

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*



A commentary on Francis Bacon's utopian novel concerning the Island of Bensalem and Salomon's House—the Rosicrucian College of the Six Days Work.

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Francis Bacon's utopian novel, *New Atlantis*, was probably written around 1623 but not published until 1627, a year after Bacon's death, by Bacon's chaplain, friend and literary executor, Dr. William Rawley. Published under the title, *New Atlantis: A Worke unfinished*, it was appended to (i.e. twinned with) a larger work, *Sylva Sylvarum: or A Naturall Historie in Ten Centuries*—a position designated for it by Bacon himself, thereby illustrating the conjoining of speculation with experimentation, or reason with experience, thought with action.



Fig.1: Title page, *Sylva Sylvarum* (1627)

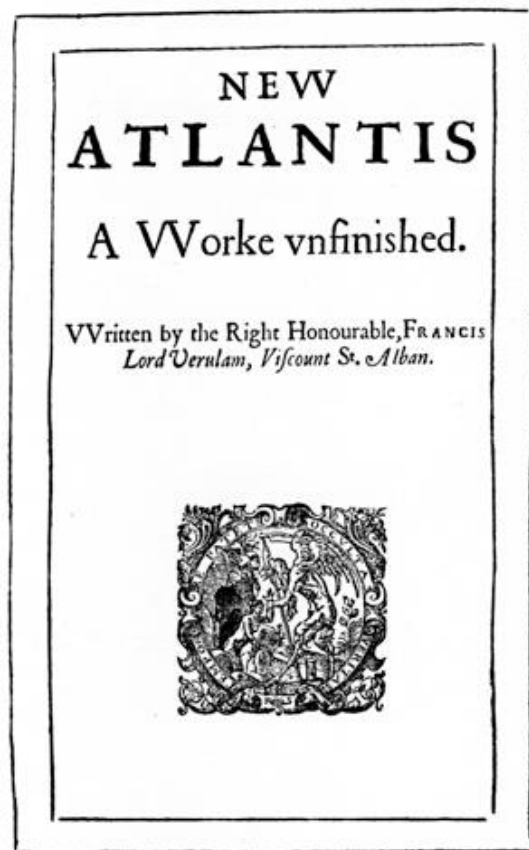


Fig.2: Title page, *New Atlantis* (1627)

In his preface to the work, Rawley describes it as a “fable my lord devised, to the end that he might exhibit therein a model or description of a college, instituted for the interpretation of nature, and the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of man, under the name of Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Work”.

The story, set in the present (i.e. contemporaneous with Bacon) but against the background of Plato's account of Atlantis, and incorporating important classical, biblical and Christian elements, contains Bacon's idea or vision of a utopian civilisation, living in peace, friendship

and charity in an island called Bensalem ('Son of Peace'), and having, as its "lanthorn", an order or society of philosophers formed into a college "dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God", and for the "finding out of 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".

Basically the novel suggests a kind of morally decent and friendly utopian society, governed by a democratically elected parliament with a sovereign head of state, in which exists an organised body of science known as Salomon's House, guided by divine Providence and dedicated to discovering the mysteries of heaven and earth, and to charitable purposes. The novel presents, in a semi-allegorical way, Bacon's vision of how he thought or hoped his Great Instauration might work. This is summed up by a Father of Salomon's House, who declares in the book that "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".

Rawley informs us that "His Lordship thought also in this present fable to have composed a frame of Laws, or of the best state or mould of a commonwealth", but that the work was left unfinished because Bacon felt it more important to turn his attention first to putting together examples of his natural history. Interestingly, however, the background of the story references and uses Plato's account of old Atlantis given in his *Critias* and *Timaeus*, which was also left unfinished. Indeed, all of Bacon's work was left unfinished; for, as Bacon said in a letter to his friend, Toby Matthews: "My great work goes forward; and after my manner, I alter ever when I add. So that nothing is finished till all is finished".¹

To have had a sketch of Bacon's ideas of the laws and constitution of a utopian Commonwealth might indeed have been very useful, as Bacon's legal and Parliamentary work was extremely significant and ultimately very influential. For instance, his formulation of a 'double majesty' state became the basis for the unwritten constitution described by John Locke in the Two Treatises, and for the written constitution created by the American Founding Fathers that provided for the dual sovereignty of the American Federal system. Bacon also invented the case method of law finding in which the impartial 'noumenal' ruling of judges is used as empirical evidence permitting reliable inferences about the unwritten common law, and thus of the country's unwritten constitution. In this, the role of the Chancery is key, being the national high court of equity concerned with conscientious law, with the power to influence or overrule the decisions of the common law courts. As a Lord Chancellor, and someone who believed in and earnestly promoted moral philosophy or science and charitable behaviour, based on the concept of divine love as being the universal law, this is of the utmost importance.

What Bacon does portray in his *New Atlantis* is a scientific body constituted in a similar way to that of an ideal 'Baconian' legal system overseen by Chancery, in which "the unwritten laws of nature and society could be revealed on a case-by-case basis by scientists trained, like lawyers, to avoid prejudice, influence, dogma, ideology and power".² Although *New Atlantis*, together with the *Advancement of Learning* (*De Augmentis Scientiarum*) and *New Method* (*Novum Organum*), inspired and led directly to the establishment of scientific institutions such as the Royal Society, much of what Bacon advocated was either not followed (such as the moral requirements and link with Divinity) or eventually rejected

because of mistranslation and misinterpretation of his Latin writings and the major influence of Newtonian mechanics; and so it still remains today. Albeit with many notable exceptions, much of modern science is still largely subject to the vagaries of commercial self-interest, political intervention, materialism and corruption, and is hardly used in service to Divinity (i.e. as handmaiden to the Mistress), whose nature is Love.

