

Reconsideration

Francis Bacon's God

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Editor's Note: With this issue, we are pleased to offer the first in our series of "Reconsiderations," essays that reexamine great thinkers and great works at the intersection of science, technology, ethics, and politics. It is only fitting that we should launch this series with an analysis of Francis Bacon's "New Atlantis," the story that gave our journal its name and that helped give birth to the age of modern science and technology.

In 1968 Howard B. White published *Peace among the Willows*, the first book-length analysis of Bacon's "New Atlantis." White, a political theorist who regards Bacon as a principal shaper of modern political ideas, maintains that it is this utopian work and not one of Bacon's philosophical treatises that provides the fullest statement of Bacon's political theory. White is especially interested in what he regards as Bacon's secularization of politics and glorification of the power of science to serve the interests of the secular state. In developing his argument, White maintains that "New Atlantis" must be read with meticulous care in order to understand Bacon's complex interweaving and transformation of political iconography, ancient history and fables, religious symbols, scientific methodologies, and pseudo-scientific concepts. White devotes considerable attention to Bacon's use of religious themes and argues that he manipulates them in order to subvert Christian ideas and transform them into a culturally acceptable justification for a preoccupation with luxury and materialism. According to White, Bacon's purpose is to transform the human quest from the search for the "heavenly city" to the creation of the well-governed country, and to change the philosophical quest from an effort to understand God, God's Creation, and humanity's place in it to a pursuit to understand what humans can make of themselves.

White's work has been highly influential and augmented more recently by another political philosopher, Jerry Weinberger. Weinberger also

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argues that Bacon's utopia provides a primary source for understanding the transitional phase from early modern political ideas to those of the modern age, and he maintains that Bacon manipulates religious language and concepts to conceal his secular agenda. Recently, considerable attention to Bacon's "New Atlantis" has also come from the new historical criticism. Studies by Charles Whitney, Amy Boesky, and others have analyzed utopian literature as a primary source for understanding the "founding fictions" and political ideologies underpinning nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, and overseas expansion. Like White and Weinberger, many cultural historians treat Bacon's manipulation of religious ideas as a way of providing cultural authority for his political agenda. Marina Leslie, for example, asserts that Bacon inverts the spiritual and material worlds, and claims that Bacon transforms spiritual salvation into material well-being accomplished by humans and not by God. David Innes, a theologian influenced by White, contends that Bacon is responsible for transmuting Christian hope for spiritual salvation into a secular dream of material comfort and argues that the Christianity of Bensalem is actually a "fundamental assault upon, transformation of and ultimate displacement of Christianity." Denise Albanese asserts that Bensalemite Christianity "first serves as yet another instance of reverse colonialism, with the natives' conversion already an accomplished fact" and as the "code for an intellectual imperialism."

This essay contends that it is a misunderstanding and distortion to view Bacon's use of religious language and concepts as disingenuous and manipulative. It demonstrates that Bacon's program of utopian reform, as presented in "New Atlantis," is grounded in genuinely and deeply felt religious convictions, which serve as the foundation for his program of political and social prosperity through the advancement of learning.

Developing the evidence to support a position that stands in marked contrast to prevailing interpretations requires careful attention to the details of Bacon's utopian narrative. We need to examine each episode of the story, from the storm that brings European sailors to Bensalem, through the Europeans' interviews with the Governor of the Strangers' House and with Joabin, to the climactic audience with a Father of Solomon's House. We need to pay careful attention to the accounts of Bensalem's conversion to Christianity and to the early history of Bensalem, Atlantis, and other great sea-going civilizations. While only one of these, the conversion to Christianity, is explicitly religious, examination of the other episodes

demonstrates Bacon's pervasive use of two key religious themes: *providential deliverance* and *special election*. In discussing the primordial history of Bensalem and Atlantis, we need to compare Bacon's version of the myth of Atlantis to the one found in Plato's *Critias* and *Timaeus*. Bacon uses this primordial history to portray a golden age that has been virtually lost from memory; as a result, humanity has been left with a truncated account of its past achievements. Bacon refers to an ancient wisdom that has been lost and replaced by impotent, inferior philosophies. Yet the purpose of the Platonic myth in "New Atlantis" is to instill hope that this knowledge can be recovered and the state of civilizational excellence restored.

We then need to turn to the complex themes surrounding the activities of Solomon's House. This episode typically receives the most extended discussion, but the focus is usually on Bacon's description of collaborative efforts of specialized sciences to advance empirical knowledge and bring relief to the human condition. The analysis offered here will place Bacon's references to Solomon and Solomon's House in the context of the iconography of the court of the British King James I, particularly portrayals of James I as the new Solomon, who would restore Solomon's Temple and usher in a providential age of peace, harmony, and prosperity. Bacon conceives of Solomon's House (i.e., the recovery of natural philosophy) as the complement to the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple (i.e., the restoration of true religion). This is the heart of Bacon's program of instauration: first, a thoroughgoing reform of religion that restores humanity's relation to God, and second, a thoroughgoing recovery of the principles of natural philosophy that restores humanity's dominion over nature.

In the end, Bacon's "great instauration" is not a secular, scientific advance through which humanity gains dominion over nature and mastery of its own destiny. Bacon's instauration is a program for rehabilitating humanity and its relation to nature, guided by divine Providence and achieved through pious human effort. To make this contrarian case, let us follow Bacon's story as it unfolds.

The Discovery of Bensalem

The story begins with a European expedition sailing from Peru en route to China and Japan being blown off course and becoming lost "in the greatest wilderness of the waters in the world." Helpless and disoriented, the sailors pray to God, begging for mercy and deliverance. Night closes in leaving them to wonder at their fate. When dawn comes, they discover

that their prayers have been answered and they have been brought within sight of land. As they approach the uncharted island, people on shore warn the Europeans not to disembark. The Europeans beg for assistance explaining that they have several sick sailors on board, who might die without medical attention. In response to this urgent need, an official of the country sails out to their ship and offers provisions, medication, and repairs that will enable the Europeans to get underway. This offer is presented on a scroll written in four languages (Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Spanish), and marked by a cross and a pair of cherubim's wings. (The cross is an obvious Christian symbol, and cherubim's wings are a key symbol from the Old Testament, representing God's presence among His chosen people.) The apprehension of the Europeans is relieved by the obvious charity and learning of the inhabitants of this country, but most of all by the familiar sign of the cross. Similarly, the Bensalemites relax their guarded reception of the foreigners when they declare themselves to be from a Christian land, and the Europeans are invited to the island to recuperate.

This opening segment is noteworthy for its introduction of the leit-motif of divine intervention and salvation. In describing the event, the Europeans compare their experience to that of Jonah and acknowledge that it was divine grace that brought them to Bensalem. Were these the only references to deliverance or salvation, their significance could be discounted or attributed to the language conventions of Bacon's day. This is not the case, however. The theme of salvation and deliverance is developed further as the Europeans experience the charity of the Bensalemites. The sailors are so struck by the people and by the society that they declare that it "seemed to us that we have before us a picture of our salvation in heaven; for we that were awhile since in the jaws of death." On another occasion, they say that they had "come into a land of angels."

