'The High and Aiery Hills of Platonisme': An Introduction to the Cambridge Platonists

ὁ δὴ θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἂν εἴη μάλιστα, καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ πού τις, ὥς φασιν, ἄνθρωπος

PLATO*

I

THE Emperor Julian, the 'apostate' who endeavoured to restore Hellenism in A.D. 361, once suggested the continuity of the Platonic tradition by listing in sequence the names of Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.[1] His failure to differentiate these philosophers need not concern us here since it was a failure shared by everyone else to the seventeenth century and beyond. Equally understandable is his omission of other formidable Platonists—Philo, Clement of Alexandria, the mighty Origen[2]—for Julian was too much of a partisan ever to

* 'Now God ought to be to us the measure of all things, and not man, as men commonly say' (*Leges*, 716c). The statement is made in express opposition to Protagoras (quoted below, p. 138, note).

[1] *Oration VII*, 222b. The chronological sequence is: Plato, 428/9–348/7 B.C.; Plotinus, A.D. 205–70; Porphyry, 233–c. 304; and Iamblichus, c. 250–c. 330. The succession passes to Proclus (410–85) and ends in the closing of the Academy at Athens by Justinian (529).

[2] All three are discussed in the excellent introductory study by Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1913). The definitive studies in English are, respectively, by H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), 2 vols.; R. B. Tollington, *Clement of Alexandria* (1914), 2 vols.; and Jean Daniélou, *Origen*, tr. W. Mitchell (1955). The case for Philo as 'the chief founder of Neoplatonism' is aggressively stated by Feibleman, Ch. VII. The best general survey of Patristic Platonism is by R. Arnou, in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, 1933), XII, 2258–392. Cf. R. P. Casey, 'Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Platonism', *Harvard Theological Review*, XVIII (1925), 39–101. The passages from Plato most often used by his divers disciples

consider seriously that a Jew and two 'Galileans' could possibly form part of the Platonic succession. Nevertheless his sequence from Plotinus to Porphyry and Iamblichus, with the further addition of Proclus who came later, focuses accurately enough on the revised edition of Platonism known for better or for worse as Neoplatonism.[1] A number of other editions have of course followed since, notably the one compiled by the less profound but equally influential Florentine Neoplatonists of the fifteenth century led by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.[2] An even more modest edition was published later, in seventeenth-century England, by the so-called Cambridge Platonists. Their inspiration came from their Plato, Benjamin Whichcote; their best writing issued from their Porphyry, John Smith; their perversities became most apparent with their Iamblichus, Henry More; while Ralph Cudworth as an acute and subtle philosopher was their Plotinus, and as a scholastic systematiser their Proclus.

Yet the achievement of the Cambridge Platonists can hardly be measured in terms of their loyalty to Plato, Plotinus, or any of the

---

will be found in Shorey, pp. 45–7, and Adam Fox, *Plato and the Christians* (1957). On the Platonism of the English Renaissance see Friedrich Dannenberg, *Das Erbe Platons in England bis zur Bildung Lylys* (Berlin, 1932), and Kurt Schroeder, *Platonismus in der englischen Renaissance vor und bei Thomas Elyot* (Berlin, 1920).

[1] The best survey of Neoplatonism is by Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1918). The bibliography of Plotinus is extremely lengthy but I should recommend four excellent studies available in English: Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, tr. J. Thomas (Chicago, 1958); W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 3rd ed. (1929), 2 vols.; A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940); and J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967). Continental studies include in particular: Maurice de Gandillac, *La Sagesse de Plotin* (Paris, 1952); Cleto Carbonara, *La filosofia di Plotino*, 3rd ed. (Naples, 1964), with full bibliography; and the multilingual *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, V: *Les sources de Plotin*, by E. R. Dodds, W. Theiler, *et al.* (Geneva, 1960).

[2] On the relationship of the Cambridge Platonists to the Florentines (as also to Erasmus, Colet and Sir Thomas More), see esp. Cassirer, Ch. I and IV, whose account is here amended considerably. Cf. Sears Jayne, 'Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance', *Comparative Literature*, IV (1952), 214–38. Hooker is not relevant (notwithstanding McAdoo, p. 124) for the reasons stated by Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (1952), pp. 171 ff. In any case, we may not merge Hooker, the Cambridge Platonists and all Latitudinarians into the single category—convenient but misleading—of 'Anglican rationalists', as Philip Harth has done in *Swift and Anglican Rationalism* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 20 ff.

lesser luminaries in the Platonic succession. Suppose that a study of their antecedents were to persuade us that they were not 'Platonists' but (as Coleridge claimed) 'more truly Plotinists'.[1] What matter then? To be a Plotinist is not to negate the influence of Plato; it is to interpret Plato to suit one's particular sensibility, which I take it is the justification for that well-known generalisation which sees the entire European philosophical tradition as 'a series of footnotes to Plato'.[2] Certainly the ever-present tendency to regard Plato's Forms as thoughts in the Divine Mind[3] does not cancel the debt owed to Plato's original conception. Likewise, the testimony of Porphyry that in the writings of Plotinus 'both the Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines are sunk; Aristotle's Metaphysics, especially, is condensed in them, all but entire',[4] hardly

[1] Coleridge, p. 366. Cf. below, p. 41, note 1.

[2] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 53. Etienne Gilson ventures a parallel affirmation in *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (1955), p. 542.

