identification of natural-philosophical knowledge and ancient myth.⁹ The years proceeding his turn towards theoretical philosophy were occupied, then, with embryonic ideas—those not yet 'hatched' from their allegorical shells, to borrow Bacon's own phrase—about the processes and product of God's creation. Nor, it should be added, did his interest in the system-building utility of mythography decline. The addition of 'Pan', intended to function as an exemplar of the usefulness of ancient allegory to natural philosophy, to the Latin *Advancement* testifies to the continuing significance Bacon was willing to accord mythography within his programme as a whole. What this ultimately tells us about the post-1611 works, then, is not only that Bacon's aspirations to include a theory of the universe in Part Five of the *instauratio* are likely the outcome of an earlier enthusiasm for mythography, but moreover that the mythopoetic itself remained an irreducible aspect of his theoretical philosophy.¹⁰

Although it would be imprudent to limit our investigation to Bacon's theoretical writings and the fables of *De sapientia* alone, since the majority of his philosophical works are concerned with the material universe, there are good reasons for employing these specific treatises at least within the capacity of a framework around which to pursue the question of creation. The theoretical works, in the first instance, while comprised largely of invective against the views of particular practitioners of astronomy and natural philosophy—principally Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, Patrizi, Telesio, and Gilbert—nevertheless contain a substantial amount of largely consistent material from which it is possible to reconstruct Bacon's own and, importantly, self-

⁸ Bacon's first interest in mythography may have first appeared in his *Cogitationes de scientia humana*, in which he examines five fables, the first four of which made it into *De sapientia veterum*: 'Metis', 'Soror Gigantum', 'Coelum', 'Proteus', and 'Midas' (CDSH, SEH III, pp. 186, 195-196). However, the dating of this text is due to later editorial judgement, such that it is not possible to claim that this was in fact Bacon's first foray into mythography with any real confidence.

⁹ Barbara Carman Garner, 'Francis Bacon, Natalis Comes and the Mythological Tradition', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), pp. 264-91.

¹⁰ Included amongst the works Bacon intended to revise in the last years of his life is the *De sapientia*, according to William Rawley: cf. Rhodri Lewis, see 'Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth', *The Review of English Studies* 61 (2010), pp. 360-389 (on p. 365).

acknowledged understanding of the kind of universe we inhabit.¹¹ At the same time, his polemic against both ancient and contemporary theories pinpoints precisely those views he thought to have been falsely construed. Concerned, ultimately, with the damaging effects of such misrepresentations of nature, Bacon sought to demonstrate how future natural philosophers should go about constructing genuine theories of the universe, and in so doing spent a great deal of time absorbed in the creation of his own.¹² 'It must not be thought,' wrote his eighteenth-century critic Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), 'that in blaming the systems of others Bacon does not have his own.'¹³

There is a further reason, though, why the theoretical treatises provide us with an especially translucent window into the construction of the Baconian universe. Despite the fact that each share in a sophisticated rhetoric intended to engender in the reader a sense that natural history rather than superfluous speculation, and thus that 'truth' rather than falsehood, is at work, Bacon's underlying intention sees him employing a language which is not quite so purposefully equivocal.¹⁴ To start with, there is at least a modicum of sincerity to his claim that these works stand 'on the threshold of natural history and philosophy'.¹⁵ A number of his theories about the universe, for instance, do legitimately arise from the results of his natural-historical approach: his claim in the *Descriptio globi intellectualis* that sidereal fire possesses a durable and globular form because of its interaction with the surrounding ether-medium is clearly derived from an earlier experiment on flame within flame.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the number of theories truly based upon experimentation rather than presupposition or the result of polemic is slight, which leads one to look beyond this claim to other motivations. What subsequently becomes clear is that, when Bacon began to compose these works

¹¹ These treatises provide us with the only place in which Bacon acknowledged that he was constructing his own 'system' of the universe. For his views within his speculative writings (OFB VI) on Ptolemy see p. 111; Copernicus, pp. 111-13, 121-3, 125; Galileo, pp. 165, 175; Patrizi, p. 133; Telesio, pp. 151, 179, 225, 231-3, 235, 251, 259-61, 263, 265; Gilbert, pp. 125-7, 153, 177, 187-9, 255.

¹² Rees, 'The Fate of Bacon's Cosmology in the Seventeenth Century', p. 27 notes that the construction of his cosmology 'absorbed so much of Bacon's abundant energy in his most productive years'; namely, in the 1610s.

¹³ de Maistre, *An Examination*, p. 81.

¹⁴ Just how Bacon thought he could claim to be constructing a theory of the universe while 'reserving [his] judgment on *all matters*' for a later time is a little absurd, yet it reveals both the depths of his ambition and the somewhat problematic position in which he found himself (TC, OFB VI, p. 173. *Emphasis added*). Given that he had dedicated so much of his time to tearing down the very system-building philosophy he was now claiming to undertake, he was forced to walk something of a fine line.

¹⁵ TC, OFB VI, p. 193.

¹⁶ DGI, OFB VI, p. 161; Bacon repeats this, his '*Experiment solitary touching the secret nature of flame*', in Experiment 31 of the *Sylva sylvarum* (SS, SEH II, pp. 352-53).

he believed he needed to provide a demonstration that genuine, natural-philosophical knowledge could be extracted from his nascent natural-historical approach.¹⁷ The underlying tone from the beginning presents us, to this point, with an author intent on generating interest and monetary support for his 'true induction'; a task which required him to show that it would ultimately bear fruits.¹⁸ So, although Bacon was constricted, on the one hand, to hold fast to (at least the rhetoric of) natural history, his need to stave off future criticism, on the other, led him in these particular works to draw fairly demonstrative conclusions about the universe.

In the second instance, *The Wisdom of the Ancients* offers us a further set of texts—not least because of its close, thematic relation to the theoretical writings—with which to reconstruct Bacon's assessment of the creation and structure of the universe. The reason *De sapientia* can be employed in the capacity of a structuring text ultimately resides in Bacon's attitude towards the fables themselves. The work consists in the interpretation—or rather, de-mythologization—of a series of fables to the 'wisdom' hidden behind each, an endeavour he dedicates to the University of Cambridge. The dedication itself is explicative of Bacon's intent: addressing his *alma mater*, he writes that, while 'there are few footprints pointing back towards you, out of the infinite number that have gone forth from you,' those which do remain direct us back to the nourishing source from which knowledge proceeds.¹⁹ The ostensible side of this is a politician paying court to his old university. The underside, more interestingly, reveals an attempt to validate the utility of mythography from the 'veil of fables' (*velo fabularum*) which follow. Fables, it is implied, are like *vestigia* which can lead us to the *sapientia prima* of a bygone age. Some such wisdom, argues Bacon, has fortunately been preserved within them, 'as sacred relics and light airs breathing out of better times'.²⁰ And, although their wisdom is scattered 'here and there,' it is precisely because it derives 'from the very beginning'—in other words, that it reflects a mind less degenerate than our own—that these texts are so valuable to the natural philosopher.²¹ Thus, while the fables of *De sapientia* might appear an unlikely source, Bacon's belief that they conceal a 'real history', and a real history which stems from

¹⁷ See, for example, the passage where he writes that, should he not provide at least tentative conclusions (in the form of his list of affirmatives), others would think his method unable to provide anything other than 'negative questions' (TC, OFB VI, p. 193).

¹⁸ In the *Phaenomena universi*, Bacon writes of the need for 'funding' (PhU, OFB VI, p. 4).

¹⁹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 691.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 698.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 696.

the mind of a peoples living closer to the time of creation itself, means that such texts offer us a reliable candidate from which to reconstruct Bacon's cosmos.²²

The convergence of the theoretical writings and *The Wisdom of the Ancients* is most clearly visible in *De principiis atque originibus*, a text in which the philosophical principles of Democritus and Telesio are interwoven with the wisdom contained in the fables of 'Cupid' and 'Cœlum'. Written shortly after the publication of *De sapientia*, *On Principles and Origins* is demonstrative of Bacon's belief that the derivation of cosmogonical *principia* requires the guidance of an ancient wisdom.²³ The obvious, but easily overlooked point to make first, is that the fruit of mythography, for Bacon, was not 'knowledge' (*scientia*), but rather 'wisdom' (*sapientia*). As Rhodri Lewis has shown, what one acquired from the interpretation of ancient fables was principally 'a kind of practical wisdom.' Due to the degeneration that ancient philosophical knowledge had undergone as a result of its preservation in the allegorized fables of the Greeks, the best one could hope to extract was a kind of 'natural prudence', or practical guide to the reclamation of a genuine, natural knowledge.²⁴ Add to this the fact of nature's own degeneration, and it becomes clear that there existed, for Bacon, an otherwise unobtainable guide to understanding nature which had to be quarried from an artefact of the human mind. What *De principiis* provides us with, as a result, is a poignant instance of the continuum that stretches between *fabula* and Bacon's theoretical and cosmological philosophy. The requisite of legitimate theoretical philosophy is, of necessity, twofold; demanding both narrative and nature, since fables alone—although not constitutive of knowledge—are able to serve as a guide to the construction of a cosmogony, a conjectural history of the earliest age of the natural world.²⁵

Although in framing Bacon's interest in a theory of the universe, these two sets of thematically interconnected texts might at first appear somewhat isolated from his later, more mature texts, this is not strictly true. The *Novum organum* (1620) and *Abecedarium novum naturæ* (1622) provide an excellent case in point. Understood in its principal aim—that is, as an instrument of logic, or *organon*—the first book of the

²² Ibid., p. 698.

²³ Rees has suggested that c. 1612 is the most probable date of composition, which seems correct, given Bacon's preoccupation with fables and the publication of *De sapientia* (1609) a few years earlier (OFB VI, xxviii-xxx).

²⁴ Rhodri Lewis, 'Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth', pp. 384-5.

²⁵ Guido Giglioni has suggested that Bacon proposes a kind of 'cultural induction' grounded in the mythopoetic foundations of the ancient fables. See Giglioni, 'Historia and Materia: The Philosophical Implications of Francis Bacon's Natural History', *Early Science and Medicine* 17 (2012), pp. 62-86 (on pp. 77, 86).

Novum organum, to begin with, sets for itself the task of 'scouring' and 'levelling' the intellect (*abrasum* and *aequum*), while the second is largely concerned with what Bacon calls the '*Submission of Instances to the Tribunal of the Intellect (Comparentiam Instantiarum ad intellectum)*'; that is, the prerogatives of his new method.²⁶ The contents of the work, however, extend well beyond the methodological. Book Two in particular, by way of guiding the reader from tables of natural history to the true induction, is otherwise entirely preoccupied with metaphysics. There is, in fact, no other place in Bacon's writings where his theory of forms is so comprehensively and painstakingly detailed. Read in conjunction with texts such as *De principiis, Thema caeli*, and the fables of 'Proteus' and 'Cupid', the continuum between Bacon's matter theory, on the one side, and his theory of forms, on the other, could not be more evident. Read in isolation from the fables of *De sapientia* and the 1611-1618 works, it is easy to view Bacon's forms as largely incoherent and confused; a footnote to his methodological concerns.²⁷ Yet in constituting a large part of the intelligibility of Bacon's universe, the theory of forms is crucial to his conception of induction, and cannot be understood adequately without taking account of his matter theory as presented in the earlier treatises. Hence, while the *Novum organum* is in many ways far removed from his first cosmological texts, it should not be divorced from his larger transition from fables to matter theory to his theory of forms and, ultimately, to method. The development of Bacon's thought was not, as he would have us believe, from method to theory, but rather from theoretical considerations of the universe to a new method of induction and experimentation.