The Conversion of Bensalem

When given an opportunity to learn about this remarkable island, the first question that the Europeans hope to have answered is how the island had been converted to Christianity. The Governor of the Strangers' House explains that the conversion occurred as the result of a miraculous event which happened about twenty years after the Resurrection and Ascension. One night a great column of light topped by a cross appeared about a mile out on the ocean. A few brave souls from Renfusa, the nearest city,

boarded boats and sailed out toward the hierophany. When they had come within about 60 yards, they were mysteriously restrained from drawing closer. One of the boats, however, had a member of Solomon's House on board, who offered this prayer: "Lord God of Heaven and Earth, Thou hast vouchsafed of Thy grace to those of our order, to know Thy works of Creation, and the secrets of them; and to discern . . . between divine miracles, works of Nature, works of art, and impostures and illusions of all sorts." He then declared the column to be a genuine miracle and begged God to reveal its true meaning. The wise man was allowed to move closer, and, as he did, the Pillar of Cloud was transformed, leaving an ark (small chest) floating in the water. As the wise man moved toward it, the chest opened to reveal a book and a letter. The book found in the ark contained canonical books familiar to the Europeans and "some other books of the New Testament which were not at that time written." The letter was from the apostle Bartholomew, who stated that he had received a vision in which God instructed him "to commit the ark to the floods of the sea." When the ark reached its appointed destination, the people of that land would receive "salvation and peace and goodwill from the Father and from the Lord Jesus."

Several aspects of this account deserve comment and development:

- Bensalem's conversion does not occur through ordinary missionary activity. It results from direct intervention by God, Who has chosen the island for a special benediction. In addition, Bensalem's conversion occurred shortly after Christ's Ascension—a period when Christ's teachings and deeds were vivid in the minds of the apostles. The Christianity of Bensalem, therefore, is pure and unadulterated by the human error and misinterpretation that occur with the passage of time. This is a primary difference between Europe and Bensalem.

- The sacred texts available to the Bensalemites are more extensive than those available to European Christianity. So, another contrast between Bensalem and Europe is that Bensalem not only has a pure form of gospel Christianity, it also has a fuller scriptural base to guide it. Moreover, the Bensalemites have evidently been able to preserve the purity of the Christian kerygma and have founded a true Christian kingdom: one that the Europeans likened to Heaven and its inhabitants to angels. Again, the purity of religion in Bensalem stands in contrast to the degenerated Christianity of Europe, where doctrinal disputes and ecclesiastical corruption have contaminated the lifeblood of the faith.

- The ark that brings salvation to Bensalem calls to mind the ark that saved Noah and his family from the devastating flood that destroyed all other peoples. An ark is also an integral part of the history of God's selection of the Hebrews as His chosen people. The culminating event of the Exodus-Sinai experience is Moses' placement of the God-given law in the Ark of the Covenant, which served as the throne of God's presence among His chosen people. This ark is, therefore, the most sacred object in Hebrew history, playing a ritual role in the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the establishment of the Davidic-Solomonic kingship, and in the consecration of Jerusalem as the seat of religious and political order. The ark functions similarly in the account of Bensalem's conversion, where it is a prime symbol of the special election of the Bensalemites as God's new chosen people. Perhaps this is why the country is named Bensalem (heir of peace or inheritor of Jerusalem's renown). The name also establishes a parallel with England as the New Jerusalem, a common apocalyptic motif during the reign of James I, who was portrayed as the new Solomon who would install the new Jerusalem.

- The choice of Bartholomew as the apostle who receives the vision and sends the ark on its way is also noteworthy in three ways. First, according to tradition, Bartholomew was the great missionary to the remote parts of the world: India, Persia, and Mesopotamia. Second, Bartholomew is the apostle who had a special ability to receive and interpret dreams and revelations. Finally, tradition holds that Bartholomew was the author of two non-canonical works: "The Gospel of Bartholomew" and "The Book of the Resurrection of Christ," both of which contain accounts of Christ's Resurrection, harrowing of Hell, and rescue of Adam. Bartholomew is thus another important symbol of a pure religion capable of healing the ruptured union with God and recovering humanity's condition prior to the Fall.

- These symbols and episodes of providential rescue refer to an entire people or nation, not a few select individuals. The Pillar of Cloud and the Ark are symbols of the selection of the Hebrews as God's chosen people. Adam, as his name indicates, represents humanity. Even Jonah's rescue is a prelude to the conversion of the people of Nineveh. Within the "New Atlantis," salvation also comes to the entire nation. And the European sailors, in the context of this utopia, are representative of European society as the whole.

- The function of the member of Solomon's House is important to note and to understand properly. Though this appearance is brief, it establishes Solomon's House as the interpreter of both natural and super-

natural or divine events. So from the first, Solomon's House is presented in a religious context, not as a secular, scientific think tank. The description of the activities of Solomon's House, provided in a later interview, makes it clear that the Brethren study the Creation in order to better understand God. Theirs is a pious search for the benefits in nature provided by the divine. Howard White is wrong, therefore, when he says that the ability to interpret the miracle only serves to grant "power over miracles to the wise men of Solomon's House" and means "control of natural philosophy over theology." The wise man is not a secular scientist able to command the supernatural to obey; he is devoted to the search for truth in its natural and its supernatural forms. The demeanor of the member of Solomon's House is reverent: He prays to God to reveal the meaning of a supernatural event that he is able to recognize as a miracle, but which he cannot interpret without divine revelation.

- The role of the wise man in the episode is also important in coming to understand why Bensalem was chosen for this special benediction. Christian revelation comes to the land because the Bensalemites already believed in an all-knowing, all-powerful God; they devoted efforts to studying both the natural and the divine and were able to distinguish the two. That the ark comes to Bensalem is, therefore, not a result of accident or caprice. God selects Bensalem because it is capable of receiving and perpetuating a pure form of gospel Christianity.

- The account of the island's conversion establishes parallels between the experience of the Bensalemites and those who first received the good news of Christ's birth. The community that first sees the hierophany is called "Renfusa," or sheep people. The person on the ship who is able to interpret the miracle is a wise man. This parallels the miraculous announcement of the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds and to the Magi. White chooses to associate the name of the community with gullibility, and Laurence Lampert claims that Renfusa is evidence that "Christianity was introduced by a wise scientist as an instrument to lead the sheep." But these interpretations are difficult to maintain or support when the reference to Renfusa is read in relation to the other symbols and motifs associated with the conversion of Bensalem.

