

two Italians, Pier Paolo Vergerio, a bishop and papal diplomat, and Mateo Gribaldi, a lawyer, both of whom subsequently converted to protestantism; Sigismund Gelons, a Pole; and Henry Scrimgeour, a Scot who made his residence in Geneva. These accounts were collected together and published in Basel in 1550, in what became the definitive source of knowledge about Spira's apostasy, in a volume edited by another Italian convert to protestantism, Celio Curio. Gribaldi's account bore an uncompromising preface by Calvin underlining the ways in which Spira's death demonstrated the truth of protestant teaching about the core doctrines of predestination, election and reprobation; it was this version alone which was translated into English by Edward Aglionby and it was therefore the version in which Spira's story was available to English readers during the Elizabethan period. From what Bacon says about his sources in the preface to his version, it would appear that he derived his *Relation* from the 1550 collection of documents. He acknowledges the existence of Aglionby's translation and notes that he has 'heard' it is a translation of only one version but says he has not been able to obtain a copy.

I have already suggested that a group similar in disposition and education to these earlier reformers, concerned to advance a reformation in religion which also has political implications, can be identified as potential readers for Bacon's version. Some other information about Bacon's view of his likely, or preferred, readership can be obtained from the preface. Firstly, Bacon addresses himself to the question of authenticity, and places particular stress upon the number of accounts and the fact that they were written by men of 'several Nations, and some of the *Romish* Religion, being all of them Spectators of this Tragedy'. The view of this life history as a tragedy is followed up a little later when he imagines a questioner requiring to know 'what moved me to compile this Treatise'. He replies not in a directly personal way but through an injunction, 'that it should teach them fear and reverence'. He both identifies a typical response to the story ('among all those that come to see him, few or none return unshaken') and implies through it that a worthy reader/spectator will have this response as a measure of his worth, since it is not merely a matter of fellow-feeling but a matter of spiritual discernment, both into oneself and into the fundamental doctrines of protestant religion. The work is, after all, as much a treatise in the sense of a doctrinal text as it is an historical narrative, since the critical issues are mental not physical and the means of approach to them are through the language of biblical text and doctrinal exposition and debate. Hence the stress in the preface on the authority of the eye-witness accounts, which derives not only from actual presence at the events