In the case of the *Abecedarium novum naturæ*, and despite the fact that Bacon refers to it as a 'preparative' (*parasceve*) to, rather than constitutive of, the sphere of abstract physics (*physica abstracta*), we find little of the methodological and a great deal of the theoretical.²⁸ The *Abecedarium* is ultimately something of a catalogue; that

²⁶ NO, OFB XII, pp. 154-5, 252-3.

²⁷ Many investigators have, without examining their relationship to his cosmogony and matter theory, concluded that Bacon's concept of forms is haphazard. See, for example, J. R. Milton, 'Laws of Nature' in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), I, pp. 685-686; Antonio Pérez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon's Idea of Science and the Maker's Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 124; Virgil K. Whitaker, 'Bacon's Doctrine of Forms: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Eclecticism', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 33 (1970), pp. 209-216; Perez Zagorin, *Francis Bacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 93-4; and, for a criticism of this view, Angus Fletcher, 'Francis Bacon's Forms and the Logic of Ramist Conversion', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43 (2005), pp. 157-179 and Sophie Weeks, 'Francis Bacon's Science of Magic' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2007), pp. 220-221.

²⁸ ANN, OFB XIII, pp. 172-173.

is, a list of the extensions, schematisms and the simple and summative motions of matter, which, when taken collectively, constitute the 'letters' of the alphabet of nature.²⁹ We are told in the *Valerius Terminus* (c. 1603), written nearly twenty years earlier, for instance, that 'these natures are as the alphabet or simple letters, whereof the variety of things consisteth'.³⁰ Bacon is not interested in 'the syllables and words' (*cum sillabis & verbis*) of the language of nature here, only with its most primary constituents.³¹ And, although he claims (as per his usual, rhetorical tactic) that the treatise is merely a preparative to Part Four (namely, a *scala sive machina intellectus*), its content overlaps much more so with the theoretical works which constitute Part Five of the *instauratio*, as well as that of Book Two of the *Novum organum*, than it does with his self-evidently didactic texts.³² If anything, the *Abecedarium* presents the reader not with prescriptions for how best to undertake the work of abstract physics, but with a model of many, but not all, of the constituent elements of Bacon's universe. It is for this reason, as a consequence, that the *Abecedarium* provides us with another source from which to reconstruct Bacon's idea of nature.

* * * *

Before turning to Bacon's universe *per se*, there is one further consideration that merits serious attention. This is the question of the relationship between both the character and sources of the Baconian cosmos and the scriptures. Somewhat conspicuous in its absence, the Bible, to begin with, was not a source from which Bacon was, as a rule, willing to draw knowledge about the material universe. This might seem all the more striking given the fact that he was so eager to derive a compass for the discovery of natural-philosophical principles from the fables of an ancient peoples. Yet, where a knowledge of nature was concerned, Bacon maintained a clear rationale for both the legitimacy of ancient fables, on the one hand, and the unsuitability of the scriptures, on the other. The scriptures, to begin with, were not a source of *scientia naturalis* for the simple reason that their author had written them for the purpose of man's moral and spiritual rejuvenation. 'The scope or purpose of the spirit of God,' wrote Bacon in

²⁹ In the *Valerius Terminus*, Bacon refers to the subject of natural philosophy (rather than abstract physics) as 'the nature of motions, inclinations, and applications' (VT, SEH III, p. 243).

³⁰ DINP, SEH III, p. 243.

³¹ ANN, OFB XIII, pp. 190-1.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

The Advancement, 'is not to expresse matters of Nature in the Scriptures,' but rather 'for application to mans capacitie and to matters morall or Diuine'.³³ Nature was never encountered in the scriptures in the form of definitive knowledge: when it did appear, it did so only for the purpose of assisting the mind to grasp higher, spiritual truths.³⁴ Adopting Calvin's theory of accommodation, Bacon favoured the moral and allegorical senses over the literal precisely because he believed the scriptures had been provided for the purpose of our salvation and not as a repository of natural *minutiae*.³⁵ In fact, and as Steven Matthews has rightly observed, Bacon 'had no concern for the strict adherence to a "literal" or "historical" sense.' Like many sixteenth-century Protestants, he employed the literal in his exegetical efforts only when it suited his individual purposes, and never considered it to be foremost amongst the scriptural senses.³⁶

Where the ancient fables differed, respectively, was by virtue of the fact that Bacon understood their wisdom—as we have already seen—to constitute a practical guide, unlike that of the Bible's, to nature's intricacies. He was clear that the fables contained 'human wisdom', and nothing of the divine.³⁷ The terrestrial character of this wisdom was the result of its attribution to a peoples who had inhabited the first, 'unknown' age of civilization.³⁸ Stretching between Creation and the Deluge, the wisdom of this age was characterized by a mentality that was fundamentally nature-oriented, not least of all because it preceded God's revelation on Sinai. Moreover, and again unlike the scriptures, the fables of the ancients reflected no authorial intention: this was testified to, thought Bacon, by the fact that the Greeks had allegorized many different versions of the same wisdom, thereby suggesting that there had once existed a 'common' source from which all originated.³⁹ One of the reasons why Bacon thought these texts could throw light 'upon nature itself' was precisely this; that one could not attribute them to a single mind.⁴⁰ This compass to the natural world was rendered all the more precise, in other words, because it originated in a kind of col-

³³ AL, OFB IV, pp. 188-189.

³⁴ Rees, 'Francis Bacon's Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology', *Ambix* 22 (1975), pp. 81-101 (on p. 90).

³⁵ See, for instance, AL, OFB IV, p. 189.

³⁶ Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon', pp. 62, 63.

³⁷ DSV, SEH VI, p. 696.

³⁸ Rhodri Lewis has identified Bacon's debt to the Roman historian Varro, who divided history into three ages: the 'unknown', the 'mythical', and the 'historical'. See 'Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth', p. 379.

³⁹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 697. See Lewis, 'Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth', p. 379.

⁴⁰ DSV, SEH VI, p. 699.

lective wisdom. Correctly interpreted, the fables consequently offered a reliable guide to precisely those theory-building exercises that Bacon wished to undertake.

In the end, however, it is not possible to maintain a strict distinction between the scriptures and ancient fables if we base our evidence upon their actual employment in Bacon's theory of the cosmos. For, although the scriptures were not to be mined for natural-philosophical knowledge, that does not mean Bacon did not find them expedient to other ends. The most notable exception is the Book of Genesis.⁴¹ The narrative of creation and fall it contains was consistently interpreted by Bacon according to the literal sense with the express purpose of legitimating his natural-philosophical programme.⁴² Scholars have identified a number of reasons for Bacon's literal approach to Genesis, so its relation to his theoretical philosophy in particular requires only a few brief remarks here. First, it should be pointed out that Genesis offers the only other window into the earliest days of the universe; and, in this way, is able to serve a parallel function to that of the fables. In other words, it informs Bacon's universe in so far as it provides him with a kind of compass with which to orient his conjectural cosmogony. In the second instance, and not unconnected to the first, Genesis functions as the ultimate limiting condition of both the theoretical works and his mythography. Matthews has already argued that, for Bacon, the scriptures were the *norma nomans*, or 'guide to the limits and proper reading of the book of nature.'⁴³ Not to dispute Matthews, my claim here is simply that Bacon employed the Bible, and Genesis in particular, within his mythographical and theoretical works as a boundary condition to the kind of universe he was willing to construct. Indeed, as it should now be evident that the sources from which his universe was constructed were largely exclusive of the Bible, it should likewise become clear that Bacon never strayed far before reigning in his speculations about the universe with a religiously motivated self-censure.

Such instances of scriptural authority entering into Bacon's theory of the universe appear very early in his thought. In the *Confession of Faith*, Bacon outlined the general contours of his Christian faith as he defined it at the time. Although not a

⁴¹ See Harrison, 'Reinterpreting Nature', p. 38; Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books', p. 70.

⁴² The call to restore the original dominion of Adam required a literal interpretation of Genesis, but Bacon appears to have been generally less inclined to read other passages of the Bible according to their literal sense.

⁴³ Matthews, 'Reading the Two Books', p. 70. Matthews presumably means that the scriptures, for Bacon, inform us about what knowledge we can acquire from nature and what knowledge we cannot.

philosophical work, the *Confession* nevertheless contains a number of crucial insights into those motivations which would come to define the character of the Baconian cosmos. In its use of Genesis to frame and limit his religious belief, for example, the work makes it clear that the literal use of particular biblical passages, as well as the censorship present in his later theoretical works, were both extant even prior to his first attempts at the construction of a cosmos. Additionally, while much of the doctrinal content of the *Confession*, as Brian Vickers has pointed out, appears to be Calvinist in orientation, its influence upon the natural philosophical tenor of the text remained much the same throughout Bacon's life: so even if his doctrinal commitments eventually shifted away from Calvinism, as it has been suggested, the use of the scriptural in general in his philosophical oeuvre never really changed. What the *Confession of Faith* provides us with, then, is solid evidence that the role of the Bible as both a source of information and an upper limit to his cosmogonical speculation remained a constant and definitive feature of Bacon's thought: in other words, that he never attempted to alter it to better suit either his religious or natural philosophical writings.

As a consequence, when read together these five sets of texts—the *Confession of Faith* (c. 1603), *De sapientia veterum* (1609), the theoretical works (1611-1618), the *Novum organum* (1620), and the *Abecedarium novum naturæ* (c. 1622)—more than any other combination of works in Bacon's written corpus, afford an opportunity to piece together his long-neglected theory of the universe. It is a theory that is not entirely coherent; at places, as we will see, seeming to contradict itself. Yet it provides the groundwork upon which his methodological insights and aims played themselves out, and is, if for no other reason than this, worthy of renewed attention. As we turn now to consider the nature of the Baconian cosmos, I hope the sheer variety of texts in which Bacon set out this aspect of his programme will help to demonstrate the seriousness with which he considered both the origins and schematism of the natural world. And, moreover, how he did not, contrary to received opinion, abandon the theoretical entirely to future generations.

Faith and the Causa Causarum

Nature (*natura*) was that which, according to Bacon, encompassed the entire 'universe of things' (*universitas rerum*).⁴⁴ It was the creation of God, comprised of both material and immaterial parts, and was governed in its regular course by 'constant and everlasting laws'.⁴⁵ It was almost entirely corporeal—that is, comprised of matter—to the extent that, with the exception of special dispensations of the divine will, everything in nature, including the immaterial, was either tethered to or produced by a body in some way.⁴⁶ Specifically, Bacon believed nature's existence to reside in three distinct, but interconnected aspects: prime matter (*materia prima*) and its appetites (*appetitus*); the overarching and 'summary law' (*lex summaria*); and those subsequent restraints, or 'forms' (*forma*), which defined the summary law through the motions of matter. Although nature was comprised of three, individual parts, it was only at their nexus—the place at which they met—that it was perceptible to man's senses. In and of themselves, matter, the summary law, and its forms, were imperceptible. Without the proper method, nature was even inherently deceptive. Yet, if digested such that its components could be rendered individually distinguishable to the senses and mind, nature could become harnessable to the will of man. Without leaping too far ahead, though, let us turn to the genesis of that which Bacon called nature. For, an investigation into its origins will enable us to comprehend not only the character of its divine authorship, but also both the fundamental materiality and interconnection of its constituent parts.

Bacon developed his cosmogony (his philosophical narrative of the coming into existence of the cosmos) predominantly in *De principiis atque originibus* and through his interpretation of the fables of 'Pan', 'Cupid', 'Cœlum', and 'Proteus'. In the fable of Pan, the goat-legged god who Bacon believed prefigured the modern notion of nature, he writes that the ancients had understood the universe as having had two possible origins: it was either the offspring of Mercury—that is, of 'the Divine Word'—'an opinion,' he notes, 'which the Scriptures establish beyond question'; or it was the result of 'the seeds of things mixed and confused together,' the view proposed

⁴⁴ DSV, SEH VI, p. 636.