Why Bensalem Remains Hidden

During the second interview with the Governor of the Strangers' House, the Europeans ask why such a great civilization has chosen to remain hid-

den from the rest of humanity, while it obviously knows about all other existing civilizations, including Europe. The Governor begins his answer with an account of ancient history virtually unknown to the Europeans. In the distant past, worldwide navigation and commerce were commonplace, until disrupted by natural catastrophe. The only vestige of the golden age known to the Europeans is in Plato's account of the glorious civilization of Atlantis, which was destroyed by earthquake and flood as punishment for its avarice and will to power. According to the Governor's account, the early history of navigation was far more advanced than even the impressive recent accomplishments of the Europeans. In the ancient past, many great civilizations sailed to the farthest regions of the world and carried on trade with Bensalem and its neighbor Atlantis. This period was brought to an end by earthquakes and floods that "Divine Revenge" used to punish Atlantis for its proud enterprises. These calamities devastated the country, the people, and the great civilization that they had created. Human civilization was never fully able to recover following these catastrophes; the civilization of Atlantis left only the primitive culture of America and the New World. "So you see," the Governor explains, "by this main accident of time, we lost our traffic with the Americans. . . . As for the other parts of the world, it is most manifest that in the ages following (whether it were in respect of wars, or by a natural revolution of time) navigation did every where greatly decay; and specially far voyages."

This account explains how other civilizations had been cut off from Bensalem and how knowledge of its greatness had been lost to the rest of the world. It does not explain, however, why Bensalem chose to keep its existence secret even though it was in contact with other nations. To give an adequate explanation requires the Governor to discuss the policies of the great king Solamona and his creation of Solomon's House. The Governor explains that about 1,900 years earlier the Bensalemite king Solamona decided that his nation was far superior to all others in every way and could not benefit from direct intercourse with them. His country was wholly self-sufficient, morally upright, and could be "a thousand ways altered to the worse, but scarce any one way to the better" from traffic with other civilizations. For this reason, he took steps to prevent the influx of customs and ideas from inferior nations. One of his steps was to offer to allow all foreign travelers to take up residence in Bensalem rather than return to their own countries. The Governor reports that this policy had been followed ever since and only thirteen individuals ever

chose to leave during the 1,900-year span. As a result, almost nothing has been reported back to other nations in two millennia; and the few reports that were made were dismissed as fantasy because the quality of life in Bensalem seemed to be an improbable delusion.

King Solamona also prohibited his subjects from leaving to prevent them from revealing too much or from becoming corrupted by what they encountered abroad. Only members of Solomon's House are sent on secret reconnaissance missions. The purpose of these trips is to gather information about other nations, especially the "sciences, arts, manufacturers, and inventions of all the world; and withal to bring unto us books, instruments, and patterns in every kind." The Governor makes it clear that the purpose of these efforts is not to acquire "gold, silver, or jewels; nor for silks; nor for spices; nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was Light." The Governor explains that King Solamona created Solomon's House to "find out the true nature of all things; (whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in the use of them)." This parenthetical statement links the pious study of the Creation and devotion to the Creator with the discovery of the benefits God placed in nature for humanity's use. As we will see, Bacon repeatedly warns that humanity cannot gain the benefits in nature without proper piety.

The Governor next explains that the name Solomon's House is inspired by the biblical Solomon's reputation for wisdom; but the Governor adds that Bensalem possessed Solomon's *Natural History*, a text which was lost to the Europeans. This text held special knowledge of the workings of nature, which Solomon's House used as the foundation of its remarkable work.

Following his description of the founding of the House of Solomon, and of the reconnaissance missions of its members, the Governor offers to help the Europeans return to their country or to allow them to stay in Bensalem. The Europeans enthusiastically accept the offer to stay. This account introduces or reinforces several critical themes:

- Atlantis is destroyed by the gods because of its drive to expand its empire through conquest and world domination. This *libido dominandi* stands in stark contrast to Bensalem, which is characterized as an embodiment of the cardinal Christian virtues of faith, charity, peace, and justice. Even after the series of natural disasters, which weakened or destroyed other civilizations, Bensalem does not seize the opportunity to invade

lands and enslave their inhabitants. Instead, it chooses to withdraw in order to live in peace.

- While Atlantis used navigation and exploration for material gain, Bensalem seeks knowledge that it can use for the welfare of its people.

- The activities of Solomon's House have theological as well as scientific dimensions. The study of nature, which brings practical benefits, is also a study of the Creation in order to know the Creator. In addition, the account of the conversion of Bensalem to Christianity makes it clear that the members of Solomon's House are able to discern the miraculous from the natural.

- This episode contains another reference to sacred texts unknown or lost to Europe, and these texts play an essential role in the well-being of the nation and its people.

- It is important to recognize that the age of Solamona and the founding of Solomon's House occur before the conversion to Christianity. The island, therefore, is already devoted to the spiritual and material well-being of its inhabitants. Perhaps this is why it is chosen by God for a "special benediction."

- In the discussion of the conversion to Christianity, reference was made to Bartholomew and the two writings attributed to him, which described Christ's harrowing of Hell and rescue of Adam. Before the Fall, humanity had dominion over nature and was able to draw from Creation all of the benefits that God had placed in it. The work of Solomon's House reflects this prelapsarian condition in which humanity has mastery over nature and is able to create paradisiacal conditions.

- Finally, it is important to note that Bensalem is the only civilization that has been spared devastation. Neither natural catastrophes nor the ravages of war have interrupted its history. It is able to preserve ancient truth and build upon it rather than being reduced to an primitive state of subsistence living and intellectual poverty.

These themes need further investigation in order to understand how they contribute to Bacon's concept of instauration. But three other episodes need to be examined first: the "Feast of the Family" ceremony, the meeting with Joabin, and the audience with a Father from Solomon's House.

The Feast of the Family

As already noted, the Europeans readily accept the Governor's invitation to become citizens. They move about the country in an attempt to learn

more about its customs and practices, and soon they have the opportunity to observe the Feast of the Family ceremony. The account of the Feast of the Family serves primarily as a model to juxtapose to the pervasive disorder in European society, a theme which is taken up again during the Europeans' meeting with Joabin. Briefly, the stated purpose of the ceremony is to honor the patriarch of a family, who has supplied the king with many subjects. The celebration is thus a ritual affirmation of the abundance and prosperity of the country. More than fecundity is being celebrated, however. The ceremony stresses the patriarch's role as the source of order, justice, and moral instruction within the family and by extension within the nation as a whole. The patriarch's first ceremonial duty, for example, is to resolve any conflict within the family before the actual celebration can begin. Moreover, the honor accorded the patriarch is proportional to the success of his children as productive, responsible citizens of the state. That the moral dimension of family life is central to the ceremony and to the well-being of the country is made clear in the discussion with Joabin. This discussion begins when the European narrator asks Joabin if polygamy is practiced in Bensalem (since it is obvious that the country honors large families). "I desired to know of him what laws and customs they had concerning marriage; and whether they kept marriage well; and whether they were tied to one wife? For that where population is so much affected [desired] and such as with them it seemed to be, there is commonly permission of plurality of wives."