What *New Atlantis* emphasises more than anything else is the absolutely essential moral basis and charitable purpose of Bacon's Great Instauration, for the development of a science that is employed entirely out of love and compassion for the human race and all life, all nature, free of the burdens of greed and overriding self-interest, and devoted to fulfilling the two 'twin' Great Commandments: "Love God" and "Love your neighbour."³

In sum, I would advise all in general, that they would take into serious consideration the true and genuine ends of knowledge; that they seek it not either for pleasure, or contention, or contempt of others, or for profit, or fame, or for honour and promotion, or such like adulterate or inferior ends; but for the merit and emolument of life; and that they regulate and perfect the same in charity.⁴

I take Goodness in this sense, the affecting of the weal of men, which is that the Grecians call Philanthropia; and the word humanity (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. Goodness I call the habit, and Goodness of Nature the inclination. This of all virtues and dignities of the mind is the greatest; being the character of the Deity: and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing; no better than a kind of vermin.⁵

As with all of Bacon's work, the *New Atlantis* has a foundation in the Mystery tradition and is constructed, like an ark, as a repository and conveyor of ancient wisdom, so that the wisdom might not be lost in the floods of destruction that Bacon foresaw lay ahead. The importance of Cabala—a secret Cabala transmitted from Moses—is emphasised, to make it clear that the laws of Bensalem, and thus the laws governing Salomon's House and Bacon's philosophy, are based on and enshrine this Cabala.

The story, although referring to the past and present, is primarily a prophecy of the future and of Bacon's hopes for the future, portrayed in an allegorical or poetic form that contains, howbeit in a veiled form, a profound wisdom—as indeed are most great prophecies and mysteries.

The prophetic aspect of the story 'foretells' a future destruction of a greedy, morally corrupt and militaristic civilisation, and the survival of an 'island' in which the wisdom is preserved, enlarged upon and practised by a truly philanthropic philosophical society. After the destruction, because of the survival of Bensalem, the world can be recreated anew as a New Atlantis. The island, of course, is a metaphor for a state of being, consciousness and activity which can exist anywhere in the world. Whether we are a citizen of it or not is up to each of us.

It should be noted that, in the *New Atlantis*, Bacon chooses to use the Latin Vulgate Bible spelling of 'Solomon', i.e. 'Salomon', just as he borrows the word 'Instauration' from the same source, meaning repair, renovation, renewal, which combines the sense of rebuilding

the old and building anew. One of the likely reasons for this is that, whereas it had been of vital importance for Protestant scholars to provide the scriptures in the vernacular for ordinary people (hence the 1611 King James' Authorised Version of the Bible), it was considered by the same scholars that biblical study was best undertaken within the international common medium of the Latin Vulgate. The latter continued to be regarded as the standard scholarly Bible throughout most of the 17th century, and the phraseology, wording and spelling of names in the Vulgate was widely used. However, there is clearly another and probably overriding reason, which is the cipher play on the letter 'A'.

The following is a synopsis of the story of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, with added comments. It is recommended that the whole book is also read. (See FBRT information sheet, [New Atlantis: A Work Unfinished](#), for the complete text.)

The Story

The *New Atlantis* begins with a European expeditionary ship sailing from Peru to China and Japan via the "South Sea" (southern Pacific Ocean). During their voyage they get blown off course (northwards, "with a point east"), and become hopelessly lost. Night closes in, leaving them to wonder at their fate and praying to God for help. At dawn break they discover that they have been brought within sight of an uncharted island. As they approach the shore, they are warned by some islanders not to disembark, but are offered provisions, medication and repairs to enable them to get underway. This offer is presented by an officer on a scroll written in four languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Spanish), and marked by a cross and a pair of cherubim's wings. The travellers beg for further assistance, explaining that they have several sick persons on board who might die without medical attention. In response, a more important official of the island sails out to their ship and, when the Europeans declare themselves to be from a Christian land, they are invited to the island in order to recuperate, in quarantine, in the Stranger's House. As they experience the charity of the islanders they declare that they have "come into the land of Angels" and compare their experience to that of Jonah.

In response to questions from the Europeans, the governor of the Stranger's House, a Christian priest, informs them that the island is called Bensalem and its people are a Christian society because of a miraculous event that happened about twenty years after the Ascension. One night, a great pillar of light topped by a cross of light appeared about a mile out on the ocean. A few brave souls from Renfusa, the nearest city, sailed out towards it. One of the boats had a member of Salomon's house (the "eye of the kingdom") on board, who prayed: "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." Recognising and declaring the column to be a genuine miracle, he begged God to reveal its true meaning. He was then allowed to move closer and, as he did so, the pillar and cross of light was transformed into a firmament of stars, leaving floating in the water a small ark or chest of cedar that had a small green branch of palm in its fore-end. As the wise man took it reverently into his boat, the chest opened of itself to reveal a book and a letter. The book contained all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, plus the Apocalypse 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 this ark to the floods of the sea," and that where the ark landed, the people of that land would receive "salvation and peace and goodwill from the Father and from the Lord Jesus." Moreover, it was found that everyone in Bensalem, natives and immigrants, could all read the book as if it was in their own language.