⁴⁵ CF, Vickers, p. 108.

⁴⁶ The notable exceptions—that is, those immaterial substances which retained at least some genuine independence from a material body—included, for Bacon, the human soul, angels, demons, and Christ.

by Democritus (c. 460-370 BCE) and the followers of ancient atomism.⁴⁷ The tension we see here, between the Democritean and the scriptural, the materialistic and the divine, is one of the strongest, though latent, motivating factors shaping the Baconian cosmos. From its inception, what sets Bacon's conception of the universe apart is the question of to what extent its creative power belongs principally to matter (*natura naturans*; nature creating) or to God (*natura naturata*; nature created).⁴⁸ And, the place at which this tension manifests itself most is in the cosmogony of *De principiis*, where he goes to some lengths to reconcile the fact that 'Holy Writ holds that matter comes from God,' whereas the ancient philosophers believed that it was 'original to itself'.⁴⁹ In the end, Bacon would argue that both 'may be accepted as indeed true'; for nature 'is sprung from the Divine Word,' but 'through the medium of confused matter'.⁵⁰ However, his reluctance to ascribe the totality of the creative power in the universe to God is arguably the real defining momentum, on the one hand, behind the character of his concept of nature and, on the other, behind the aims of his understanding of the role of the natural philosopher.

When it comes to the latter, Bacon drew an epistemological perimeter around the question of origins and principles. Singling out Democritus and Bernardino Telesio (1509-1588), he argued that those who have 'philosophize[d] according to the sense' have tended to hold that matter is eternal, and therefore uncreated. Upon first reading, this appears quite clearly to be a criticism. However, it should be kept in mind that Bacon too was a self-proclaimed philosopher 'according to the sense.' What he was suggesting, in actual fact, was that if one investigated nature from the perspective of the human senses—as Democritus and Telesio had done—then it would be perfectly acceptable to believe that matter was 'original to itself,' because this in essence is what nature itself reveals to us. Since, however, we have recourse not only to our senses, but to the Bible, it is possible to know otherwise. We 'know by faith,' he

⁴⁷ DSV, SEH VI, p. 709. For the influence of Democritus and atomism upon Bacon, see Benedino Gemelli, *Aspetti dell'atomismo classico nella filosofia di Francis Bacon e nel Seicento* (Firenze: Olschki, 1996); Robert H. Kargon, *Atomism in England from Hariot to Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), pp. 43-53; Silvia Manzo, *Entre el atomismo y la alquimia. La teoría de la materia de Francis Bacon* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2006) and 'Francis Bacon and Atomism: A Reappraisal', in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, ed. Christoph Lüthy et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 209-43; and Graham Rees, 'Atomism and "Subtlety" in Francis Bacon's Philosophy', *Annals of Science* 37 (1980), pp. 549-71.

⁴⁸ On *natura naturans* versus *natura naturata*, see Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1951] 2009), pp. 40-1.

⁴⁹ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 251.

⁵⁰ DSV, SEH VI, p. 709.

states, 'that matter was created from nothing' (*materia creata sit ex nihilo*)⁵¹. The important division Bacon thus draws is that, while as human beings 'we must depend on faith and its firmaments,' as natural philosophers, it is not only perfectly acceptable, but actually necessary, that matter be considered as uncreated.⁵² The reason for this is that 'nothing,' he argues, 'has corrupted philosophy more than the false enquiry into the principles or causes of matter.' Philosophers have deduced false causes for matter from 'excursions of the mind beyond the bounds of nature,' such that the only antidote is to regard the origins and principles of matter as a 'positive doctrine and as if they were articles of experimental faith' (... *ut doctrinam quondam positivam, & tanquam fide experimentalis*).⁵³ It is important to note here that the sense in which Bacon employs *experimentum* is that of 'experience': in other words, that the faith of the natural philosopher must be placed in the *experience*—or rather sensibility—of material nature first and foremost. Where philosophical knowledge is concerned, matter should thus be held as a 'positive doctrine', even whose genuine, first cause (God) is beyond the gambit of legitimate enquiry. So in the first instance, we can say that Bacon held that there was a kind of philosophical utility to maintaining that matter had always existed and was thus uncreated.

One of the central concerns of Bacon's programme to reform the state of learning was the cultivation of a particular mindset to which he believed the natural philosopher should conform. And it was a mindset which, at times, bordered closely on the religious. This is well in evidence, for instance, in his contention above; that the natural philosopher hold a kind of a 'experimental faith' in matter as the *causa causarum*.⁵⁴ Bacon did not maintain this on a whim. The faith he believed the philosopher ought to hold in the causative power of matter was derived from the wisdom of an ancient age. In the fable of 'Cupid', for example, he suggests that the ancients had recognized the limits of human knowledge regarding the origins of matter, and that this epistemic boundary had later been enshrined in the myth of the world egg. Historically speaking, Bacon was drawing upon a particular passage of orphic poetry; one in which he believed some of the primitive religious beliefs of the ancients had been pre-

⁵¹ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 251.

⁵² Ibid., p. 253.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 198, 199.

⁵⁴ See Peter Harrison, 'Experimental Religion and Experimental Science in Early Modern England', *Intellectual History Review* 21 (2011), pp. 413-33 (on pp. 424-5).

served.⁵⁵ On his account, these early Greek poets were expressing an even earlier ancient wisdom—a wisdom which taught that the cosmos had been hatched from a silver egg of unknown origin. This egg, he recalls, was said to have been without 'any parent at all' and to have had hatched in the middle of the night, so as to symbolize the limits of cosmogonical knowledge.⁵⁶ His point here is to argue that it was partly on account of their belief in matter as the first cause that the ancients had become such successful interpreters of nature. Although undoubtedly heathens, it was—neither then nor now—belief in God that brought natural-philosophical success, but rather a philosophically-expedient faith in matter as the ultimate causative power. Consequently, it might be said that what Bacon was attempting to do was to transform what he considered to be a fundamental tenet of pre-pagan wisdom (or religiosity) into one of the fundamental doctrines of his so-called 'experimental faith'. For the sake of utility, the natural philosopher needed to exalt prime matter, just as the ancients had done during the first age, as 'a thing positive and inexplicable'.⁵⁷

In a letter to Henry Oldenburg (1619-1677) of 1661, Spinoza (1632-1677) would come to criticize Bacon for ignoring God as the principle cause of things; of having, in his own words, 'strayed ... far from the knowledge of the First Cause and of the origin of all things.'⁵⁸ Spinoza's quarrel with Bacon was chiefly to do with what he perceived to be Bacon's endorsement of a dualism between body and mind.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Spinoza's rationale, that Bacon's failure to take into account the true nature

⁵⁵ See Martin Litchfield West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 198-203.

⁵⁶ DSV, SEH VI, p. 729.

⁵⁷ DSV, SEH VI, p. 729. For Bacon, it was primarily the Greek philosophers of the succeeding age (Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Aristotle, and Plato, in particular) who had reversed the progress of natural philosophy by attempting to provide false origins and principles to matter. See, for example, DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 209, 211-213, 221, 255.

⁵⁸ Spinoza to Oldenburg, (September 1661; 236), in A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall (eds), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, 13 vols (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965-1986), I, p. 427.

⁵⁹ In Spinoza's eyes Bacon had failed to recognize certain metaphysical subtleties that thereby rendered him a dualist. Three propositions were provided to this point in the letter to Oldenburg: first, 'that in nature there cannot exist two substances unless they differ in their whole essence'; second, 'that a substance cannot be produced, but that existence pertains to its essence'; and lastly, 'that every substance must be infinite or supremely perfect of its kind.' When proven, what followed from these propositions was not only a confirmation of his definition of God, claimed Spinoza, but also a demonstration of the true nature of man. For the entire being of man—not only mind, but mind *and* body—could thereby be shown to be modes of the attributes ('thought' and 'extension') of the same perfect substance that was God. Where Bacon had gone astray, then, had been in his failure to recognize first and foremost the basic metaphysical uniformity of substance. Having misunderstood this, claimed Spinoza, it was inevitable that Bacon had ended up mistaking the true nature of the human mind. For, one needed to start all investigation with a metaphysically-sound knowledge of God.

of the 'First Cause' (God) had thereby rendered both his concept of man, as well as that of nature, fundamentally incorrect, is significant. For, from Bacon's standpoint, as we just have seen, the study of nature, whether it be the nature of man or of the created universe, needed to commence always with an inquiry into matter rather than God.

The leap from the epistemological boundaries Bacon maintained to the metaphysical reality he ultimately subscribed to was not great. The natural philosopher was justified, as it turns out, in holding his stock in matter—not only because it averred needless speculation, but more so because matter did, in actual fact, possess its own genuine creative power, even if it was not the ultimate one. And this material activity, moreover, was enough, thought Bacon, to explain the mechanics of nature without the need for theological interpolation. For this reason, he began by reiterating a standard theological position in *De principiis*: namely, that the 'divine nature' had first 'distinguished itself' (*se insignire voluisse*) through the very act of creating matter.⁶⁰ In other words, not only had nothing existed outside of God until the moment that He created matter, but matter was also that by which God's own existence had become distinguishable. While Bacon was drawing a traditional, scholastic distinction here, his aim was ultimately to point out what he considered to be the difference between two active forces: one *ex natura*, the other *ab intra natura*. It is a distinction which ultimately depends upon the demarcation of a finite, material, and spatially-defined entity (nature), and one that while created by God, is not one in which He is (at least regularly) present. To achieve this, Bacon resorts to arguing that, within nature, matter is the 'cause of causes, itself causeless' (*causa causarum, ipsa incausabilis*).⁶¹ Although the scriptures inform us that God is the principle cause of things, having created matter *ex nihilo*, the divine author is outside of nature, such that Bacon believes he is justified in designating matter the cause, not outside of which, but from within which nature originated and continues to exist.⁶² In the fable of 'Proteus', he writes that matter is 'the most ancient of things, next to God', while in the fable of 'Cupid', he provides something by way of an illustration of this distinction: returning to the world egg, he argues that it was the 'original and unique force' which belonged

⁶⁰ DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 252, 253.

⁶¹ TC, OFB VI, pp. 198, 199.

⁶² DPAO, OFB VI, p. 251.

to matter that enabled it to break free from the egg.⁶³ The claim, as such, is not merely to distinguish between creator and created, but to distinguish between the two kinds of creative power noted above: the kind that laid the egg in darkness (God), and the kind that hatched itself from the egg into the light of scientific enquiry (matter).⁶⁴

Between Ancient Atoms and Modern Matter

Bacon explained the creative power of matter in terms of what is perhaps one of the most unique aspects of his philosophy, and one for which the seeds were sown fairly early in his life. Although the theory of appetites would later come to dominate much of his thinking about the nature of matter, the germination of his thought prior to the appearance of this more mature explanatory framework provides some insight into the most basic continuants of his universe. It has been shown, to begin with, that in the initial instance Bacon's attraction to matter was born out of an interest in the doctrines of the ancient atomists—Leucippus, Democritus, and Lucretius—sometime around 1595: although, as Rees once noted, his opinion of them never really 'rose above benevolent neutrality.'⁶⁵ From a philosophical perspective, this neutrality could be parsed, on the one hand, in terms of Bacon's acceptance that the universe was indeed composed of atom-like particles: he does, in the end, seem to have retained a commitment to the 'atom' as the most basic constituent of the universe. On the other hand, however, his rejection of void, of the centrality of fate, chance and the swerve, and of the homogeneity of atomic motion, suggests that he never truly aligned himself with the teachings of the ancient atomists.⁶⁶ In the end, it is safe to say that, even if Baconian atoms ultimately proved explanatorily hollow, the lowest ontological level of his universe nevertheless remained a minute, invisible, and indivisible particle.⁶⁷

⁶³ DSV, SEH VI, pp. 725, 729.