Joabin replies that the marital bond is the nucleus of familial and social order in Bensalem and that the people are not given to passion or sexual excess: "there are no stews [brothels], no dissolute houses, no courtesans, nor any thing of that kind." He adds, however, that his familiarity with the deplorable condition of European society allows him to understand how such a question might be the paramount interest and logical assumption of the Europeans. "They [the Bensalemites] say ye have put marriage out of office: for marriage is ordained the remedy for unlawful concupiscence; and natural concupiscence seemeth as a spur to marriage. But when men have at hand a remedy more agreeable to their corrupt will, marriage is almost expulsed." This passage is followed by a scathing criticism of libidinal immorality in Europe that has destroyed the family, the desire for children, and the orderly social life that emerges from a stable family. The disorder resulting from libidinal corruption in individuals is compounded by misguided social customs and laws. In order

to prevent the greater evils of adultery, the deflowering of virgins, and unnatural lust, society permits “change and the delight in meretricious embracements.” Such compromises and accommodations, however, are destined to fail. According to Joabin, lust is like a furnace: If you stop the flames altogether, it will go out, “but if you give it any vent, it will rage.” He then asserts that vice and corrupt appetites reflect a profound disorder of the soul that obstructs religious and moral instruction, and without a firm moral and religious base, no society can endure. The analysis here is restricted to the most literal meaning of the text. We shall see later that Bacon repeatedly uses the “marriage” image in reference to the productive union of the mind with nature. This image is contrasted to the sterile state when men become obsessed with their intellectual creations.

Joabin the Jew

The exchange between Joabin and the Europeans is interrupted by a messenger who has come to tell Joabin that a Father of Solomon’s House is going to visit the city and Joabin is needed to help make suitable arrangements. Although Joabin appears only briefly, his role in Bacon’s parable is crucial. The references to Solomon’s House and Joabin’s name provide the principal clue to his role in Bacon’s parable. The stem of Joabin’s name is Joab. The biblical Joab was one of King David’s generals, whose most important role was in retrieving the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines. As we have already noted, the Ark of the Covenant is the prime symbol of the Hebrews election as God’s special people. The Ark’s recovery and subsequent placement in the Temple were essential elements of the establishment of Jerusalem as a religious and political center for the Jewish people. So there is a direct connection between the biblical Joab, Jerusalem, and Solomon’s Temple. Joabin also has a key function in Bensalem and an important tie to the activities of Solomon’s House. These equivalences of symbolization augment the earlier discussion of King Solamona and reinforce other symbols that associate Bensalem with God’s chosen people and the New Jerusalem.

Joabin’s connection with other key themes in “New Atlantis” is found in his account of the ancestry of the Bensalemites. According to Joabin, the people of Bensalem are descended from Abraham and their laws were given by Moses. The descent from Abraham is supposed to come from his son Nachoran. Joabin’s statement, therefore, provides a further link of the Bensalemites to a biblical benediction (Abraham is described elsewhere in

“New Atlantis” as “Father of the faithful”). The reference to Moses includes the statement that he “by a secret cabala ordained the laws of Bensalem which they now use.” The political order of Bensalem, therefore, is founded on God’s law. But the law available to Bensalem extends beyond the Old Testament. It includes the secret teachings revealed to Moses during the 40 days on Mount Sinai. While Joabin speaks specifically of the Cabala in relation to political law, mention of the Cabala reinforces the discussion of Solomon’s *Natural History*: From the Middle Ages into the Renaissance there was a widespread tradition that the secret teachings given to Moses were preserved in the Ark of the Covenant and transmitted to Solomon.

This complex of symbolic linkages between Bensalem and Jerusalem, Solomon’s Temple, and Solomon’s House is further augmented by the initial description of Joabin as a Jew unlike those in Europe. The chief difference between the Jews of Bensalem and the Jews of Europe is that the Bensalemite Jews expect that the coming of the Messiah will usher in a New Jerusalem or a Kingdom of God on earth, and they expect that the king of Bensalem, as a representative of a people who have received a special benediction, will sit on the right hand of the enthroned messiah. Joabin’s function, therefore, is to set the stage for the discussion of Solomon’s House by introducing symbolic linkages between Solomon’s House and Solomon’s Temple. Joabin also serves as a representative of a pure form of Judaism, which complements Bensalem’s pure form of Christianity. Joabin’s pure form of Judaism follows the traditions of Abraham and Moses, respects Christianity, and waits for the Messiah, who will deliver His chosen people from spiritual and temporal disorder. Joabin’s identification of Bensalem as a chosen people, whose king will sit on the right hand of God, reinforces the emphasis on piety, charity, faith, and good works as the traits of God’s chosen people. God’s “chosen” do not belong to a specific ethnic group. They are those who attempt to live under the Old and New Covenants.

The Father of Solomon’s House

Shortly after Joabin is called away to assist with the arrival of the Father from Solomon’s House, the narrator gives a detailed description of the pomp and ceremony surrounding the Father’s entry into the city. The people crowd the streets to catch a glimpse of this high-level state official, who is surrounded by religious paraphernalia. His attendants, for example, carry a crosier, a symbol of ecclesiastical authority, and a staff, a symbol of pastoral function. Moreover, his demeanor is clearly ecclesiastical—he “held up his

bare hand as he went, as blessing the people.” Because the Europeans have heard about and seen how highly the Brethren are valued, they are anxious for an opportunity to gain an audience, and Joabin is able to make the arrangements. This interview is the climactic episode of “New Atlantis.”

When the Europeans enter, the Father greets them with a gesture of blessing, and they kneel to kiss the hem of his robe (as they have been instructed). The Father then provides an extended account of the purpose, the activities, and the contributions of Solomon’s House. The purpose is first succinctly stated: “The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible.” A detailed description of the investigation of the natural world then follows: from caves to mountain observatories to marine investigations. These investigations produce a breadth and depth of knowledge beyond anything imagined in Europe. But these investigations are only the preliminary stage. The intent is to use them to improve the human condition through the improvement of existing orders and to create new phenomena. Experiments in the Lower Region, for example, produce new artificial metals, which are used for curing diseases. There is also a “great variety of composts, and of soils, for the making of the earth fruitful.” There are also a number of artificial wells and fountains, including one called Water of Paradise, which was created by the brethren “for health and the prolongation of life.” The Father further indicates that “we have also large and various orchards and gardens . . . [and] make them also by art greater much than their nature; and their fruit greater and sweeter. . . . And many of them we so order as they become of medicinal use.” The Father also explains that Solomon’s House has apothecaries, centers for the mechanical arts, furnaces, laboratories for light, acoustics, as well as houses for the study and exposure of deceit, impostures, and illusions.