In another meeting, the governor explains that there had once been a great civilisation centred on Atlantis, which was part of America,⁶ and that there was much travel by sea and trade and intercourse between nations worldwide. It was a golden age, but eventually forces of corruption, greed, aggression and warfare set in, causing the civilisation to decline both in Atlantis and other parts of the world, and culminating in the destruction of Atlantis by a great flood as divine retribution. However, whereas civilisation in most of the world was greatly set back, Bensalem escaped the corruption and continued to flourish as a utopian society which was blessed at one time with a great king, Solamona, the "lawgiver of the nation" who had "a large heart, inscrutable for good, and was wholly bent to make his kingdom and people happy". He established the means by which the country could maintain itself without any foreign aid and with a very careful and beneficent immigration policy, and instituted an order or society called Salomon's House or College of the Six Days' Works, the "lanthorn" of the kingdom, dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God, "for the finding out of the true nature of all things, whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in their use of them."

Salomon's House, the governor adds, was almost certainly named after the Hebrew King Solomon (Salomon), and they were fortunate in having some parts of King Solomon's 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."

In order to prevent the corruption of Bensalem's society, Solamona also passed a law that forbade anyone of his kingdom to sail anywhere else in the world, with the exception that every twelve years two ships could sail forth, each carrying three fellows or brethren of Salomon's house, for these brethren to spend twelve years abroad gathering "knowledge of the affairs and state of those countries to which they were designed; and especially of the sciences, arts, manufactures, and inventions of all the world" and to purchase and bring home "books, instruments, and patterns in every kind". In this way, the governor explained, Bensalem maintains "a trade, not for 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; to have light ... of the growth of all parts of the world."

The visitors were then allowed to move around freely and in the process discovered not only the humanity and charity of the inhabitants of the country, but also the special custom of the ceremonial Feast of the Family, granted at the cost of the State to any father "that shall live to see thirty persons descended of his body, alive together, and all above three years old". The father, then called the Tirsan, is given the authority, with State assistance, to settle any discord or disputes, to assist financially and in other ways anyone who needed relief or competent means to live, and to reprove and censure, or give advice and direction, where required amongst the family. The Tirsan could, moreover, choose a son to live with him, who then becomes known as the Son of the Vine. He is also empowered to give a special blessing to each member of the family.

The narrator then meets a Jew called Joabin, who relates the tradition that “Moses by a secret Cabala ordained the laws of Bensalem” and informs the narrator “that there is not under the heavens so chaste a nation as this of Bensalem, nor so free from all pollution or foulness. It is the virgin of the world.” He stresses that in all such things Bensalem is not like the rest of the world: that the nation has no stews, dissolute houses, courtesans, libertine behaviour, masculine love, polygamy, or anything of that kind; and that marriages are not made simply for the purpose of alliance, or portion, or reputation, or some desire of issue, as happens in Europe and elsewhere, but solely for the “faithful nuptial union of man and wife”. He adds that the Bensalemites say that “whoever is unchaste cannot reverence himself,” and that “the reverence of a man’s self is, next religion, the chiefest bridle of all vices.”

A week later, one of the Fathers of Salomon’s House enters the city, borne in state. Three days after that the Europeans are admitted to his presence, and one of them (the narrator) is allowed to have private conference with him. The Father blesses the narrator and then, “for the love of God and men,” proceeds to reveal to him the true state of Salomon’s House:

“God bless thee, my son; I will give thee the greatest jewel I have. For I will impart unto thee, for the love of God and men, a relation of the true state of Salomon’s House. Son, to make you know the true state of Salomon’s house, I will keep this order. First, I will set forth unto you the end of our foundation. Secondly, the preparations and instruments we have for our works. Thirdly, the several employments and functions whereto our fellows are assigned. And fourthly, the ordinances and rites which we observe.”

The Father then explains the first on the list—the purpose or motive of Salomon’s House:

“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”.

He then proceeds to recount the preparations and instruments they have for their works, the several employments and functions that the fellows have assigned to them, and the ordinances and rites that they observe. This includes a description of the various experiments they carry out, the mechanical arts they had created, the commodities and medicines they manufacture, the different types of laboratories (particularly for research into light and sound and motion) and observatories they had, and the orderly constitution of the various scientists in terms of the various roles or employments they performed.

These fellows or scientists have consultations at which it is decided which of the inventions and experiences they have discovered should be published, and which not, and everyone takes an oath of secrecy for the concealing of those which they think fit to keep secret, although some of those are revealed sometimes to the State, and some not. They conduct daily services to give thanks to God for his marvellous works and to pray for His aid and blessing for the illumination of their labours and the turning of them into good and holy uses. They further carry out circuits or visits of the various principal cities of the kingdom, where they publish such new profitable inventions as they think good, declare “natural divinations of diseases, plagues, swarms of hurtful creatures, scarcity, tempers,

earthquakes, great inundation, comets, temperature of the year, and divers other things," and give counsel as to what the people should do for the prevention and remedy of them.

The Father then blesses the narrator and gives him permission to publish the information about Salomon's house "for the good of other nations," adding "for we here are in God's bosom, a land unknown."