⁶⁴ The identification of the egg with 'Pan', what Bacon also calls 'universal nature', as well as Proteus (matter), the 'first born' or 'primordial', is one which is drawn explicitly, if not directly, from the Protogonos theogony. See DSV, SEH VI, pp. 725-6 and West, *The Orphic Poems*, pp. 198-205.

⁶⁵ Rees, 'Atomism and "Subtlety"', pp. 553, 555. For various views of Bacon's relationship to ancient atomism, see Silvia Manzo, 'Francis Bacon and Atomism: A Reappraisal', in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Theories*, ed. by Christoph Lüthy, John E. Murdoch, and William R. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 209-43.

⁶⁶ Benedino Gemelli, *Aspetti dell'atomismo*, p. 195.

⁶⁷ The atom, for Bacon, remained largely explanatorily hollow precisely because he rejected the philosophical superstructure (void, chance, fate, etc.) of the ancient atomists, and as a result ended up accounting for natural phenomena through the action of material bodies (i.e., aggregations of atoms) rather than individual particles.

In characterizing them, Bacon agreed with Democritus that 'atoms or seeds, and their virtues, were quite different from anything subject to the senses,' and, moreover, that they were 'remarkable for being things whose nature was entirely dark and secret.' Atoms, he continued, were not like 'fiery sparks, drops of water, bubbles of air, specks of dust, nor tiny amounts of spirit or ether. Nor [was] their power and form something heavy or light, hot or cold, dense or rare, hard or soft, such as are found in larger bodies'⁶⁸. The senses, as a consequence, could never truly grasp the most fundamental particles of nature; not because of an inherent weakness—although this was a contributing factor—but because of a property inherent in atoms themselves. These minute particles were akin to nothing we knew, nor would ever really know. Yet Bacon did not think we were wholly unable to possess some knowledge of them.⁶⁹ Through a process of exclusion (*exclusio*) and strict observation of the particular manifestations of atomic virtues in conglomerate bodies, he thought it possible to garner some knowledge—even if not a direct knowledge—about their character. For, it 'belongs to God alone,' he concluded, 'that, when His nature is inquired of by the senses, exclusions shall not end in affirmatives'⁷⁰. Atoms, then, though not directly perceptible to the senses, could be known through the 'experience' of their bodily action; that is, through a kind of *fides experimentalis* in their existence leading through method to knowledge.

Where Bacon disagreed explicitly with Democritus was in his understanding of the nature of the primordial motions of the atom. Democritus was mistaken, he argued, when he attributed homogeneity of motion to the atom: in other words, he was wrong to have believed that all atoms possessed the same, fundamental motion, and that the entire universe of things resulted from it alone.⁷¹ Taking his cue from the parable of 'Cupid', Bacon maintained the heterogeneity of atomic motion against the famed atomist.⁷² In the 'atom's body exist the elements of all bodies,' he wrote, 'and in the atom's motion and virtue exist the beginnings of all motions and virtues'⁷³. It is clear from the above quotation that, for Bacon, the atom was the deepest, constituent

⁶⁸ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 201.

⁶⁹ Bacon never actually makes it clear in what such a knowledge would look like. Whenever he discusses of knowledge of matter, it relates to material bodies rather than individual atomic particles.

⁷⁰ DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 202-203.

⁷¹ The motion of ascent of heavier atoms and the motion of descent of lighter atoms appear, in Bacon's view, to be the same: that is, one motion directionally determined by density rather two separate motions.

⁷² DSV, SEH VI, p. 730.

⁷³ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 203.

element of nature, and, moreover, that its most primary feature was its multiplicity of—or at least its potential to produce—every variety of motion in the universe.

What Bacon does not appear to have discussed, however, is the relationship between atoms and matter or, put differently, between atomic particles and material bodies. It seems obvious enough to conclude that he believed matter to be a product of the 'composition' and 'combination' (*compositus* and *conflatum*) of individual atoms, for he tells us so in numerous places. In the fable of 'Pan', for instance, he writes that everything in nature is the result of 'the seeds of things mixed and confused together'.⁷⁴ What is not so clear, though, is the question of whether these motions ultimately belong to atoms or to material bodies. Silvia Manzo has rightly pointed out the fact that Bacon never provided an answer to this problem.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, if we take Bacon's statement from the *De principiis*—namely, that 'in the atom's motion and virtue exist *the beginnings of all motions*'—at face value, it might suggest to us that, while the potential for all motions was inherent in the atom, not all motions surface until the level of conglomerate atoms, or matter (emphasis added). The Aristotelian language of potentiality and actuality was, of course, openly and consistently rejected by Bacon, but it is difficult to understand his meaning unless the atom is understood to possess in its own, original and fundamental motions the potential for all material, bodily motion.⁷⁶

Before setting out his own thoughts about the nature of matter, Bacon moved—as was so often his preferred tactic—to sweep aside the philosophical detritus of the schools. From his point of view, it had been of great detriment to humankind that the Academy and Lyceum had come to overshadow the teachings of Democritus. Unlike the great 'Magus,' Plato and Aristotle had characterized matter not as an active, principal constituent of the universe, complained Bacon, but rather as a passive and inert substratum upon which to work.⁷⁷ The idea of matter as something 'passive, potential and unformed,' as an 'accessory' and 'substrate' upon which forms could act, was reflective not of the real world but of Plato's imagination alone.⁷⁸ Many of the ancients, including 'Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Anaximenes, Heraclitus and Democritus'—des-

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 202-3. DSV, SEH VI, p. 709.

⁷⁵ Manzo, 'Francis Bacon and Atomism: A Reappraisal', pp. 242-3.

⁷⁶ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 207. Bacon never mentions as absurd the idea that atoms might possess the potentiality of all motion. He does, however, argue that the idea that matter is pure potential acted upon by form is superstitious and false.

⁷⁷ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 205. Bacon refers here to Democritus as 'the greatest student of nature.'

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 207.

pite having differed in other respects as to the qualities they had attributed to it—had at least maintained ‘that matter was active ... and had the principle of motion within itself.’ So, although guilty of other crimes against nature, they had not ‘abandon[ed] experience altogether,’ like Plato, Aristotle, and their followers. Should these Presocratics have had succeeded, the human condition would have been much improved. In the end, however, it was Plato, who had ‘made over the world to thoughts [*cogitationes*],’ and Aristotle, who in turn had ‘made over thoughts to words [*verba*],’ who had ‘fascinated’ the minds of men.⁷⁹ What was needed was an ancient conception of matter made modern. Democritus, it seems, was ‘worthy of being rescued from neglect.’⁸⁰

A Political Matter: Principles, Perception, and Appetite

Matter, then, as a first rule of Bacon’s ontology, existed ‘no less really than those [things] that flow from it, and in some ways more.’ It was ‘self-subsisting’ and all things in the universe ‘subsist[ed] through it’⁸¹. Because everything in nature, according to Bacon, was either composed of or emanated from it in some way or another, matter was conceived to be both ‘pliant’ (*plica materiae*) and ‘changeable’ (*fluxa*); an aspect said to reflect the wisdom of Proteus, the god who ‘would turn himself into all manner of strange shapes’ in order to escape bondage.⁸² It was this elasticity that ultimately allowed matter to ‘unfold’ (*explicatio*) and ‘enfold’ (*implicatio*) into the myriad species that populated the universe; whether it be the dense bodies of the earth or the rare bodies of the outermost heavens.⁸³

While in many ways Baconian matter, as we shall shortly see, owes its conceptualization to the thought of the Italian philosopher Bernardino Telesio, Bacon’s particular insistence that all species ‘unfold’ through a generative processes comes very close to the thought of Peder Sørensen (1542-1602). Known better by his Latinized name, Petrus Severinus was a Danish physician who endeavoured to put

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 209.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 207.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 209.

⁸² NO, OFB XI, p. 404; PhU, OFB VI, p. 12; DSV, SEH VI, p. 725.

⁸³ PhU, OFB VI, p. 13; DGI, OFB VI, p. 101; TC, OFB IV, p. 177; DPAO, OFB VI, p. 229.

Paracelsian medicine on a firmer philosophical basis.⁸⁴ In his *Idea medicinae philosophicae* (1571), Severinus had argued that all material species were produced through a process in which matter, the 'matrix' or 'womb' (*matrix*), unfolded according to the immaterial and divine 'seeds' (*semina*) implanted within it.⁸⁵ Although Bacon rejected the idea that such immaterial seeds were responsible for the unfolding of matter, he nevertheless accepted the basic idea presented by Severinus that everything in nature was indeed the result an organic and germinative process of 'unfolding'. The important influence of Severinus is, in fact, silently witnessed in numerous places throughout Bacon's written works: his use of phrases such as all things spring 'from the wombs of the elements' (*e matricides elementorum*), that the 'true signatures and marks' of God were 'set upon the works of creation,' and his frequent use of the term 'seeds'—albeit in a strictly material sense—testify to Severinian nature of Bacon's matter theory.⁸⁶

Where Bacon drew heavily from the natural philosophical tenets of Telesio was in his theory of the appetites of matter. Bacon, in general, was extremely ambivalent about Telesio.⁸⁷ On the one hand, Telesio's openly anti-Aristotelian rhetoric and matter theory appealed to him immensely. On the other, though, he criticized what he considered to be Telesio's penchant for overly naturalistic explanations: it was pos-

⁸⁴ Severinus was one of the few Paracelsians about whom Bacon had anything positive to say. In his *Temporis partus masculus* (c. 1608), he wrote: 'Only one of your followers do I grudge you, namely Peter Severinus, a man too good to die in the toils of such folly. You, Paracelsus, adopted son of the family of asses, own him a heavy debt. He took over your brayings and by the tuneful modulations and pleasant inflexions of his voice made sweet harmony of them, transforming your detectable falsehoods into delectable fables. So I find it in my heart to forgive you, Peter Severinus, if wearying of the teaching of the Sophists, ... you gallantly sought a fresh foundation for our crumbling fortunes. When you came across these doctrines of Paracelsus, recommending themselves by their noisy trumpeting, the cunning of their obscurity, their religious affiliations, and other specious allures, with one impulsive leap you surrendered yourself to what turned out to be not sources of true knowledge but empty delusions. You would have been well and truly advised if your revolt from ingenious paradoxes had taken you instead to nature's laws, which would have offered you a shorter path to knowledge and a longer lease of life' (TPM, SEH III, p. 533. Translation from Benjamin Farrington, *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on its Development from 1603-1609 with New Translations of Fundamental Texts* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), p. 67).

⁸⁵ See Petrus Severinus, *Idea medicinae philosophicae* (Basiliae: Ex officina Sixti Henricpetri, 1571), p. 49; Jole Shackelford, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine. The Ideas, Intellectual Context, and Influence of Petrus Severinus (1540/2-1602)* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2004), pp. 162, 163, 182-3, 285, 464-5.

⁸⁶ See, for instance, the following passages: DSV, SEH IV, p. 396, 709, 731; NO, OFB XI, pp. 72-3; DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 201, 253.