The Father next explains the duties or offices of the various members, which include advancing the practical aspects of research, developing new theoretical insights, and producing new products and inventions that benefit the nation. The Europeans are told that Solomon’s House guards its work carefully and takes pains to prevent the government or the citizenry from obtaining information that might be misunderstood or misused. This last statement—along with the earlier statement that foreign travel is restricted to members of Solomon’s House—has prompted extensive comment by White, Weinberger, Boesky, and others, who see these prac-

tices as further evidence of totalitarian state control or evidence of the creation of scientists as a new political-intellectual elite, who are able to provide creature comforts to the citizens and produce political order and stability for political rulers. Such interpretations fail to take into account Bacon's concept of human nature, which is based upon the concept of Original Sin. Since the Fall, humans are prone to being self-centered and inclined to become preoccupied with material concerns. Only the members of Solomon's House have attained the level of spiritual discipline to overcome this materialistic preoccupation and use the rich benefits to be derived from God's Creation for charitable purposes.

The Father ends by describing daily religious observances intended, evidently, to remind the brethren of their religious and moral obligations to use their God-given wisdom prudently: "We have certain hymns and services, which we say daily, of laud, and thanks to God for his marvellous works: and forms of prayers, imploring his aid and blessing for the illumination of our labours, and the turning of them into good and holy uses." Here is another instance where Bacon associates knowledge of nature with piety and charity, which Bacon contrasts to the sins of pride and selfishness. Shortly after the statement that "we do also declare natural divinations of diseases, plagues, swarms of harmful creatures, scarcity, tempests, earthquakes, great inundations, comets and (etc.)," the text breaks off.

This account of the collective efforts to advance the theoretical and practical applications of the study of nature is the reason some scholars describe Solomon's House as a model for the Royal Society. But the analysis offered here demonstrates that Bacon presents Solomon's House after establishing a context of religious imagery of salvation, deliverance, and rehabilitation. We need, therefore, to consider the function of Solomon's House in relation to these motifs in more detail, especially the motifs of rescue and renewal. More specifically, we need to examine the linkages Bacon establishes between Bensalem's Solamona and the biblical Solomon and between Solomon's House and Solomon's Temple. For it is here that we might discover the true character of Bacon's concept of instauration.

Solamona and Solomon's House

We should begin by recalling the Governor's account of King Solamona and his founding of Solomon's House:

There reigned in this island, about nineteen hundred years ago, a King whose memory of all others we most adore; not superstitiously, but as a

divine instrument, though a mortal man; his name was Solamona: and we esteem him as the lawgiver of our nation. This king had a *large heart*, inscrutable for good; and was wholly bent to make his kingdom and people happy. . . . [A]mongst the excellent acts of that king, one above all hath the preeminence. It was the erection and institution of an Order or Society which we call *Salomon's House*; the noblest foundation (as we think) that ever was upon the earth; and the lanthorn of this kingdom. It is dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God. Some think it beareth the founder's name a little corrupted, as if it should be Solamona's House. But the records write it as it is spoken. So as I take it to be denominate of the King of the Hebrews, which is famous with you, and no stranger to us. For we have some parts of his works which with you are lost; namely, that Natural History which he wrote, of all plants, from the *cedar of Libanus* to the *moss that groweth out of the wall*, and of all *things that have life and motion*. (emphasis added)

The first notable feature of this account is the connection between Solamona's "large heart," that is, his piety and charity, and the establishment of Solomon's House. Bacon's reference to Solamona's "large heart" evokes the use of the phrase in I Kings 4:29 to describe Solomon. According to the text, Solomon found favor with God and God offered to grant him any wish. Solomon asked for wisdom in order to be able to rule his kingdom with intelligence and compassion. The request pleased God and it was granted. God also gave Solomon great material wealth as well. The biblical reference to a "large heart" is augmented in the Governor's account of Solamona's reign, describing the king's devotion to making his kingdom and his people happy and to perpetuating peace and prosperity. This emphasis on the benevolence of the king also defines his kingship in terms of the primary Christian virtue: charity. "New Atlantis" makes it clear that benevolence and charity are the motives for Solamona's establishing Solomon's House. It is referred to several times as "the lanthorn of the kingdom," providing enlightenment and prosperity; enlightenment encompasses religious knowledge as well as philosophical knowledge of the workings of nature that can be applied for the benefit of humanity. Scholars who are determined to portray Bacon as an advocate of imperialism and colonization continue to overlook the Solomonic model of political order that is so obvious here and in Bacon's other writings.

Solomon's House and Bacon's Instauration

While Bacon uses biblical descriptions of Solomon's piety and charity to link Solamona's kingship with the Hebrew King, he significantly modi-

fies the conventional notions of Solomonic wisdom. The famous biblical account of the judgment of Solomon accents the psychological insight that allowed him to understand his subjects and to rule them justly. In "New Atlantis," Bacon associates Solomonic wisdom with his understanding of the workings of nature, and the Governor claims that Bensalem possesses a copy of Solomon's *Natural History*; and its ongoing work advances the knowledge it contains. There is, of course, no mention of this *Natural History* in the biblical accounts. Bacon makes the biblical connection by quoting fragments from the biblical description of Solomon's knowledge of the natural order: "of all plants, from the *cedar of Libanus* to the *moss that groweth out of the wall*, and of *all things that have life and motion*." Bacon connects Solomonic knowledge to charity and piety; the work of Solomon's House brings relief to "man's estate" and demonstrates the love and mercy of the Creator.

The transformation of the attributes of Solomonic wisdom is complemented by transformation of the Solomonic Temple into Solomon's House. Charles Whitney has provided the most penetrating study of this transformation, and has shown how the references to the biblical Solomon and to the appropriation of the Solomonic Temple are tied to Bacon's concept of instauration. As Whitney explains, the Vulgate edition of the Bible created a typology that centered on the apocalyptic motif of the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem. Because the Temple held the Ark of the Covenant, it stood as a symbol of God's presence among the Hebrews and associated the kingdom with religious piety and justice. It also identified the kingdom as the agency for both God's justice and His mercy. The kingdom reached its zenith during the reign of Solomon, when the Hebrews enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and freedom from religious or political interference by neighboring powers. After Solomon, however, the Hebrew nation was overrun and lost its political autonomy and religious freedom. In 624 B.C., pressure from neighboring powers waned, and the young king Josiah was able to institute political and religious reforms, including rebuilding of the Temple. During reconstruction, the Temple's Mosaic Law (the Deuteronomic Code) was rediscovered, and this crucial recovery was interpreted as the beginning of a renewed covenant with God. The biblical account makes it clear that the project of rebuilding was understood as providentially guided and signaled the restoration of God's relation to the people. The term used in the Vulgate for the rebuilding is *instauratio*, which has the dual meaning of building up (construction) and rebuilding.

Whitney demonstrates that Bacon uses the notion of instauration as no previous author had, making it the root symbol for his program. Moreover, according to Whitney, Bacon employs the connotation of building or rebuilding as edification or re-edification. The word *edifice* and its derivatives can denote a physical structure or can refer to the building up or construction of knowledge (*edification*). Bacon chooses to emphasize the latter. For him, instauration depends upon a recovery of knowledge that clears away accumulated epistemological errors and re-establishes a proper foundation. This notion of instauration is developed in “New Atlantis” by utilizing the dual meaning of edifice and edification. King Solamona builds an edifice—Solomon’s House—that is responsible for rebuilding and advancing knowledge (edification).