At this point the Father leaves the narrator, having assigned to him and his fellows a considerable gift of money, "for they give great largesses, where they come, upon all occasions". The story of *New Atlantis* ends at this point.

Key elements in the story

- The reality and importance of divine intervention and salvation.
- The importance of an original and pure wisdom teaching and philosophy.
- The importance of a pure transmission of the wisdom, ancient and otherwise.
- The importance of a purity of religion.
- The importance of piety, morality and charity.
- The importance of marriage and family.
- The importance of preventing the influence of a degenerate outside world corrupting the purer condition of Bensalem.
- The balance, differentiation and integration of science and religion.
- The dedication of Salomon's House to the study of the Works and Creatures of God.
- The dedication and use of science (Philosophy) to serve religion (Divinity).
- The importance of Salomon's House (or College of the Six Days Work) as a complement to the inferred Salomon's Temple or reformed Christian Church.
- The ability of members of Salomon's House to receive and interpret divine revelation, to study both physical and metaphysical phenomena, and to discern the miraculous from the natural.
- The piety, morality and Christian charity of the members of Salomon's House.
- The activities of Salomon's House are theological as well as scientific.
- The faith or belief of the inhabitants of Bensalem in an all-wise, all-powerful and all-loving God.
- Possession of a secret Cabala derived from Moses.
- Good laws stemming from a great lawmaker and king (Solamona) who, like the biblical Solomon, was both compassionate and wise, with a "large heart", and wholly bent to make his people happy.
- Possession of Salomon's Natural History and various books of the New Testament unknown to the rest of the world.
- Possession of secret knowledge revealed to St Bartholomew.

- A society based on the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity, and who follow the twin Great Commandments as taught by Jesus.
- The idea of instauration (renewal, restoration, renovation, repair) as an act of purification, reformation, resurrection and redemption.

Special mythological and Biblical stories used as analogies

- The cross and cherubim wings on the scroll handed to the newly arrived adventurers references the Rosicrucian motto, "Sub Umbra Alarum Tuarum, JHVH" ("Beneath the shadow of Thy wings, O Lord"). Jehovah (JHVH), termed "the Lord", is represented by the cross of light, symbolised heraldically as a gold (metal) or red (colour) cross, which in turn is representative of the Son or Light of God. The main source of the motto is Psalm 36, verse 7: "How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." The wings are known as those of the cherubim, as the latter are the angels of light, signifying the radiance of divine light. The same symbolism was used by the Ancient Egyptians in their emblem of the winged Sun. "Beneath the shadow" signifies overshadowing, giving protection, inspiration, guidance and, to a certain extent, 'invisibility'.
- The pillar of light and cross of light references the theophany of the pillar of fire (by night) and cloud (by day) that led the Hebrews safely out of Egypt and through the Sinai desert.
- The ships that sailed out to see the pillar of light contained citizens of Renfusa (the only Bensalem town that is named) and a member of Salomon's House. *Renfusa* means 'sheep', thus the citizens are 'shepherds'. The member of Salomon's House is a wise man. Hence the reference is to the shepherds and wise men who see the angels and Star of Bethlehem, and go to find the newly born Christ Jesus, lying in his manger or cradle.
- The cedar ark floating on the water references the Ark of Noah that survived the flood.
- The sacred scriptures and letter contained in the Ark, which were revealed to a member of Salomon's House, references the Ark of the Covenant and its rediscovery in what Freemasonry calls the Holy Royal Arch Degree, derived from the biblical stories and legends about the repair, restoration and rebuilding of Solomon's Temple
- in the reign of King Josiah of Judah in the 7th century BC, and (2) in the time of Zerubbabel, who led the first group of Jews from captivity in Babylon and back to Jerusalem in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, in the 6th century BC. The Ark of the Covenant contained the original Mosaic Law (Torah), together with other sacred items, and its discovery was not only a revelation but also signalled the beginning of a renewed covenant with God.
- The ability to read the Scriptures by all Bensalemites, whatever the language, references the speaking in tongues of Jesus's apostles after the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- The letter of Saint Bartholomew references the canonical and apocryphal stories concerning the apostle Bartholomew whom Jesus found sitting under a fig tree,

meditating upon Jacob's Ladder; who carefully questioned Jesus after his resurrection; who was given by Jesus knowledge of the angels and of Satan, the greatest kabbalistic mystery of all; and who thereby became known as 'the Depository of the Mysteries of the Son'. (The fig tree is symbolic of the Tree of Knowledge.)