⁸⁷ See Valeria Assenza Giachetti, 'Bernardino Telesio: il migliore dei moderni. I riferimenti a Telesio negli scritti di Francesco Bacone', *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* 35 (1980), pp. 41-78; Guido Giglioli, 'The First of the Moderns or the Last of the Ancients? Bernardino Telesio on Nature and Sentience', *Bruniana et Campanelliana* 16 (2010), pp. 69-87; Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Bacon, lecteur critique d'Aristote et de Telesio', in *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi su Bernardino Telesio* (Cosenza: Accademia Cosentina, 1989), pp. 135-66; Jean-Marie Pousseur, 'Bacon, a Critic of Telesio', in *Francis Bacon's Legacy of Texts: The Art of Discovery Grows with Discovery*, ed. William A. Sessions (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 105-17.

sible, after all, to philosophize according to the sense a little too much.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it was from Telesio that Bacon derived the view that matter was not only pliant and changeable, but that it possessed a set of particular, primordial desires or 'appetites' (*appetitus*).⁸⁹ Telesio had conceived of a universe in which matter was pervaded by two opposite 'active natures' (*naturae agentes*); 'warmth' and 'cold'. And it was with these two principles, according to his *De rerum naturae* (1586), through which it was possible to differentiate between and thus categorize all phenomena in the universe. The warmth of heavenly bodies, for instance, was responsible for the swift motion of the Sun through the night's sky, while the cold of the Earth accounted for its own stationary position. The properties of all natural bodies—not just those of the Sun and the Earth—were determined entirely by the 'quantities of warmth and cold' that constituted them.⁹⁰ But it was ultimately the principle of warmth that enabled matter to be turned into an appetitive organism. Every material body, even the coldest, possessed some degree of warmth, and through this endowment was afforded the capacity of both perception (*perceptio*) and motion (*motio*).⁹¹ In explaining their connection, Guido Giglioni has recently argued that what Telesio did was to 'conflate the very notions of movement and perception by defending the existence of a natural and sentient appetite of self-preservation in each part of the universe.'⁹² Put differently, the principle of warmth rendered matter both perceptive and capable of self-movement to the extent that its motion became predicated upon its ability to 'distinguish between that which threaten[ed] and that which favour[ed] its survival.'⁹³ The result of Telesio's conflation was thus a kind of material 'appetite' (*appetitus*)—a desire inherent in all material bodies to avoid that which is harmful and to seek that which is beneficial.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, DAS, SEH IV, pp. 397, where Bacon criticises Telesio for his belief that the human soul was purely material. See also TC, OFB VI, p. 179; DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 225, 259-61, 263.

⁸⁹ For a summary of Bacon's debts to Telesio's matter theory, see Guido Giglioni, 'Francis Bacon', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Peter Anstey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 41-72 (on p. 48).

⁹⁰ Cees Leijenhorst, 'Bernardino Telesio', in *Philosophers of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul Richard Blum, trans. Brian McNeil (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), pp. 168-80 (on p. 171).

⁹¹ As Cees Leijenhorst has argued, there is a real asymmetry between the two active natures; where warmth is the genuinely active and creative of the two principles, and cold only functions to 'temper' warmth. See 'Bernardino Telesio', p. 172. This asymmetry is furthered attested to by the fact that it is the nature of warmth alone that enables perception and material motion.

⁹² See Giglioni, 'The First of the Moderns or the Last of the Ancients?', p. 84.

⁹³ Ingegno, 'The New Philosophy of Nature', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 236-63. For Telesio, see pp. 250-52 (on p. 252).

Bacon undoubtedly adopted the idea of the appetites of matter from Telesio. Yet he did not accept them wholesale, choosing rather to adapt them to suit his own particular theory of the universe. The chief difference between the two philosophers ultimately rested upon the enumeration of principles (*principia*). From Telesio's point of view, there existed three principles in the universe: matter, warmth, and cold. Given that warmth was the principle of action, while cold was that which tempered its presence, all that remained for matter was the old Aristotelian role of mere passivity.⁹⁴ It was true that, for Telesio, all matter possessed perception and appetite—that which was characteristic of life—but it was equally true that such 'life' was the result of the varying degrees of the principle of warmth vivifying it. Matter, as a consequence, could only be said to be perceptive and appetitive in a derivative and concomitant sense. For Bacon, on the other hand, there could only be one true principle—matter—and it alone, rather than any external virtue, contained 'the principle of motion within itself'⁹⁵. The appetites of matter, in other words, were not derived from warmth and cold, 'hot and cold' were derived from the appetites of matter. So, if there was any genuine 'principle' in nature—and Bacon was not entirely convinced that such a thing even existed—then it could only be a fundamentally active and perceptive *materia*.⁹⁶ All other so-called principles, from the warmth and cold of Telesio to the water, earth, air, and fire of the Presocratics, were little more than 'dialectical notions'.⁹⁷ Telesio had been right to attribute appetite to matter, but he had been 'caught out by the harsher inconvenience of making ... imaginary' principles govern it, believing 'things that are notional and mere mental props [to be] real entities'.⁹⁸

Where Telesio had expressed natural phenomena in terms of a primordial tension between two principles, Bacon explained them in terms of one in perpetual con-

⁹⁴ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 225; Bernardino Telesio, *De rerum natura* [1586] (reprinted in Olms: Hildesheim, 1971), pp. 7, 9, 45, 59. See also Cees Leijenhorst, 'Bernardino Telesio', p. 172.

⁹⁵ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 209.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209. Bacon criticizes Thales for having made 'Water' into 'the principle of things', and Anaximenes and Heraclitus for predicating the reality of matter upon 'some notional and fantastic fire, air, or whatever...' (DPAO, OFB VI, p. 221). In this way, the Presocratics, like Telesio, separated matter from reality as if 'by a veil' (*ibid.*, p. 213).

⁹⁸ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 255.

flict with itself.⁹⁹ Although there was just a single principle at work in the Baconian cosmos, it was an extraordinarily multifaceted one. The appetites that matter possessed were diverse and ubiquitous. And so it is that we find them in the *Descriptio globi intellectualis* of c. 1612, where Bacon first lists them under the description of the 'Cardinal' or 'Catholic' virtues of matter as: 'Dense' and 'Rare', 'Light' and 'Heavy', 'Hot' and 'Cold', 'Consistent' and 'Fluid', 'Similar' and 'Dissimilar', as well as 'Specific', 'Organic and the like'.¹⁰⁰ The first notable point is that Bacon did, in fact, retain an important place for Telesio's principles of 'hot and cold'—although he ultimately relegated them to only one of a number of the appetites of matter.¹⁰¹ The more significant point to note, though, is that the appetites—again drawing upon the Italian natural philosopher—are comprised of contrary qualities; what Bacon refers to as the 'great armies' of contraries, 'which appear throughout the universe' and 'spring from some one source of material stuff [*res materiae*]'¹⁰². So, like the contrary principles of warmth and cold, Bacon's appetites in their earliest incarnation existed in pairs of opposites.

A number of years later in the *Novum organum*, however, Bacon not only expanded his list of primordial appetites from the *Descriptio*, but redefined their relationship to each other. He now listed appetites of 'resistance', of 'connection', of 'liberty', of 'hyle', of 'continuity', of 'profit and want', of 'greater and lesser congregation', of 'magnetism', of 'flight', of 'assimilation', of 'stimulation', of 'impression', of 'configuration', of 'passing through', of 'royalty or politics', of 'rotation', of 'trepidation', and of 'rest' among the cardinal virtues of matter.¹⁰³ So what had happened to the Telesian pairing of opposites? Gone were the conflicting pairs of the *Descriptio*, replaced with myriad singular and, at first, ostensibly non-antithetical virtues. It seems that Bacon, having reconsidered things at some point between 1612 and

⁹⁹ Guido Giglioni has rescued Bacon's theory of the appetites of matter from obscurity. For a general introduction, see his 'Francis Bacon', pp. 45-55. See also Giglioni, 'Mastering the Appetites of Matter; The Material Foundations of Francis Bacon's Utopia', *Studi di Stiinta si Cultura* 23 (2010), pp. 7-19; 'The Hidden Life of Matter: Techniques for Prolonging of Life in the Writings of Francis Bacon', in *Francis Bacon and the Refiguring of Early Modern Thought. Essays to Commemorate The Advancement of Learning (1605-2005)*, ed. Julie Robin Solomon and Catherine Gemelli Martin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 129-144; *Francesco Bacon* (Roma: Carocci editore, 2011), pp. 59-95.

¹⁰⁰ DGI, OFB VI, p. 108; Giglioni has argued that the first hints of Bacon's theory of the appetites of matter appear in the *Cogitationes de natura rerum* (c. 1605), *Filum labyrinthi* (c. 1607) and *Comentarius solutus* (1608).

¹⁰¹ See also DPAO, OFB VI, p. 263, where Bacon explains the motions of dense and rare in terms of the expanding and contracting effect of hot and cold.

¹⁰² DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 221-223.

¹⁰³ NO, OFB XI, pp. 382-416.

1620, had changed his mind about their nature. The original appetites of the *Descriptio* now became 'textures' (*texturae*), or what Bacon otherwise referred to as the 'schematisms of matter' (*schematismi materiae*).¹⁰⁴ Rather than appetitive motions, these schematisms signified the arrangement of matter (presumably that of its atom-like particles) within any given material body. This is a shift further attested to in the 1622 *Abecedarium*, where Bacon refers to 'dense and rare', 'heavy and light', 'hot and cold', 'tangible and pneumatic', and 'volatile and fixed' as the 'great Determinants of Bulk' (*Exporectiones magna*), and 'moist and dry', 'stable and fluid', and 'fragile or tensile', as its schematisms.¹⁰⁵ The appetites in the *Abecedarium* are labelled 'simple' and 'compound' motions—as they were in the *Novum organum*—but number sixteen instead of the earlier nineteen.¹⁰⁶ It is ultimately difficult to argue for any hidden significance in the final number of material appetites, as Bacon admitted that his list was tentative, and consequently open to additions or subtractions.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, precedence should be given to the list of the *Novum organum*, if only out of consideration for the ripening of Bacon's thought and its publication.

Whatever the definitive sum, Bacon was adamant that these appetites existed in every part of the universe. 'No difference of regions or places,' he wrote, could 'divide or put asunder' the appetites of matter.¹⁰⁸ In large part, this was a response, first voiced in the *Thema caeli*, to what Bacon took to be the unduly divisory theories of the ancients. In particular, he singled out Aristotle (c. 384-330), who had derived from Plato the belief that the heavens were composed of a fifth element. According to Aristotelian physics, it was 'aether' (*αἰθήρ*), the fifth element or 'quintessence', which comprised the sphere of the heavens, and aether from which it received both its immutability and perfect, circular motion. The region of the Earth, by contrast, was composed of the four Ionian elements, affording it both mutability and rectilinear motion. This distinction ultimately led to a cosmological division: the realm above the sphere of the moon (the heavens) was, in its perfectness, perfectly separated from the

¹⁰⁴ DGI, OFB VI, pp. 108-109; NO, OFB XI, pp. 341-343.

¹⁰⁵ ANN, OFB XIII, pp. 174-177, 177-191.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 203.

¹⁰⁷ OFB XII, p. 413; ANN, OFB XIII, pp. 173, 221-223; In the *Novum organum*, Bacon writes: 'I do not deny that other species could perhaps be added, or that the divisions set out could be shifted the better to match the truer veins of things, or lastly, that their number could be reduced' (OFB XII, p. 413).

¹⁰⁸ DGI, OFB VI, p. 113.

everything that existed below the moon (the sublunary realm).¹⁰⁹ For Bacon, this peripatetic distinction was nothing but 'an arrogant and wanton denial of fact and sense'.¹¹⁰ Recent telescopic evidence of comets, in addition to ancient reports of the appearance of new stars, disproved any possibility that the heavens were truly immutable, and thus any possibility that they were effectively any different from the regions surrounding the Earth.¹¹¹ From Bacon's point of view, matter was 'one and the same' (*una et eadem*) regardless of where it was located in the greater scheme of the universe.¹¹² From the furthest reaches of the heavens to the deepest depths of the Earth, the universe was everywhere comprised of the same pliant, perceptive, and appetitive stuff.

