

but from the religious and intellectual qualities of those who wrote their reports, who are affirmed by Bacon to be 'holy and learned'. Bacon's own contribution has nothing to do with the substantive issues of the story, but this does not prevent him from claiming some part in the final achievement of the work. The value he has added to the original documents is that of narrative consistency, 'so as those [discourses] which under several writers were before counted several, are now by my endeavours reduced into one intire Historie, connexed by due succession of time and occasion, as punctually as could be aimed at'. This statement is both a clear affirmation of a principle of composition and a declaration of that aspect of the work which he is offering to his reader as both his distinctive contribution and achievement. He does not say why he has endeavoured to create 'one intire Historie', but instead takes it for granted that there is a part, at least, of his readership who will both share this assumption about the proper way of writing a life-history, and who will be capable of expressing an informed judgement on his success.³

In other words, the preface identifies the intended reader of the work as one who is capable of making judgements of a literary and a theological kind, the latter in relation to issues of a most critical and profoundly disturbing nature. A brief and yet vivid indication of what being an apostate means as Spira experiences it can be gained from the following quotations from the work itself and then from Robert Bolton's *Instructions for the Right Conforting Afflicted Consciences* (1631).

I perceive said *Spira*, that I call on him to my eternal damnation; for I tell you again, it is a new and unheard of example, that you find in me. If *Judas* (said they) had but outlived his days, which by nature he might have done, he might have repented, and Christ would have received him to mercy; and yet he sinned most grievously against his Master, which did so esteem of him, as to honour him with the dignity of an Apostle, and did maintain and feed him. He answered, Christ did also feed and honour me, neither yet is my fault one jot less then that of his, because it is no more honour to be personally present with Christ in the flesh, than to be in his presence now by illumination of his holy Spirit; and besides, I deny that ever *Judas* could have repented how long soever he had lived; for grace was quite taken from him, as it is now from me.

O *Spira*, said they, you know you are in a spiritual desertion; and must therefore not believe what Satan suggests, he was ever a Lier from the beginning, and a meer Impostor, and will cast a thousand lying fancies into your mind, to beguile you withal; you must rather believe those whom you judge to be in a good estate, and more able to discern of you than yourself: believe us, and we tell you that God will be merciful unto you.

O here is the knot (said *Spira*) I would I could believe, but I cannot.

Then he began to reckon up what fearful dreams and visions he was continually troubled withal: that he saw the Devils come flocking into the Chamber, and about