

The Religious Foundations of Francis Bacon's Thought, by Stephen A. McKnight, Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2006, 193 pp. \$37.50.

The influence of Francis Bacon on modern thought cannot be underestimated, but according to Stephen A. McKnight it has been misunderstood. Although scholars of the Enlightenment have portrayed him as a secular humanitarian, McKnight demonstrates that the religious themes, images, and motifs permeating his works paint a different portrait. Bacon may have challenged the religious establishment of his own day by calling for an inductive approach to philosophy which moved from fact to axiom to law rather than using the deductive syllogisms of the philosophers and theologians; however, he never outran his belief in God and centered his vision for this new way of learning on religious motifs and beliefs, including the motive of Christian charity. McKnight challenges Bacon's secular interpreters by describing in great detail the religious images painted in his works. He demonstrates that these images revealed Bacon's essential beliefs, and the author insists that they weren't merely designed to appease the social and political elites of the day though this has been suggested by some.

McKnight takes the reader through several of Francis Bacon's works to illustrate just how much religious thought infused everything Bacon wanted to accomplish. Using religious images and allusions Bacon sets out a plan for the renewal of mankind that will restore him to a state of moral and philosophical purity, one that he believes man possessed before the Fall. He uses themes of salvation and deliverance centered around images of the Exodus and the Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom, as well as the theme of "messianic and millenarian restoration of humanity and nature," (p. 3). Bacon apparently wanted to augment the religious restoration that was under way, and his use of biblical images reinforces his religious motivations. In fact the author suggests that Bacon hoped his work would contribute to the "apocalyptic instauration of the Kingdom of God on earth and the societal embodiment of the cardinal Christian virtues, especially charity," (p. 44).

The heart of Francis Bacon's thought can be summed up by understanding his notion of Instauration. This is the restoration of a thing to its former state after decay, lapse, or dilapidation. For Restoration Movement Churches this word reveals an interesting connection. Instauration comes from the Latin Vulgate where it describes the renovation of the Temple during the reign of Josiah. Thus, linguistically, the narrative justifying his renewal of philosophy and society for Bacon parallels one of the

dominant Old Testament stories adopted also by the Restoration Movement: Josiah's renewal of Israel by the rediscovery of the Book of the Law. Although Bacon intended to renew the study of philosophy and science, his use of a similar idea provides a little more context with which to understand the times and thought processes that may have influenced our own movement. McKnight's work provides insights to Bacon's thinking that allows us to evaluate him and his religious motives more clearly. Most likely this book will open up some debate about this important historical figure, but McKnight's analysis keeps the importance of the religious thinking of Francis Bacon at the forefront of the discussion.

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(Published in Restoration Quarterly, Volume 50, no. 4, 2008, p. 256)