As the sole and ubiquitous principle of the universe, Baconian matter carried a great deal of explanatory weight upon its shoulders. In order to account for an entire universe of natural phenomena, it had to be able to provide plausible explanations for things as seemingly divergent as the rotation of the heavens, on the one hand, to the growth of human bodies, on the other. Bacon's faith in matter to achieve this ultimately came down to what he saw as its intrinsic power to facilitate a vast pliability, originating in perception and evolving into appetite, sensation and, in some sense, even intelligence. As the ontologically foremost condition of material life, perception was everywhere (*ubique ... est perceptio*)—not just in terms of spatial location, but also in so far as it was present throughout the entire chain of being. 'All natural bodies,' he would later come to write, 'have a manifest power of perception (*vis percipiendi*),' which is nothing other than 'a kind of choice in receiving what is agreeable, and avoiding what is hostile and foreign.' We see this, for instance, when 'magnet attracts iron, flame leaps towards naphtha,' or even when 'one bubble coming near another unites with it.' 'No body when placed near another,' he consequently maintained, 'either changes it or is changed by it, unless some reciprocal *perception* precede the operation'.¹¹³ Perception, as a general rule then, was always present: it oc-

¹⁰⁹ See R. J. Hankinson, 'Science', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 140-67 (in particular, pp. 150-8). Aristotle's sophistry, according to Bacon, had 'spawned for us a fantastic heaven' from an 'outer element' (OFB VI, pp. 135-7, 255).

¹¹⁰ TC, OFB VI, pp. 187-9.

¹¹¹ DGI, OFB VI, pp. 139-41.

¹¹² DGI, OFB VI, pp. 111-3. Bacon may also have adopted this view from Telesio. See Karl Shuhmann, 'Telesio's Concept of Matter', in *Atti del convegno internazionale di studi su Bernardino Telesio* (Cosenza: Accademia Cosentina, 1989), p. 128. Shuhmann argues that the view that nature was uniform appears to have originated with William of Ockham in the fourteenth century.

¹¹³ DAS, SEH I, p. 610; DAS, SEH IV, p. 402.

curred not just when two or more material bodies 'touched', but operated equally well from 'a great distance off,' and, for Bacon, was rooted in the belief that everything in nature should be capable of survival without the intercession of divine action.¹¹⁴

In many ways, perception sounds like sensation (*sensus*). Yet Bacon was adamant that it was not—that the two, in fact, operated at very different levels of reality, and that the difference between them was 'a matter most fundamental.' Philosophers, he argued, had made two serious mistakes in this matter: their first had simply been to ignore the distinction altogether; their second, rather whimsically, had been to allow their minds to wander too far and 'attribute sense to all bodies; so that it were a kind of impiety to pluck off the branch of a tree, lest it should groan.'¹¹⁵ What they should have done is to have examined how perception differed from sense; not only between animate and inanimate bodies, but within bodies, such as that of humans, who are capable of both. Error might readily have been avoided should they

have observed what is the reason why so many actions are performed without any sense at all; why food is digested and ejected; humours and juices carried up and down; the heart and the pulse beat; the entrails, like so many workshops, perform every one its own work; and yet all these and many other things are done without sense.¹¹⁶

Sensation, then, was for Bacon the next level of material activity above perception. It was, as Guido Giglioni has deftly put it, the 'fundamental difference which distinguishes the simple urge of material appetite from the level of knowledge that is capable of controlling the primordial appetitive drives of matter.'¹¹⁷ A magnet which perceived a loadstone would make every effort to attract it. It could not perceive the loadstone and do otherwise—that was a gift of the capacity for sensation. Perception was ultimately a simple binary affair, 'far more subtle than the sense,' such that 'sense [was] but a dull thing in comparison'.¹¹⁸

With perception, as we have seen, came appetite, and appetite for Bacon entailed motion. Perception without the capacity for motion was, after all, somewhat

¹¹⁴ SS, SEH II, p. 602.

¹¹⁵ In the *Aeneid*, III, 39, Vol. 1, p. 179, Virgil writes that, as Aeneas cleared the land to found a new colony in Thrace, the plants began to bleed, such that he soon discovered it to be the spot where Polydorus had been killed.

¹¹⁶ DAS, SEH IV, pp. 402-403.

¹¹⁷ Giglioni, 'Francis Bacon', p. 45.

¹¹⁸ SS, SEH II, p. 602.

superfluous. What good would it do an antelope to perceive its feline predator but be unable to run? From the rotation of the heavenly bodies to the motion of the tides, all locomotion—that is, perceptible change—was the result of atomic-level activity related to appetitive drive.¹¹⁹ Bacon provides concrete explanations for the two, chief kinds of locomotion: circular motion (*motio circulus*) and rectilinear motion (*motio recta*). He writes that

movement in a circle has no limit, and seems to emanate from an appetite of the body, which moves merely for the sake of moving and following itself, of seeking its own embraces, and of exciting its own nature and enjoying it, and of exercising its own operation; while rectilinear motion seems, on the contrary, like a journey to an end, and to move towards a point of idleness or rest, for the sake of achieving some object and then abandoning its motion.¹²⁰

While Bacon's explanation clearly draws upon Aristotelian physics, it substitutes the causal commitments underlying its forerunner's teleological bent, exchanging for natural motion his own theory of the appetites of material bodies (*appetitus corporis*). Baconian circular motion, at least where appearances are concerned, is no different than Aristotelian celestial motion: both manifest at the macroscopic level of locomotion in the various rotations of heavenly bodies. But, when it comes to explaining their cause, Bacon eschews Aristotle's theory of natural motion—namely, the view that all natural bodies tend towards their proper place—for his own explanation, according to which celestial locomotion is considered to be the result of an underlying appetite of self-love inherent in the constituent matter of stellar bodies. Rectilinear motion, too, is the result of underlying material appetites; though Bacon does not say which.

It is important to note, however, that for Bacon motion was not appetite, in the strict sense. Although locomotion was always derived from appetite, locomotion was often more than just appetite. This is clear from a passage in the *Thema cœli* where he discusses the system of the universe. Referring first to the Earth and then to the heavens, he writes that a 'dense and tight packing of matter induces a tendency torpid and antipathetic to motion, just as on the other hand loose unfolding induces a tendency

¹¹⁹ Locomotion is meant here in the sense provided by modern physics: that is, of the change of any given object's position with respect to space and time.

¹²⁰ TC, OFB VI, p. 179.

ready or apt'.¹²¹ In other words, the Earth, being composed of tightly packed matter, is very much stationary; whereas the heavens, being composed of loose, fiery particles, are extremely volatile. It is not only, then, the underlying appetites that determine the nature of an object's motion: density or rarity can also be a contributing factor, and it is highly probable that so too can the other *exporrectiones magnae*. It might be said, in sum, that while appetites are expressed as kinds of motion as the necessary corollary of perception, not all locomotion is determined strictly by appetites—the configurations and textures of material bodies are seldom indeterminate in this respect.

Bacon's appetites of matter were something of a motley crew. The Telesian conflict had escalated from a meagre two principles to a host of divergent tendencies. The notion that material bodies were constructed from a universal conflict between principles expressed through atomic appetite was—as we have already seen—a theory Bacon derived from Telesio.¹²² But, where Telesio had maintained that the conflict between one pair of opposite tendencies was all that was required, Bacon argued that a wealth of simple and compound motions were necessary to explain nature. At bottom, simple motions co-existed in conflict with one another and produced either various kinds of resistance (*antitypia*) or resulted in further, compounded types of motion.¹²³ While this ultimately allowed for a much more nuanced range of conflict—and thus one that could be used to explain a much more diverse body of natural phenomena—it also entailed that Bacon's universe, even more than Telesio's, was a deeply Tacitean place. The most natural state of material appetites, Bacon wrote in *De principiis*, was to 'attack, usurp, and slaughter one another in turn'¹²⁴. Material bodies possessed appetites

of constantly generating, multiplying and spreading themselves in all directions, of occupying the whole mass of matter, of mutually attacking and invading one another, [and] of dislodging and ejecting one another from their proper seats ...¹²⁵

As a rule, life in the Baconian universe—as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) would so

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² See Giglioli, 'Francis Bacon', p. 48.

¹²³ ANN, OFB XIII, pp. 203-15.

¹²⁴ DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 221-3.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 231-3.

aptly put it—was 'nasty, brutish, and short.'¹²⁶ The beauty we witnessed around us masked the reality of the bloody conflict which made it possible. Sure, Telesio's universe might have been the result of gang rivalry, but Bacon's was the consequence of all-out war.

Despite existence in a condition of conflict, matter could never be destroyed. The 'sum of matter', agreed Bacon with Telesio, 'remains forever constant, and is not increased or diminished'.¹²⁷ God had decreed that the 'quantum of nature' should forever remain constant, and in order to achieve this had 'implanted an active virtue' within it

... by which matter saves itself from destruction, such that not the smallest portion of matter can be either overthrown by the whole mass of the world, or destroyed by the power and fury of all agents, or in any way annihilated and reduced to order, but it both occupies some space, and keeps up resistance with impenetrable dimensions.¹²⁸

This appetite for self-preservation, what the ancient Stoics had referred to as 'oikeiosis' (*οικεισις*), was 'the most powerful' of all appetites, 'completely unconquerable, and as it were nothing but fate and necessity.'¹²⁹ Through the existence of conflict within this absolute quantum of matter, Bacon was also able to offer something by way of an explanation for the existence of energy in the universe. Those appetites which sought 'connection', 'liberty', and 'rule', for instance, taken together with the ultimate necessity of resistance, meant that material bodies were continually being relocated throughout the universe. Because the sum total of matter always remained constant, when any given appetite overcame any other, in displacing that which it had overcome, energy (*ἐνέργεια*)—traditionally equated with 'action' or 'operation'—resulted. In occupying 'some space' and keeping 'up resistance with impenetrable dimensions,' matter could never be destroyed but only displaced, and displacement entailed move-

¹²⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), p. 76. For Hobbes' relationship to Bacon, see Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, pp. 464, 477, 503, 505; Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 52-5, 174-5, 188; Noel Malcolm, *De Dominis (1560-1624): Venetian, Anglican, Ecumenist and Relapsed Heretic* (London: Strickland and Scott Academic Publications, 1984); and Robin Bunce, 'Hobbes's Relationship with Francis Bacon: An Introduction', *Hobbes Studies* 16 (2003), pp. 41-83.

¹²⁷ DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 259-61; SEH VI, p. 723; Bernardino Telesio, *De rerum natura*, pp. 7-8.

¹²⁸ Bacon argues in the *Phaenomena universi* that nothing is truer about nature than the two propositions: 'Nothing comes from nothing, nor is anything reduced to nothing, but the very quantum of nature, or the whole sum of matter always remains and stays the same, and is in no way increased or diminished' (PhU, OFB VI, p. 11).

¹²⁹ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 259-261.

ment. As a consequence, the source of energy in the universe could be accounted the result of a combination of appetitive motion within an absolute quantum of matter.

* * * *

As we have seen, Bacon's concept of nature owes much to Democritus and Telesio, as well as to the Paracelsian Severinus. But it is also owing to political theorists, such as Machiavelli, and the Tacitists Guicciardini and Lipsius. All three proved to be exceptionally influential, not just to Bacon's views about politics and religion, but also to his understanding of the natural world.