According to Whitney, Bacon’s emphasis on the revitalization of natural philosophy, that is, the rebuilding of Solomon’s House, displaces the biblical notion of a spiritual recovery and advance represented by the apocalyptic motif of the rebuilding of Solomon’s Temple. But this is incorrect: “New Atlantis” does not depict Solomon’s House as a displacement of Solomon’s Temple; it presents it as its complement. In “New Atlantis” Bacon several times demonstrates the importance of purified religion as a spiritual basis for the well-being of the people and associates it with providential action on behalf of the people. Bacon does not dismiss or displace the idea of spiritual renewal; indeed, regulation of gospel Christianity was one of his principal concerns. He chooses, however, to emphasize what for him is an equally important part of recovery or rebuilding: to rebuild natural philosophy so that human beings can recover the benefits God instilled in Creation. The description of Solomon’s House makes it clear that its first pursuit is light. Light as enlightenment is a basic religious motif, and Bacon never changes its religious connotation. At the same time, natural philosophy leads not only to reverence for God and God’s Creation but also provides practical insights into how to relieve human suffering and improve the human condition. While others stress the need for spiritual regeneration, Bacon emphasizes the need for the complementary instauration of knowledge.

While the symbolic ties between Solomon’s Temple and Solomon’s House are the key to understanding Bacon’s concept of instauration, they do not explain how Bacon’s instauration of knowledge involves recovery and rebuilding in the way that the apocalyptic dream of rebuilding Solomon’s Temple does. To adequately develop this concept requires an

examination of the Governor's account of the prehistory of Bensalem and Atlantis, an episode that has been largely ignored by most scholars.

The Prehistory of Civilization

According to the Governor, Bensalem, Atlantis, and civilizations from the far-flung corners of the world carried out a mutual exchange of learning and material goods, while living in peace. A series of cataclysms destroyed the other great civilizations and left most nations in an infantile state, having lost all records of their previous greatness and all ability to restore themselves to their former condition. Not only were the civilizations reduced to infancy and the memory of their own past greatness eclipsed, they also forgot about the other great civilizations as well. Consequently, Bensalem, the only civilization to be spared, chooses to remain obscure; the country has nothing to gain and much to lose by making itself known to the rest of the world. As previously noted, the island does continue to monitor developments in other countries throughout the world and brings back any information that can be used by Bensalem. The most learned and incorruptible inhabitants of Bensalem, the members of Solomon's House, carry out these expeditions in secret, however.

In recounting these remarkable events, the Bensalemite official notes that the only records of the great primeval age available to the Europeans are the brief references in the work of "one of your philosophers." The allusion is to Plato's discussion of the golden age of Athens and to the demise of the great sea-going empire, Atlantis, found in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*. As Plato retells in recounting the fate of Athens and other countries, "your people and the others are but newly equipped, every time, with letters and all such arts as civilized States require; and when, after the usual interval of years, like a plague, the flood from heaven comes sweeping down afresh upon your people, it leaves none but you the unlettered and uncultured so that you become young as ever, with no knowledge of all that happened in old times in this land or in your own."

The purpose of the Platonic accounts of the fate of Atlantis and of a golden age virtually lost from memory is made clear in the opening dialogue of the *Timaeus*. The participants in the dialogue are discussing the best form of society. Their intent is to limit the discussion to actually existing societies, not unattainable ideal states. But the dialogue makes it clear that the historical horizon has to be expanded beyond the immediate past. The present age is not one in which humanity has realized its

full potential. It is a period of iron, not gold. In the Platonic dialogues, it is evident that the primary difference between the primordial golden age and the current state of degeneration lies in the eclipse of knowledge of the divine and in the loss of the skills of divination, medicine, engineering, agriculture, and navigation. In the Platonic context, then, it is clear that an essential requirement for recovering the capacity for human excellence lies in re-attaining the original, pure forms of knowledge. The two Platonic myths, taken together, give an account of the creation of the cosmos and the primordial age before man's hubris led to corruption and degeneration. After the cosmos is created, the gods amicably divide the territories. Athena, for example, becomes the patroness of Athens, and Poseidon becomes the patron of Atlantis. The human race that the gods create is a combination of divine spirit and matter. The gods' gifts to the human race include an idyllic world, and human beings have dominion over all terrestrial things. Using their god-given abilities, they are able to accomplish great feats of engineering and navigation. The Atlantans, as the children of Poseidon, were especially accomplished navigators. But the idyllic age is destroyed when the material aspect of human nature gained prominence. The predominance of the material leads to avarice and to the will to dominate and control, and Atlantis uses its navigational skills to subjugate other civilizations. According to the *Critias*, the hubris of Atlantis is brought to an end by the gods. Zeus, the god of justice, calls a council of the gods to decide on a proper punishment. This punishment must be severe enough to end Atlantis's marauding, but it is not to be so severe as to annihilate Atlantis. The text states that Atlantis can be brought back again at some future date. White has incorrectly characterized this ending speech by Zeus as being about destruction. In fact, Zeus is the minister of justice and is responsible for the restoration of order. The Atlantans have violated their place in the order of things and that order has to be restored by the gods. The emphasis is not on destruction; it is on the restoration of order. And the punishment is not to be a total destruction. While order must be restored in the present, Atlantis will have an opportunity to rise again in the future. This promise of restoration perhaps explains why Bacon chooses to call his text "New Atlantis."

Perhaps Bacon uses the myth of Atlantis and the promise or restoration (instauration) to complement the prevalent apocalyptic theme in England of the re-establishing of Jerusalem. While James I exploited the political elements of the idea of a renewal of the Solomonic kingdom, the primary

association was with religious renewal. And, as we have noted, Bacon regarded the renewal of natural philosophy as the necessary complement to the religious renewal that was underway. Bacon apparently wishes to augment the apocalyptic religious images associated with the New Jerusalem with the prospects of the renewal of Atlantis. Atlantis was known for its engineering and navigation, and its great accomplishments in these areas reflected its wise use of the gifts the gods had provided. Atlantis only declined after it fell away from divine intent and became dominated by material concerns. Its renewal would be allowed by the gods, once Atlantis had come to recognize the errors of its ways and had returned to a spiritual state. Perhaps Bacon intends to suggest that England's spiritual renewal coupled with his reform of knowledge will permit it to emulate the engineering and navigational feats of Atlantis; therefore, England can become the new Atlantis. And, of course, a chastened Atlantis would also greatly resemble Bensalem. If this is Bacon's intent, then it might also explain why Bacon leaves his story incomplete. Bacon is proposing that England continue its emphasis on religious recovery and begin the recovery of natural philosophy. Whether this will be done or not is out of Bacon's hands. It will depend on whether or not James I is like Solomon and Solamona and will choose to implement the pious study of nature in order to draw from Creation the benefits that God has provided.