- The description of Atlantis references the account of Atlantis and its destruction given by Plato in his *Critias* and *Timaeus*, together with the idea of Atlantis being resurrected or redeemed as the New Atlantis.
- Joabin the Jew references the biblical Joab, one of King David's generals, who retrieved the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines, thereby enabling the Ark to be subsequently placed in the Temple of Solomon and establishing Jerusalem as a religious and political centre for the Jewish people and all the tribes of Israel.
- Salomon's House references Solomon's Palace that was built as a complementary adjunct to Solomon's Temple, as also the Lodge of Freemasons who built Solomon's Temple.
- The College of Six Days' Work references the biblical Six Days of Creation (Genesis) followed by the Seventh Day of Rest.
- Solamona, King of Bensalem, references the biblical King Solomon (also spelt Salomon), who was renowned for his wisdom, understanding, justice, kabbalistic knowledge and largeness of heart; who wrote a Natural History, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Song of Solomon (i.e. History, Philosophy and Poetry); and who built Solomon's Temple and Palace, and instituted a brotherhood of Freemasons for the purpose.⁷
- The Feast of the Family references the agape or love feast (i.e. feast of remembrance and thanksgiving) instituted by Christ, as also the Orphic or Dionysian banquet from which the Christian love feast is derived, with its symbols of grapes (wine) and ear of corn (bread).
- The emphasis on the production of a large family and the ability to learn about the laws of nature so as to look after nature and develop things useful and good for mankind, references the first two commandments given to man by God: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion⁸ over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."⁹
- The title *New Atlantis* references the old Atlantis destroyed by the great Flood, and Noah who founded a new society afterwards, from whom descended Enoch, the first Messiah.
- The title *New Atlantis* also references the Apocalypse and New Jerusalem of St John's *Revelations*.

The Founding of Bensalem

Five main influences and characters brought about the founding of Bensalem as an island deserving of its name:-

- First was Abraham, the “Father of the faithful”, from whom the people of Bensalem are descended via his son Nachoran.
- Second was Moses, who “by a secret Cabala ordained the laws of Bensalem”.
- Third was the renowned king of the island, Altabin, “a wise man and a great warrior,” who “3,000 years ago or more” saved the island from invasion by the Atlanteans.
- Fourth was the great king and lawgiver, Solamona, “a divine instrument though a mortal man,” who “reigned on this island about 1,900 years ago,” who “had a large heart, inscrutable for good, and was wholly bent to make his kingdom and people happy,” and who founded Solomon’s House.
- Fifth was the miraculous appearance of the ark containing the sacred books and letter of Saint Bartholomew, which brought Christianity to the island “about twenty years after the Ascension of our Saviour”.

The first one references Abraham, the devoted servant of God, whose fruitfulness was both promised and blessed by God, and who was initiated by and took Holy Communion with Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem (later Jerusalem). The second emphasises that the laws and thus the structure of Bensalem are based on a secret Cabala transmitted from Moses. In the following three, analogous references to King David, King Solomon and Jesus are unmistakable, as also the cabalistic references to the three superior *Sephiroth* of the Tree of Life: *Geburah* (Strength, Judgement), *Chesed* (Mercy, Compassion), and *Daath* (Knowledge, Illumination).¹⁰

The name Bensalem is constructed from two Hebrew words—*Ben*, meaning ‘Son’, ‘Heir’, ‘Inheritor’ or ‘Offspring’, and *Salem* (an alternative rendering of *Shalom*), meaning ‘Peace’—thereby clearly linking it with Jerusalem. Jerusalem (Hebrew *Yeru-Shalom* or *Yeru-Shalaim*) means ‘Foundation of Peace’. It can also mean ‘Foundation of Solomon’, since the name Solomon, derived from Hebrew *Shalom*, means ‘Peace’. Jesus (Hebrew *Yeshua*), whose name means ‘Saviour’, was known as the “King of Peace”. David (Hebrew *Dawid*), whose name means ‘Beloved’ or ‘Friend’, was the initial founder of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, whilst his son Solomon was the builder of Solomon’s Temple and its adjacent palace or ‘house’. An alternative meaning of David is ‘Dove’. The dove is the well-known symbol of the Holy Spirit, whose particular attribute is peace. Such peace is a blessing and illumination that comes with and because of love.

In describing Solamona, Bacon is clearly thinking of himself as playing that role—a role patterned on what the Bible says about King Solomon: “And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.”¹¹

In naming St Bartholomew as the apostle who brought Christianity to Bensalem, Bacon was equally clearly hinting at being privy to secret knowledge that Saint Bartholomew was said to have possessed, as well as presenting Saint Bartholomew as an example of the sort of philosopher-scientist who would comprise a member of Solomon’s House. Jesus said that he

saw Nathaniel Bartholomew “under the fig tree”,¹² which refers both to the piety of Bartholomew and also to his earnest quest for truth—the fig tree symbolising a life and study of the Torah, and Israel’s religious history culminating in the expectation of the Messiah.

Bartholomew was named by the other apostles as “the Apostle of the Mysteries of God” (or “the Depository of the Mysteries of the Son”).¹³ He was a healer and visionary, enquiring into the mysteries of heaven, seeing things which are hidden from others, and not afraid to ask Jesus about the profoundest matters. He saw Jesus’s descent into hell, the resurrection (with heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending),¹⁴ the redemption of Adam, the summoning of Satan, and the Angel of Vengeance.¹⁵ Moreover, it was Bartholomew who asked Jesus whether it was lawful for him to reveal these mysteries unto every man, to which Jesus answered “As many as are faithful and are able to keep them under themselves, to them mayest thou entrust these things. For some there are that be worthy of them... And also they are secret, because of those that cannot contain them; for as many as can contain them shall have a part in them.”¹⁶ It was also Saint Bartholomew who asked Jesus “What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?” and received the reply that “Whosoever shall decree against any man that hath served my holy Father hath blasphemed against the Holy Ghost: For every man that serveth God worshipfully is worthy of the Holy Ghost, and he that speaketh anything evil against him shall not be forgiven.”¹⁷

Whether Bartholomew’s secret knowledge was passed on to Bacon by the mystery school of which he was an initiate and adept, or whether he had obtained direct revelation of such knowledge (a possibility hinted at by Bacon’s chaplain, Dr Rawley, in his ‘Life’ of Bacon), this allusion does have a historical link not only with the Rosicrucian “fraternity in learning and illumination” which Bacon headed but also with Canonbury Place in Islington, which Bacon leased when he was Lord Chancellor. Canonbury had been founded at the beginning of the 16th century by Prior Bolton of Saint Bartholomew’s Priory, Smithfield, London, and contained symbolic carvings and other things indicating its use as a Freemasonic and Rosicrucian centre.