The Tacitean character of Bacon's philosophy is indebted to the years he spent with the young Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux (1565-1601), during the 1590s. In his later writings, Bacon would come to voice a number of opinions similar to those of the politically-minded youth who had assembled around Essex during these early years of his career.¹³⁰ It is hardly surprising, then, that we also find an implicit Tacitean bent to his natural philosophy. Vital channels for the reception of Tacitus (c. 56-117), both Guicciardini and Lipsius proved hugely influential to members of the Essex circle, who were drawn to their writings for offering a realist approach to the political concerns of late-Elizabethan England. But it was Bacon, more than any of his contemporaries, who drew upon the untapped well of Tacitean thought; seeing in it both a replacement for the failed idealism of political Ciceronianism, but also a means to dissolve the castles Aristotelianism had erected in the sky. The ideas that he took from Tacitus, Guicciardini and Lipsius, such as balance of power and Neostoic notions of fate and necessity, would come, roughly a decade later, to define central aspects of his view of the universe.

The language of appetite that was to become such a key feature of the political landscape of Cinquecento Italy was in many ways a natural extension of Tacitus's view of history as the interplay of competing interests.¹³¹ Guicciardini, though not the first to use this language, saw political power in Tacitean terms, and put forth the view

¹³⁰ See Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 108-9, who has argued that Bacon represents English Taciteanism at its most concentrated in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Bacon was first exposed to the writings of Guicciardini and Lipsius through his association with Robert Devereux.

¹³¹ Guido Giglioni, 'Philosophy According to Tacitus: Francis Bacon and the Inquiry into the Limits of Human Self-Delusion', *Perspectives on Science* 20 (2012), pp. 159-82; David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 153; Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, p. 36.

in his *Ricordi* (1512-1530) and, subsequently, in his *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze* ('Dialogue on the Government of Florence', 1521-1525), that all states had their origin in violence.¹³² This violence, he suggested, was a result of the conflict that existed between the various, self-interested factions of the unwashed masses. While it had long been considered the chief task of the prince to suppress these popular appetites in order to retain power and preserve the peace, Guicciardini took an approach perhaps best described as a 'Stoic Tacitism' to the problem of governance, arguing that the surest means to secure power was to cultivate an equilibrium favourable to one's personal rule amongst conflicting appetites.¹³³ His notion of a 'balance of power'—first used in the *Storia d'Italia*—thus suggested that rulers encourage a 'mutual but equal antagonism of various interests' as a means to maintain political power.¹³⁴ Combined with the *ragion di stato*, Guicciardini was able to offer a formidable new model of the mechanisms of statecraft based upon a Tacitean view of history which underscored the irreducibility of self-interest, and thus the necessity of securing power through the cultivation of a state of political equilibrium.

Perhaps stemming from his express admiration for Tacitus' historical realism, Bacon borrowed from Guicciardini the notion of a balance of power, transplanting it from a book of Italian political history into the sphere of nature.¹³⁵ Writing in his essay 'Of Empire', he praised Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, and argued that war could almost always be justified when necessary for the preservation of a balance of power in Europe (Bacon was, in fact, something of a warmonger).¹³⁶ But it was ultimately in his treatment of nature – perhaps not surprisingly, given that the notion, as Richard Tuck has suggested, is 'an image more of pharmacy or metallurgy' than of politics – that Bacon found a true home for Guicciardini's balance of power.¹³⁷ From at least the publication of the *De sapientia veterum* onwards, Bacon believed the existence of the universe to be the result of a precarious balance between material appetites. Baconian nature, as we have already seen, was populated with bodies 'endowed with many motions, some ruling, others submitting, others again lying hidden unless excited', whose

¹³² Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, p. 39.

¹³³ Giglioni, 'Philosophy According to Tacitus', pp. 159-64.

¹³⁴ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 95-6: Guicciardini first employed the term 'balance of power' in the context of foreign affairs rather than that of civil conflict.

¹³⁵ For Bacon's admiration of Tacitus, see AdFG, OFB I, pp. 207-11.

¹³⁶ AL, OFB I, pp. 60-1.

¹³⁷ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 95-6.

interaction, unless tempered by the hand of God, would result in chaos.¹³⁸ It was only with the introduction of the summary law, '*The work which God worketh from the beginning to the end*', that a 'manifold consent of things (*consensus rerum*)' emerged, defined as a state of mutual but equal antagonism brought into existence through the principal law of nature, or 'most general appetite.'¹³⁹ Order, what Bacon refers to in his cosmology as the 'symmetry of the universe', was thus achieved through a certain 'necessity [which] moderates and sets limits' upon the interaction of all material appetites for the greater good of the whole.¹⁴⁰ Like the European continent, then, for Bacon the universe was kept in a constant but, crucially, perfectly stable state of war. Nature was very much a political entity, where God's power was understood not to restrict material activity, but to make sure that it remained forever balanced.

Lipsius, a Flemish humanist who produced definitive editions of both Tacitus and Seneca between the years 1574-1607, is another political theorist whose influence on Bacon's thought extends to the natural world. His immensely popular work of Neostoic consolation, *De constantia* ('On Constancy', 1583), as well as his political opus, the *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* ('Six Books on Politics or Civil Philosophy', 1589), were, like the writings of Guicciardini, widely circulated amongst members of the Essex circle. It is thus unsurprising that we find a number of ideas derived from Lipsius's Stoic Tacitism – including those of 'fate', 'providence', and 'self-preservation' – in Bacon's natural philosophy. In his attempt to reconcile Stoicism and Christianity, Lipsius postulated a novel relationship between the Stoic notions of οἰκείωσις (self-preservation/adaptation) and μοίρα (Fate) and that of Christian providence: in essence, he argued that the intractability of divine providence (understood as the immutable and eternally decreed course of nature), operating in tandem with the irrepressible desire for self-preservation, entailed the necessitation of certain actions. 'This Necessity [or Fate]', he wrote in the *De constantia*, 'I join next to Providence, because it is a near kin to it, or rather born of it.'¹⁴¹ Stoic fate was thus subjected to Christian providence through the inescapability which arose from the coalescence of God's immutable design and the necessity to preserve one's own exist-

¹³⁸ TC, OFB VI, pp. 187-9.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ DGI, OFB VI, p. 169.

¹⁴¹ Justus Lipsius, *De constantia*, trans. John Stradling, ed. John Sellers (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press, [1595] 2006), p. 58.

ence whatever the cost.¹⁴² The violence which resulted was an inexorable fact of life – a simple consequence of the necessity through which God cultivated his creation. From the human point of view, Lipsius acknowledged that this seemed unduly harsh, but believed that it was ultimately for the greater good, such as when a plant is trimmed back in order for it to grow stronger.¹⁴³ Analogously, the only real option left to humans was to cultivate constancy from the 'sacred seed' (*semen divinum*) that God had implanted in us whenever we faced fatal necessity.¹⁴⁴

These Neostoic notions proved particularly adaptable to Bacon's own attempts at a theory of the universe. In at least two separate works, Bacon employed Lipsian terms to describe the fundamental forces of nature. Writing of the summary law in *De sapientia veterum*, for instance, he maintained that, because matter was inherently blind, 'divine Providence' was required in order 'to educe by a fatal and necessary law all the order and beauty of the universe.'¹⁴⁵ Similar to Lipsius, then, Bacon identified the course of nature with providence: the divine plan was responsible in major part for that 'necessity' which constrained 'nature or matter.'¹⁴⁶ But so too was the desire for self-preservation, which, in the *De principiis*, he described similarly as 'by far the most powerful of all [appetites], completely unconquerable, and as it were nothing but fate and necessity.'¹⁴⁷ Together, these two appetites functioned within the Baconian view of the universe much as they had in *De constantia*: when the 'necessary law' of providence (i.e., the summary law) encountered the 'completely unconquerable' appetite of self-preservation, nature was necessitated to act in a manner specific to the cultivation of balance and order. Just as necessity was 'born of' providence for Lipsius, so too should the classical Fates, thought Bacon, be regarded as 'the sisters of nature'; for they are 'the chain which draws after it the births and durations and deaths of all things; their fallings and risings, their labours and felicities: in short all the fates that can befall them.'¹⁴⁸ Lipsius' Neostoicism can thus be seen as providing the Baconian universe with the parameters (providence and self-preservation) within which a fundamental necessity maintains order and beauty.

¹⁴² See Giglioli, 'Justus Lipsius and the Notion of *oikeiosis*', p. 42 and Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁴³ Lipsius, *De constantia*, pp. 78-81.

¹⁴⁴ Bacon shared with Lipsius a great love of gardens: *ibid.*, pp. 124-7; AL, OFB I, pp. 139-45.

¹⁴⁵ DSV, SEH VI, p. 731.

¹⁴⁶ DGI, OFB VI, pp. 97-9.

¹⁴⁷ DPAO, OFB VI, pp. 259-61.

¹⁴⁸ DSV, SEH VI, pp. 709-10.

Unlike Guicciardini and Lipsius, Tacitus never provided Machiavelli with a historical precedent upon which to model his political ideas. Nevertheless, Bacon, ever the synthesist, was able to find a use for Machiavellian conceptions of statecraft in his view of the natural world. Strikingly dissimilar to subsequent, mechanical and mathematical views of the laws of nature, Bacon's identification of providence with the summary, or highest, law of nature is especially fraught with ambiguity: besides the fact that it is foremost a material appetite, there also arises the problem that, while most answerable for order and regularity in the world, providence often achieves this through circuitous ways. In this respect, Bacon's God is not all that dissimilar to Machiavelli's prince. In his *Il principe*, for instance, Machiavelli had argued that 'we find some qualities that look like virtues, yet—if the prince practices them—they will be his destruction, and other qualities that look like vices, yet—if he practices them—they will bring him safety and well-being.'¹⁴⁹ The use of 'the power to be not good ... in accord with necessity' often represented for Machiavelli the sole means to retain one's political position and the stability of the state.¹⁵⁰ In this way, an ostensibly malign action could prove virtuous when necessary for the preservation of the whole.

Bacon would come to draw upon this advice in *De sapientia veterum*, where he interpreted the allegory of Pan's 'sheep-hook' as a reference to the mixture of 'straight and crooked in the ways of nature'. Pan's staff was depicted as 'curved chiefly towards the top', he wrote, because 'all the works of Divine Providence in the world are wrought by winding and roundabout ways – where one thing seems to be doing, and another *is* doing'. The same was true of 'human government', which could secure consensus more profitably through 'pretexts and indirect ways than directly; so that every rod or staff of empire is truly crooked at the top.'¹⁵¹ With 'the whole frame of nature ris[ing] to a point like a pyramid', Bacon reasoned that the summary law, sitting atop nature's highest peak, must frequently compel the appetites of matter to behave in what appeared to the human eye as 'winding and roundabout ways', but which were, in actual fact, necessary to the conservation of balance.¹⁵² Just as Machiavelli had argued (albeit in political terms), so too did Bacon agree that the ends of nature justified the means: providence, circuitous as it could be, worked chiefly to-

¹⁴⁹ Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, 18, in *The Chief Works*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁵¹ DSV, SEH VI, p. 711. Emphasis added.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 710. Remember that, for Bacon, nature often appears to man as a 'labyrinth'.

wards preserving balance for the sake of order and goodness. Although providence might appear to the human eye as irregular, this irregularity actually worked towards the preservation of a regular course in nature.

Chaos, Space, and the Reign of Saturn

Belief in conflict as a necessary condition of the universe can be seen at work in Bacon's cosmogonical narrative, wherein he argues for the necessity of a primordial 'chaos'. The idea that matter might have existed before the law in a state of total disorder, he argues, 'agrees with the Scriptures'; for 'it is not written that God *in the beginning* created matter [*hyle*], but that He created the Heaven and the Earth.' The crucial point for Bacon here is that God created chaos *first*; that matter, 'as a whole, or the mass of matter, was once without form'¹⁵³. This, he continues, is not much different from the philosophy of Democritus, who 'more openly than any one else asserted the eternity of matter, while he denied the eternity of the world.' On this point, Democritus 'came somewhat nearer to the truth as declared in the divine narrative; for that represents matter without form as existing before the six days' work'¹⁵⁴. Bacon, as a devout Christian, rejected the eternity of matter on biblical grounds, but nevertheless held that, without the presence of God's law, the primary condition of matter, in which it was determined solely through its appetitive motions, could only be accounted for through the postulation of a primordial chaos.