There are, of course, significant differences in Bacon's uses of the myth of a primordial age of human excellence and those of Plato. The focus of the Platonic dialogue is on the development of right political order. Bacon's interest in political order and disorder is secondary. His utopia makes it clear that political order derives from right religion and the proper study of nature. One of the biggest obstructions to the recovery of right knowledge—in Bacon's view—is the misplaced reverence for Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. Through the Platonic dialogues and Bacon's own account of the prehistory of the world, we are shown that the period of Greek civilization valued by the Europeans is not an age of wisdom and high civilizational attainment. It is a period of infancy or childhood following on natural calamities. Most efforts were necessarily devoted to subsistence living; and once a civilization was stable enough to devote itself to considerations of political order and justice or to the study of the natural order, it would have little or no frame of reference, because the records of the great achievements of the past had been lost. Bacon makes this point in "New Atlantis" by having the Governor of the

House of Strangers tell them first that there are Scriptures and ecclesiastical traditions that are not available in Europe, and then he tells them that Bensalem possesses Solomon's natural history which is unknown in Europe. Moreover, his description of the activities of Solomon's House clearly do not follow Platonic or Aristotelian methods of investigation and deduction. They are based upon more ancient and purer forms of philosophy. The significance of the ancient wisdom for the (re)building of knowledge is presented in Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients* of 1609, which augments the primordial history of Atlantis and Bensalem. By examining the key themes in this work, we can more fully understand Bacon's description of the work of Solomon's House and how the recovery of ancient wisdom relates to Bacon's instauration of natural philosophy.

Ancient Wisdom and the Instauration of Knowledge

In the preface to *Wisdom of the Ancients*, Bacon explains that the fables of Homer and Hesiod "must be regarded as neither being the inventions nor belonging to the age of the poets themselves, but as sacred relics and light airs breathing out of better times, that were caught from the traditions of more ancient nations and so received into the flutes and trumpets of the Greeks." The problem is that their true meaning has been lost, obscured, or distorted over time; and previous generations have been unqualified to interpret them. Bacon's purpose, therefore, is to re-present the fables and give them their proper interpretation. For the present purpose, our discussion can be confined to the fable of Orpheus, which is for Bacon the story of the decline of philosophy as it descends from the natural philosophy of the ancient wisemen to moral and civil philosophy and finally to a state of almost total disintegration. In its pristine state, according to Bacon, "natural philosophy proposes to itself as its noblest work of all, nothing less than the restitution and renovation [*instauration*] of things corruptible, and (what is indeed the same thing in a lower degree) the conservation of bodies in the state in which they are, and the retardation of dissolution and putrefaction." The effort at retardation, however, means arduous labor, and failure leads to frustration and to the adoption of the easier task—the management of human affairs through moral and civil philosophy. This stage of philosophy remains stable for a while, but it too declines with the passage of time, and moral and civil laws are put to silence. And if such troubles last, Bacon warns, "it is not for long before letters also and philosophy are so torn in pieces that no traces of them can

be found but a few fragments, scattered here and there." When philosophy and civilization reach this low point, barbarism sets in and disorder prevails "until, according to the appointed vicissitude of things, they break out and issue forth again, perhaps among other nations, and not in the places where they were before."

Three elements of this Baconian fable are worthy of emphasis. The pure, original philosophy takes as its task the restitution and renovation of things corruptible. This god-given ability is lost through the lack of human effort and will. The decline, however, is not permanent. According to "the appointed vicissitude of things"—which is to say, providential intervention—true philosophy will return, and humanity will be restored to its primordial condition, but not necessarily in the place it originated.

With this brief discussion of Bacon's fable of the degeneration of the original, pure form of philosophy in mind, we can now better understand the activities of Solomon's House as the preservation and perpetuation of natural philosophy in its original, pure form. The investigations of Solomon's House are aimed at finding "the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things"; they produce new artificial metals, which are used for curing diseases, and blended mineral waters created by the brethren "for health and prolongation of life." The activities of Solomon's House are reminiscent of Bacon's accounts in *Wisdom of the Ancients* of the original, pure philosophy used to retard age, prolong life, and restore corruptible things to their original, pure state.

This emphasis on the restitution of health and the prolongation of life runs throughout "New Atlantis," and no function of Solomon's House appears to be more important. The European sailors who are sick are given a fruit with remarkable restorative properties; it causes the sick to think that they had been "cast into some Divine Pool of healing." White and others see this emphasis on "prolonging life" and drawing other benefits from nature as evidence of Bacon's materialism and secularism. It is more accurate to see these results as evidence that the reverent study of nature by Solomon's House allows them to overcome the alienation from God and nature that is the consequence of Original Sin. The Brethren understand nature and are able to enjoy the benefits God intended humanity to possess. This return to Eden is a result of the spiritual quest that has purged the members of Solomon's House of pride (the cause of the Fall) and the pious devotion to God that has prompted them to "love the neighbor as the self."

In addition, the reference to Solomon's *Natural History* seems to allude to a Jewish esoteric tradition in which Solomon was not only wise in the way described in the Biblical accounts, he also possessed a deep understanding of the mysteries of the Creation. Several variations of this tradition were fairly widely known in the early modern period. In one version, the original esoteric knowledge is given to Adam but lost through the Fall. Another version has the knowledge given to Moses on Mount Sinai and placed in the Ark of the Tabernacle, where it was accessible only to the High Priest. The Ark and then later Solomon's Temple became a center for communing with the powers and principalities governing the world. The work of Solomon's House, then, is clearly in accord with both the "pagan" tradition of a pure ancient wisdom and with the Jewish esoteric traditions associating Solomon and Solomon's Temple with cabalistic knowledge.

The Dimensions of Instauration

Taken as a whole, "New Atlantis" presents a two-fold view or description of instauration. One is represented by Bensalem and involves a spiritual rejuvenation. The other is a recovery of natural philosophy represented by the work of Solomon's House and by Atlantis before it became corrupted. Bacon chooses to stress the latter in his utopia because he was concerned that the recovery or instauration of natural philosophy was being overlooked. For Bacon, the instauration of knowledge or the building of Solomon's House was as important to creating a Solomonic kingdom as was the religious recovery.

It is important to recognize the predominance of these religious motifs in order to understand the full scope of Bacon's program for a great instauration through the advancement of learning. This program is not a secular or humanistic departure from traditional religion and Solomon's House is not the prototype for a modern scientific think tank. Careful reading of the full text demonstrates that the activities of Solomon's House cannot be separated from the underlying themes of providential salvation and deliverance. The aim is to rebuild man's relation to God and recover the benefits God placed in nature for human beings to enjoy. The work of Solomon's House is thus tied to the spiritual as well as the material well-being of the people. Reverence toward nature as God's Creation is essential to derive the benefits from the Creation. The pious study of nature also guards against humanity's pride and its effort to create its own

fantasy world. The Solomonic wisdom alluded to in Solomon's House is the wisdom of the workings of nature and the ability to use that knowledge for the benefit of humankind.