The Martyrdom of Bartholomew (included in Book Eight of the *Apostolic History* attributed to Pseudo-Abdias) emphasises St Bartholomew’s ability to heal illness and to cast out demons, which miracles were particularly relevant to the work of Guthlac, an Anglo-Saxon predecessor of Rahere who founded Croyland Abbey. His story, in turn, provided precedents for several incidents in the founding of the Priory and Hospital of St. Bartholomew the Great in London.

Bacon carried out many of his scientific investigations at Canonbury, and it is probably there that he established his prototypal Salomon’s House or College of the Six Days’ Work.

Salomon’s House

Salomon’s House is referred to as “the lantern of the kingdom”. That is to say, it is the kingdom’s lantern, shining its light over the country and its people, but also the “horn” (from which lanterns were once made) of plenty. It provides both enlightenment and prosperity.

The organisation of Salomon's House is patterned on the zodiac, as was that of Jesus with his twelve apostles and that of King Arthur with his twelve Knights of the Round Table. It also has a reference to ancient Israel with its twelve tribes and their leaders, of which Jerusalem was the centre and heart. Bacon's organisation is a hierarchical Trinitarian expression of the zodiacal Round Table, comprising thirty-six fellows or 'knights' arranged in three sets of twelve:-

- Twelve that sail into foreign countries, gathering information (Merchants of Light).
- Three that collect experiments which are in books (Depredators);
- Three that collect experiments of mechanical arts, liberal sciences and other practices (Mystery-Men);
- Three that try new experiments (Pioneers or Miners);
- Three that draw the experiments of the former into titles and tables (Compilers).
- Three that draw out of experiments things of use and practice for man's life, etc. (Dowry-Men or Benefactors);
- Three that direct new experiments of a higher light, more penetrating into nature than the former (Lamps);
- Three that execute the experiments and report on them (Inoculators);
- Three that raise the former discoveries by experiments into greater observations, axioms and aphorisms (Interpreters of Nature).

Salomon's House is, as the Father of Salomon's House points out, named after King Salomon (Solomon). It therefore quite obviously references Solomon's Temple, but is a complement or 'twin' to the temple. King Solomon not only built a temple but also a palace. Solomon's Palace (i.e. Solomon's House) was not only for himself and his family, staff and servants, but also a place where philosophers could meet in order to research and discuss the Torah and the laws of nature and the universe. The two were connected, above ground and below ground. Above ground the terraces, steps and courts, with appropriate gateways, allowed movement between palace and temple. Below ground a subterranean passage connected the palace with a secret crypt beneath the temple. This was for the use of only Solomon and his co-principals or grand-masters, King Hiram of Tyre and Hiram Abiff. All this is taken into consideration by Bacon.

However, Bacon's real temple is metaphysical, being a temple of the mind, with the Great Instauration being a method of building this temple of light in the mind or soul of mankind.

"I am not raising a capitol or pyramid to the pride of man, but laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world. That model therefore I follow. For whatever deserves to exist deserves also to be known, for knowledge is the image of existence; and things mean and splendid exist alike."¹⁸

The earthly Salomon's House is a means of facilitating the building of this soul temple and bringing heaven down to earth, like the New Jerusalem, or of raising old Atlantis out of the flood to become a New Atlantis in the heavens. It works like the Gemini myth, wherein the immortal descends in order that the mortal may be raised.

The Greatest Jewel

The Father of Salomon's House refers to his relation of the true state of Salomon's House as the greatest jewel he has to impart as a gift. This is a jewel of knowledge, and as the greatest jewel it clearly contains something of very great importance. It therefore should be noted well.

Possibly the main thing to note is the division of the topic into four main heads:-

- (1) The end of our foundation.
- (2) Preparations and instruments we have for our works.
- (3) Several employments and functions whereto our fellows are assigned.
- (4) The ordinances and rights which we observe.

These four heads or subject matters correlate with the four major degrees of initiation, which themselves are based on the process of life. The process of life begins with an impulse, which is the source of the cyclic process, followed by a desire, which in turn is followed by thought, which gives rise to the action. After the action comes a remembrance and knowledge derived from the experience, which then helps to seed or initiate the next impulse and guide the ensuing desire, etc... In initiation, the desire becomes a loving desire or wise purpose, the thinking becomes clear philosophical understanding, and the action becomes one that is useful and of service. The loving desire, clear understanding and charitable action constitute the first three degrees of initiation. The fourth or Royal Arch degree is knowledge and the sharing of that knowledge for charitable purposes.