Although he appears to have believed wholeheartedly that chaos existed first, it is somewhat questionable whether Bacon believed that the world had ever, in actual fact, assumed such a state.¹⁵⁵ In other words, that chaos had indeed existed first, but only as a potential condition of matter. The reason for thinking this might be the case appears, foremost, in the fable of 'Cupid', where Bacon writes that the ancient god 'Chaos' was 'coeval' (*coævus*) with the god 'Love'.¹⁵⁶ Bacon identifies 'Love' here, as well as in the *De principiis*, with 'the summary law of nature, that impulse of desire impressed by God upon the primary particles of matter which makes them come together, and which by repetition and multiplication produces all the variety of

¹⁵³ DPAO, OFB VI, p. 211.

¹⁵⁴ DSV, SEH VI, p. 723.

¹⁵⁵ In the *De principiis*, Bacon derides philosophers who believed that the world might have originated without Chaos (DPAO, OFB VI, p. 251).

¹⁵⁶ DSV, SEH VI, p. 729.

nature'¹⁵⁷. The implications of this interpretation are not conducive to the existence of chaos as a state in which matter could have actually found itself during the Creation. For how, we might ask, could there ever have existed a genuine chaos if God brought the summary law (Love) into existence simultaneously? Bacon's own interpretation appears, as such, to rule out the possibility that chaos, as he understands it, is anything other than a condition of matter that was created first, but which never existed in time. In Bacon's reading, then, it was only with the conjunction of Love and Chaos—primordial matter and the summary law—that the universe broke forth from the allegorical egg.

But what exactly did matter 'hatch' into? Well, Bacon provides us with some tantalizing clues; clues which offer insight not only into his conception of nature, but likewise into the nature of his religious belief. In the *De sapientia veterum*, to begin with, Bacon makes his earliest reference to the existence of an immaterial space, or 'Heaven' (*Caelum*), which he defines as 'the concave or circumference which encloses all matter.'¹⁵⁸ This immaterial space is after called the 'pure Empyrean' (*Empyreum integrum*); that region into which matter, even the extremely rarified 'flame' of the fixed stars, does not extend.¹⁵⁹ In the *Descriptio globi intellectualis*, Bacon again refers to the 'empyrean heaven' (*caelum empyreum*), but this time explains that nothing can be known of the this heavenly region whatsoever: concerning the empyrean heaven and its 'immaterial spaces' we must, he argues, 'depend entirely on religion and leave the matter alone.' Those philosophers who have attempted to understand the region where matter ceases, such as Francesco Patrizi (1529-1597) and the Platonists, have ended up with 'frivolous contrivances egregious in their superstition, arrogance, mental instability, and (like the images and dreams of *Valentine*) their complete effrontery and utter fruitlessness'¹⁶⁰. The empyrean, for Bacon, is thus truly unknowable, and it is this undefined space into which God laid his, metaphorically speaking, material egg. Moreover, and crucially, it is not to be confused with the material heavens, or the sphere of the fixed stars: for the material heavens are composed of a mixture of both the material and immaterial—as a result of which they are observable—

¹⁵⁷ DSV, SEH VI, p. 730; DPAO, OFB VI, p. 199.

¹⁵⁸ DSV, SEH VI, p. 649.

¹⁵⁹ TC, OFB VI, pp. 177-179; The empyrean, from the Greek ἔμπερος and meaning the region of fire, was often used in Christian thought to refer to the pure region in which God, the angels, and pure spirits dwelled (see, for instance, its well-known appearance in Dante's *Divina Commedia*).

¹⁶⁰ DGI, OFB VI, pp. 132-133.

whereas the empyrean is strictly immaterial, and thus unobservable.

In relating his cosmogonical narrative, furthermore, Bacon appears to suggest that matter did not co-mingle with the pure empyrean, but by virtue of the force of its appetites 'unfolded' (*explicatus*) and expanded outwards in such a way that it pushed back the empyrean which surrounds it.¹⁶¹ Once matter hatched, in other words, it immediately began a germinative process of outward expansion, creating an ever-increasing space of material and immaterial action inside the 'vault of the heaven' (*concavum coeli*). In this way, and as Graham Rees pointed out a number of years ago, Bacon's universe was essentially plenist; it consisted of material and immaterial substances which were, if not continuous, then fully contiguous, and which, as a result, ruled out the existence of a vacuum.¹⁶² It is thus possible to characterize the general structure of the Baconian universe as one in which matter is a finite, self-contained entity that exists inside a presumably infinite (or, at least, undefined) delineating and entirely immaterial space. Represented by the mythological figure of Proteus, Bacon depicts matter as having 'its habitation under the vault of heaven, as under a cave,' an image that he puts to a number of uses, but which chiefly stands as a reminder of the relationship between the empyrean and the cosmos¹⁶³: for nature does not include the empyrean; it is on the outside, and thus perhaps best understood—as Bacon himself suggests—in religious terms. It is also this aspect of the character of his universe that, as we mentioned above, enables him to draw a legitimate distinction between that creative power which is within nature (matter) and that which is outside of nature (God). The empyrean realm that God inhabits is not itself a part of the universe, and thus it is possible for Bacon to maintain that the natural philosopher should begin his investigation with matter and leave the empyrean to the theologian.

In the fable of 'Cœlum', Bacon wrote that there were 'two divisions of time' at the beginning of the universe: that of Saturn, 'who by reason of the frequent dissolutions and short durations of things in his time, was called the devourer of his children'; and that of Jupiter' (i.e., God), who 'put an end to those continual and transitory changes, and thrust them into Tartarus—that is to say the place of perturbation: which place seems to be midway between the lowest parts of heaven and the inner-

¹⁶¹ DGI, OFB VI, p. 101; TC, OFB VI, p. 177; DPAO, OFB VI, p. 229.

¹⁶² Although in the *Novum organum*, he appears to question whether a vacuum might be possible after all. See Rees, 'The Fate of Bacon's Cosmology in the Seventeenth Century', p. 30.

¹⁶³ DSV, SEH VI, p. 725.

most parts of the earth; in which middle region perturbation and fragility and mortality or corruption have their chief operation.'¹⁶⁴ By the 'Reign of Saturn', Bacon meant that time when the 'sum total of matter' ruled in nature, when it had unfolded into its primordial chaos, before the imposition of forms, known as the 'Reign of Jupiter.' During this time, 'the agitations and motions of matter produced ... imperfect and ill-compacted structures of things, that would not hold together—mere attempts at worlds,' such that it was not until the Reign of Jupiter that 'a fabric was turned out which could keep its form.'¹⁶⁵ Bacon here stresses the creative power of Saturn; how matter, by virtue of its appetites, was able to 'attempts at worlds' in its expansive outward motion. But the Reign of Saturn was not, for Bacon, just a temporal epoch, but also a physical layer of the universe: although God's laws continued to maintain order in his stead, matter retained its creative power under that law, providing the energy of which the Baconian universe was constituted. God imposed order from outside of nature, from the empyrean, where his work was 'not immediate and direct, but by compass; not violating Nature.'¹⁶⁶

* * * *

The cosmology into which Bacon expended so much energy over the years 1611-1619 went virtually unnoticed for the remainder of the seventeenth century.¹⁶⁷ Graham Rees once claimed that, 'true to his principles Bacon never once invoked the Creation, Old Testament or ancient wisdom in connection with cosmology.'¹⁶⁸ But, as we have just seen, this is simply not the case. The wisdom of the ancients provided Bacon with a legitimate source from which to reconstruct cosmogonical and cosmological knowledge; and, though the Bible did not provide him with natural *principia*, it did provide him with limiting conditions for his universe. Though de Maistre was mistaken about Bacon's atheism, he was not too far off the mark when he wrote that 'it must not be thought that in blaming the systems of others Bacon does not have his own'—even if

¹⁶⁴ DSV, SEH VI, p. 724.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 723-4.

¹⁶⁶ CF, SEH VI, p. 221: 'That notwithstanding God hath rested and ceased from creating since the first Sabbath, yet nevertheless he doth accomplish and fulfil 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.'

¹⁶⁷ Rees, 'The Fate of Bacon's Cosmology in the Seventeenth Century', p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ See Rees, 'Francis Bacon's Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology', p. 91.

it would be more correct to say that Bacon had a 'theory' of the universe, based in the wisdom of the ancients and limited by his religious beliefs.¹⁶⁹

De Maistre was also not entirely mistaken in his judgement that 'every line of Bacon leads to materialism.'¹⁷⁰ Though Bacon was not a materialist in the strict sense, his theory of the universe ruled out the immediate and direct intervention of God, and gave over to matter and its appetites that creative power which was of most interest to the natural philosopher, leaving the creative power of God to the theologians. It was Telesio, with his belief that God had invested nature with its own powers, who Bacon most resembled here. Like Telesio, Bacon's God was a transcendent god; both above and outside of nature. He was a lawgiver who imposed order through his eternal and immutable laws onto the temporal and mutable materiality of the natural world. Just as in the politics of religion, Bacon maintained a distinction between the temporal and the eternal in his understanding of the universe; one that was intended to afford man the intellectual space in which to fulfil the divine mandate to create a godly society through his reinstated command over nature. Rees was right in his assessment of the Baconian universe: it was, quite purposefully, 'de-deified.'¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ de Maistre, *An Examination*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁷¹ See Rees, 'Francis Bacon's Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology', p. 91.

Conclusion

The World's a Bubble

*The world's a bubble,
and the life of man, less than a span.*

— Francis Bacon
'The World's a Bubble'

For Francis Bacon, both the *globus Intellectualis* and *globus Terrestris* were characterized by a fundamental duality between the eternal and the temporal, the created and the creating.¹ It was a distinction based in the thought of the Christian humanists, who held that 'Religion hath partes which belonge to eternity and partes which pertayne to time.'² Bacon, like his parents and an earlier generation of English humanists, used it to justify his programme for both religious reformation and the reform of knowledge. The temporal globe, he believed, was intended to be cultivated within the limitations imposed by the eternal laws of God; to be played like 'a Game of wit, as Chesse.'³ Because he interpreted it as a divine mandate, Bacon felt justified in carving out an intellectual space in which to pursue the betterment of society through both the politics of religion and the activities of the natural philosopher. But he went beyond the generation of his parents, in employing it to justify an 'experimental faith' in the study of the material universe and its secrets. His humanism, it could be said, found its natural conclusion in nature.

It was a distinction that also served as the central pillar of Bacon's engagement with the religious controversies of late-Elizabethan England. In his efforts to deal with the Presbyterianism of his mother, Bacon used it to distance himself from what had become for him her politically, more than theologically, dangerous convictions. When Anne Bacon could no longer support the church she had helped to establish, her son stepped up to defend it and his father's contribution to the 1559 Settlement. Bacon, in fact, stepped into his father's role (figuratively and literally), developing the Christian humanism of Elizabeth's Lord Keeper into a tolerant and irenic vision of civil religion

¹ NO, OFB XI, p. 27

² ACE, OFB I, pp. 162-3.

³ AL, OFB I, p. 182.

through his introduction of Florentine political thought into the context of Tudor religious controversy. Although his life was but a span, Francis Bacon contributed no small part to the establishment of a uniquely English faith; whether through his political or natural philosophical writings.

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