Yet Bacon's emphasis on Solomon's House rather than on Solomon's Temple reveals the way in which Bacon's vision of renewal or instauration is unique. The work of Solomon's House is not a substitute for the work of the Temple; it is the complement to it. Bacon indicates in several other writings that he believes religious reform is underway. What is crucial but lagging is the reform of natural philosophy. This is where Bacon directs his foremost attention. The biblical themes of instauration are reinforced by references to the prehistory of the world before human ignorance and error resulted in divine punishment. This primeval golden age offers another vision of what a well-ordered empire can be, with Atlantis serving as a proper symbol of Bacon's intent and as a complement to Bensalem. Atlantis also provides an object lesson regarding the need for right religion to guide the efforts of natural philosophy. If pride replaces piety, science and technology will become sterile or self-destructive.

That Bacon sees the two aspects of instauration as complementary is evident in his other writings. In *The New Organon*, for example, Bacon says that "man by the Fall fell at the same time from his state of innocence and from his dominion over Creation. Both of these losses however can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences." In *The Great Instauration*, Bacon urges that "all trial should be made, whether that commerce between the mind of man and the nature of things . . . might by any means be restored to its perfect and original condition, [or at least] reduced to a better condition than that in which it now is." Bacon believed that religious reform could be accomplished through the work of others. It was his special duty to advance the reform of natural philosophy. Both were necessary for the complete instauration of man's relation to God and his dominion over nature. The complete instauration will overcome the ravages of Original Sin and restore humanity to its prelapsarian condition.

In the end, "New Atlantis" offers a multi-layered analysis of the disorder of the European sailors' society and then prescribes the necessary cures. The contrast between European nations and Bensalem points to the sources of order and disorder. Both Bensalem and Europe have the benefit of Christian religion. Bensalem's Christianity is a pure form of gospel Christianity uncorrupted by human ignorance and error. Europe's

Christianity, by contrast, has been distorted and is plagued by philosophical and theological squabbling. Bensalem and Europe also have schools of natural philosophy. Bensalem's school of natural philosophy is the House of Solomon, which investigates nature in a reverent attempt to discover the benefits placed in creation by a loving God. Europe's natural philosophy has been marginalized and corrupted by scholastic and philosophical bickering and is dominated by competing schools of thought no longer grounded in empirical investigation of nature. England, nevertheless, has at its disposal the necessary means for utopian reform: a reformed and purified religion and, through Bacon's efforts, a reformed and revitalized natural philosophy. The two are complementary and each is indispensable for the restitution of humanity to its prelapsarian condition.

The Religious Origins of Modern Science

Because Howard White and others have argued that Bacon's use of biblical images and religious themes is cynical and transforms a spiritual quest into a material hedonism, it is important to review how religious motifs actually function in the text. Contrary to White's interpretation, the transformation from the European wanderers' preoccupation with material concerns to spiritual conversion constitutes the central dramatic action of "New Atlantis." At the beginning of the story, the Europeans are concerned to be rescued from a storm, and they seek assistance for those who are ill. The Europeans quickly recognize the excellence of the island and are struck by its order and its religion. After they have been allowed to reside in the Strangers' House, the narrator urges his companions to conduct themselves so that they can earn the respect of the Bensalemites. The more they learn about Bensalem, the more they wish to become residents there. While their initial concern was their physical rescue or well-being, their exposure to the quality of life in Bensalem makes them realize that they have been rescued from personal, social, political, and spiritual disorder and disorientation. Even White acknowledges that the European travelers "not only wish to stay but are somehow made worthy of staying."

The centrality of religious and spiritual themes is reflected not only in the transformation of the Europeans but also in the persons with whom the Europeans have contact. The Bensalemite official, who boards the European ship, offers Christian charity in the form of provisions and medicines. The first interviews are provided by the Governor of the Strangers' House, a Christian priest, who responded warmly when the

first question from the Europeans concerned the island's religion. The second set of interviews is given by Joabin and centers around matters of social order and morality, including discussion of Judeo-Christian dreams of installing the Kingdom of God on earth. The final interview is given by a Father of Solomon's House. He describes the physical and material benefits provided by Solomon's House, but he also emphasizes that their study is motivated by piety, and he stresses that the ability to discover useful information is dependent on reverence and charity. Indeed, piety and charity are the motivations for founding Solomon's House in the first place.

It is well known that Bacon repeatedly links the knowledge of nature with the ability to bring relief to man's estate. Most often this linking is associated with knowledge as power. What is often overlooked is Bacon's emphasis on charity as the motive for using the knowledge of nature for the benefit of humankind—and, more specifically, the allusion to the biblical Solomon's reward for his "large heart" and his request for knowledge that can help meet the needs of his people. It is wrong, therefore, to link Bacon to a Faustian exercise of egomaniacal power. The understanding of nature enables humanity to enjoy the blessings that God provided, not simply to conquer the natural world with impiety.

The Temple in Jerusalem was the primary symbol of religious and political order. It housed the Ark of the Covenant, which was the symbol of divine election, and represented the making of the covenant between God and the Hebrews and the giving of the law as the basis for the covenant. One of the greatest instances of Israel's defeat and humiliation was the profanation of the Temple; and one of its greatest moments of rejuvenation occurred when King Josiah was able to re-establish political independence and to rebuild the Temple. Josiah's reform did not endure; Israel was again defeated and this time taken into captivity. During the post-exilic time, the apocalyptic yearning for restoration centered on the rebuilding of the Temple, and the Temple remained an apocalyptic symbol through the New Testament period to Bacon's age. The term used in the Vulgate edition of the Bible for Josiah's reform and for other messianic or apocalyptic revivals is *instauratio*. This term is, of course, a key symbol in Bacon's writings; it signals the shape and direction of the restoration he believes it is his calling to initiate.

When examined carefully, it becomes evident that "New Atlantis" is an intricately constructed literary work permeated with religious

themes, including providential deliverance (for both the Europeans and Bensalem), apocalyptic instauration of the Kingdom of God on earth, and the societal embodiment of the cardinal Christian virtues, especially charity. It is not a society of “pleasant things,” as Howard White asserts, nor is it the case, as Denise Albanese claims, that “the references to crosses and oblations, to piety and Christianity, which crowd the earlier pages . . . virtually disappeared thereafter.” The primary religious motif of salvation and deliverance is evident from the outset. The European voyagers are tossed off course by a storm and surrounded by darkness. But then they are delivered—like Jonah—to safety. The Europeans describe the island of Bensalem as a land of angels or as the Kingdom of God on earth. The conversion of Bensalem is an act of providential deliverance, suffused with symbols of special election, including the pillar of Cloud and the Ark of the Covenant. These themes are important to understanding Bacon’s real project and for the recovery of the religious origins of modern natural science. For while the hunger to restore humanity’s original place in God’s Creation is surely not the only spur to the modern mastery of nature, the significance of the divine for the birth of empirical science also cannot be avoided or denied.