Because love is the creative and guiding motive in initiation, the knowledge acquired is an illumination—a knowledge of truth, which is love. This love is wisdom, the Word of God, in which is life and light. Such knowledge involves also remembering, honouring and thanking previous inventors and their inventions, and giving thanks to God “for his marvellous works” together with “forms of prayers, imploring his aid and blessing for the illumination of our labours, and the turning of them into good and holy uses”.

Following this, such knowledge is given out as a light, or oracle, to help people generally. The giving out of such light in charitable ways constitutes the higher degrees of initiation, from fifth to seventh, and this is mentioned by the Father as the “circuits or visits of diverse principal cities of the kingdom”, where “we do publish such new profitable inventions as we think good. And we do also declare natural divinations of diseases, plagues, swarms of hurtful creatures, scarcity, tempests, earthquakes, great inundations, comets, temperature of the year, and divers other things; and we give counsel thereupon, what the people shall do for the prevention and remedy of them.”

These references, plus other hints, indicate that Salomon's House is designed as an initiatory centre or mystery school, somewhat akin to Freemasonry, in which a gradual (i.e. degree by degree) training in morality and charity as well as of learning is of fundamental importance.

The Officers

The officials of Bensalem who speak to the adventurers are five in number and they form, in terms of their order of appearance, how they are clothed, what they do and what they say,

a meaningful and symbolic hierarchy suggestive of the Holy Royal Arch Degree in Freemasonry. In order of appearance, increasing from lesser to greater, they are:-

- (1) First Bensalemite official (c.f. Scribe Nehemiah);
- (2) Second Bensalemite official (c.f. Scribe Ezra);
- (3) The governor of the Strangers' House, a Christian priest (c.f. Joshua, the High Priest);
- (4) Joabin, the Jew (c.f. Haggai, the Prophet);
- (5) The Father of Salomon's House (c.f. Zerubbabel, Prince of Jerusalem).

Dramatic Effect and Symbolism of Clothing and Appurtenances

A good deal of emphasis is placed on describing the clothing and appearance of the officers, of whom the Father of Salomon's House is the most fully described as well as adorned. The detail that Bacon uses reveals his love of drama and theatrical effect, as well as his profound knowledge and use of symbolism.

For instance, when the Father makes his entry to the city, his attendants carry his crosier and staff, and he is clothed in a robe of fine black cloth with wide sleeves and a cape, under which he wears white linen down to his feet, with a white girdle around his waist and a white sindon or tippet (shoulder cape), and a hat that is like a helmet or Spanish montera (the soft black bicorne hat worn by bullfighters).

The crosier signifies the good shepherd who looks after his sheep, and is alternatively known as the pastoral staff. The staff, sometimes called the rod or sceptre, is emblematic of strength, support, protection and (ecclesiastical) authority. They are associated with the right-hand and left-hand of the cabalistic Tree of Life respectively (i.e. Mercy and Strength).

The white tunic and cape is an alb, signifying innocence or purity as well as light; whilst the black robe and cape symbolises the dark universe, also pure, in which the light shines. The dark universe is the source of light, and light is the source of all colour and variation. The black and the white clothing thereby indicate the idea of divine Father and Son, the Father being the darkness and the Son being the light, and they are One ("The Father and I are One." "Darkness is invisible light; light is darkness made visible."). The black robe and cape, and black helmet, are also emblematic of invisibility, denoting not only the "Invisible Light" (i.e. Darkness) but also a Rosicrucian, an "Invisible One".

The helmet or Spanish montera links with the idea of the Knights of the Helmet of the 1595 Gray's Inn Revels (*Gesta Grayorum*), with the added association of the bull, symbol of Taurus, the Alpha sign of the Zodiac. It also points to the myth of Europa and the Bull, from which Europe derives its name, and the Dionysian and Mithraic Mysteries that underlie Freemasonry.

The chariot in which the Father is carried is "all of cedar, gilt, and adorned with crystal; save that the fore-end had panels of sapphires set in borders of gold, and the hinder-end the like of emeralds of Peru colour."

Cedar, symbolic of wisdom and eternal life, is the sacred wood out of which the Ark of the Covenant is made, covered all with gold tissue upon blue like the Father's chariot. The gold

symbolises the light, whilst blue symbolises the mind or universe in which the light shines. The gold and blue are the first symbolic colorations of the white (light) and black (darkness).

Crystal is associated with the pure white light, whilst sapphire is associated with the creative wisdom or Word of God (Moses' Tablets of the Law were traditionally of sapphire), and emerald is associated with the Bride or Soul that is the repository and revelation of the Word of God (Merlin's Island or Stone is an emerald). In other words, the sapphire and emerald represent the Alpha and Omega, whilst the crystal signifies the Source, the All. In Cabala, the crystal, sapphire and emerald are symbolically associated with the first three *Sephiroth*, 1 (Crown), 2 (Wisdom) and 3 (Intelligence) respectively, which in Christian terms are referred to as Father, Son (or Word) and Holy Spirit.

The radiant sun of gold upon the top of the chariot, accompanied by a small cherub of gold with wings displayed in front of the sun, is symbolic of the spiritual Sun and its cherubic rays of illuminating wisdom. This particular sign is associated with the Rosicrucians and their motto "Beneath the shadow of thy wings, O Lord", indicating that the Father of Salomon's House who sits beneath this winged Sun is a Rosicrucian. His initiatory status means that he can truly bless others, which he does with a raised, bared right-hand gesture.

Solamona

Finally, mention should be made of the careful but unusual spelling of the name SOLAMONA, the importance of which is hinted at by the Father of Salomon's House when he says, referring to the name of Salomon's House:-

"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."

SALOMON is the Latin Vulgate spelling of Solomon, but SOLAMONA is Bacon's own invention.

First of all one should notice the emphasis on the letter 'A' and what Bacon does with it. Secondly, Bacon has created a name that is similar to that of Salomon (Solomon), and therefore also in meaning, whilst at the same time his new name has a further meaning.

Salomon/Solomon is derived from the Hebrew name שלמה (*Shelomoh*) which in turn is derived from Hebrew שלום (*Shalom*) "Peace" or (*Shalem*) "Complete". Solamona consists of the syllables Sol-a-Mona, which reveal two names, Sol ('Sun') and Mona ('Moon'), joined together by the primary sacred letter 'A'. Solamona, therefore, is a name for the immortal-mortal—the Sun being symbolic of the immortal and the Moon being symbolic of the mortal. Confirming this meaning of the name, the governor of the Stranger's House describes Solamona as "a divine instrument though a mortal man".

The Sun and Moon symbolise our divine spirit and human soul, or higher self and lower self, or lover and beloved, also known biblically as bridegroom and bride. They are the so-called Gemini of which we are each composed. They can also signify heart and mind, or wisdom and understanding, or Divinity and Philosophy. When joined together in a unity of operation, this indeed is peace or completeness.

Thirdly, by emphasising that the College of the Six Days' Work is called Salomon's House rather than Solamona's House, Bacon is indicating that both his Great Instauration and his idea for a "fraternity of learning and illumination"¹⁹ is based upon Solomonic wisdom and ancient Cabala (or Hebrew *Kabalah*), as taught and practised by both Solomon and Jesus.

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Recommended reading

Stephen A. McKnight, *The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought*, chapter 1, 'The New Atlantis' (The University of Missouri Press, 2006). An adaptation of the chapter is available online, titled "[Francis Bacon's God](#)" (published in *The New Atlantis*, Number 10, Fall 2005).

Endnotes

¹ Letter from Francis Bacon to Tobie Matthew, "from Gray's Inn, Feb. 27, 1610".

² Harvey Wheeler, *The Semiosis of Francis Bacon's Scientific Empiricism*.

³ Matthew 22, 37-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 15:27; John 4: 20-21; John 13:34-35; John 15:9-17; 1 John 4:7-13, 16, 20-21; Romans 12:10.

⁴ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, The Preface (1640).

⁵ Francis Bacon, 'Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature,' *Essays* (1625).

⁶ Atlantis is described as distinct from Mexico (then called Tirambel) and Peru (then called Coya), which coexisted with it, and as being the closest of the countries to the island of Bensalem. They of Tirambel sailed to the Mediterranean and made war on the Athenians (as recorded by the Egyptian priests who informed Plato), whilst they of Coya sailed through the South Sea (southern Pacific Ocean) and made war upon Bensalem. The inference would appear to be that Atlantis was the central land (i.e. the Caribbean and bordering lands) lying between Tirambel (Mexico) to the north and Coya (Peru) to the south, and that all three kingdoms were considered by other nations as being comprised of Atlanteans. The three countries are described as having at that time far greater rivers and far higher mountains to pour down waters than any part of the Old World.

⁷ 1 Kings 4, 29-34 (Geneva Bible):-

And God gave Salomon wisdom, and understanding exceeding much, and a large heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Salomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than any man.... and he was famous throughout all nations round about. And Salomon spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came all the people to hear the wisdom of Salomon, from all Kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

⁸ The Hebrew word translated as "dominion" more accurately means 'cherish' or 'look after', 'care for'. Bacon, who could read Hebrew, probably knew this, for he turns around the Church teachings, which have allowed mankind to interpret "to have dominion over" as meaning to conquer and do whatsoever we want, by saying that we should in fact be obedient to nature, like a servant: in other

words, echoing the phrase “the perfect king is the perfect servant” and following the idea that the first man, Adam, was placed in the garden of Eden as its gardener:-

Now the empire of man over things is founded on the Arts and Sciences only; for Nature is only governed by obedience. (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Bk I, Aph.129.)

⁹ Genesis 1:28.

¹⁰ *Daath* references or is synonymous with *Binah* (Intelligence, Holy Spirit), in whom are *Kether* (Crown, Power) and *Hokhmah* (Wisdom, Word)—the three supreme *Sephiroth*, known as The Holy Trinity.

¹¹ 1 Kings 4:29.

¹² John 1: 48-50.

¹³ *The Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle.*

¹⁴ John 1: 51.

¹⁵ *The Questions of Bartholomew*, otherwise known as *The Gospel of St Bartholomew*, I.

¹⁶ *The Questions of Bartholomew*, IV:65-68.

¹⁷ *The Questions of Bartholomew*, V:1-6. Matthew 12:32.

¹⁸ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Bk I, Aph.120 (transl. Spedding & Ellis).

¹⁹ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Part 2 (1605):-

And surely, as nature createth brotherhood in families, and arts mechanical contract brotherhoods in commonalities, and the anointment of God superinduceth a brotherhood in kings and bishops; so in like manner there cannot but be a fraternity in learning and illumination, relating to that paternity which is attributed to God, who is called the Father of illuminations or lights.