[3] Cf. Sterry: 'Philosophers and Divines call the first Images of things, as they rise up from the Fountain of eternity in the bosome of this universal and eternal Image, *Ideas*. The *Idea*, in this sense, is the first and distinct Image of each form of things in the Divine Mind' (*Discourse*, p. 49). Plato's conception is discussed by F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (1935), *passim*; Raphael Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato* (1939), Ch. X; Sir David Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford, 1951); *et al.* For subsequent developments consult H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), I, 200 ff., and *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), I, Ch. XIII; Feibleman, pp. 109 ff., 153 ff., and *passim*; R. M. Jones, 'The Ideas as the Thoughts of God', *Classical Philology*, XXI (1926), 317–26; A. N. M. Rich, 'The Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts of God', *Mnemosyne*, 4th series, VII (1954), 123–33; and H. A. Wolfson, 'Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretations of Platonic Ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXII (1961), 3–32. The most crucial utterances of the early Platonists (e.g. Philo, *De opificio mundi*, XX; Albinus, IX; Plotinus, V, i, 4) are repeatedly echoed in the seventeenth century, as by Donne (*Sermons*, ed. E. M. Simpson and G. R. Potter [Berkeley, 1962], X, 353 ff.), Cudworth (cf. Martineau, pp. 413 ff.), George Rust (*A Discourse of Truth* [1682], §§ 17–18), *et al.* The conception in *Paradise Lost*, VII, 557, is thoroughly traditional.

[4] Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.*, XIV. On the non-Hellenic elements in Plotinus' thought, see Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, tr. J. Thomas (Chicago, 1958), Ch. VII; cf. Willy Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1930), esp. Ch. I. But it is also conceivable that Plotinus was influenced by Christian ideas, possibly through his teacher Ammonius who was once a Christian and had taught Origen. Cf. E. Zeller, 'Ammonius Sakkas und Plotinus', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, VII (1894), 295–312; Heinrich Dörrie, 'Ammonios der Lehrer Plotins', *Hermes*, LXXXIII (1955), 439–77; and H. Langerbeck, 'The Philosophy of Ammonius Saccas', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* LXXVII (1957), 67–74.

affects the position of Plotinus as Plato's most important disciple. Even where the outlook is manifestly un-Platonic—as in Origen's firm commitment to an Incarnate God, or in Iamblichus' excessive attachment to theurgy, or in Pico's dazzling attempts to fuse mutually exclusive ideas —we may not conclude that Plato has been necessarily bypassed. To reach the appropriate conclusions wherever we observe individuals 'always consorting with Plato' (as Porphyry said of Origen)[1] we should indeed investigate the extent of their indebtedness to Plato but we must in particular examine the reasons for their predilection toward Plato in the first instance. To attempt the one without the other would be quite misleading, especially in the case of the Cambridge Platonists, who quote the minor Neoplatonists more often than Plotinus, and Plotinus more often than Plato. But to study their general attitude of mind as it emerges from their principal tenets is to see not only how far the spirit of Plato pervades their thought but also why they enrolled themselves among the 'platonicks', 'Those Eagle Eyed Philosophers', as Whichcote called them, 'the best and divinest of philosophers' according to More.[2]

The acceptance by the Cambridge Platonists of Plato and his disciples under the leadership of Plotinus—'Divine Plotinus!'[3]—went hand in hand with their bold rejection of the entire Western theological tradition from St Augustine through the medieval schoolmen to the classic Protestantism of Luther, Calvin, and their variegated followers in the seventeenth century. John Worthington's statement sometime after the Restoration that the Cambridge Platonists looked to 'the ancient and wisest philosophers, as also the primitive fathers, the Greek especially',[4] is an acknowledgement of a development staggering in its implications. Protestants had of course repeatedly pleaded for a return to 'the primitive fathers', but it was always understood that Origen should be on the whole avoided and that the other Greek Fathers should be studied in the light of Tertullian and especially St Augustine. The Cambridge Platonists inverted this procedure with almost mathematical precision. They tended to silence Tertullian altogether; they invoked Augustine only if he happened to agree with the eagle-eyed

[1] *Apud* Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xix, 7.

[2] Whichcote, *Discourses*, II, 400; More, Preface to *Philosophical Poems* (Bullough, p. 7).

[3] More, *The Oracle*, l. 17 (Bullough, p. 159). See also More's frequent references to Plotinus in the notes to his *Poems*, pp. 335 ff.

[4] Worthington, *Discourses*, p. 36. Cf. S.P., *Brief Account*, p. 9. Worthington himself remained loyal to the Augustinian tradition.

philosophers;[1] and they granted primacy in theological matters to the Greek Fathers, all now led by Origen—'that Miracle of the Christian World'.[2] Among the major Western theologians only two found favour with the Cambridge Platonists: St Anselm, who provided the basis for their theory of the Atonement, and St Thomas Aquinas, who supplied them with the most advanced formulation of the Graeco-Roman theory of natural law.[3] Nearly all other exponents of the traditional modes of Western thought were mercilessly ostracised. St Jerome who is certainly the greatest humanist among the Latin Fathers was silently removed from his pedestal in recompense for his attacks on Origen as much as in reply to his frequent denigrations of classical literature ('Quid facit cum psalterio Horatius? cum evangeliis Maro? cum apostolo Cicero?').[4] Even Western 'platonicks' such as Macrobius and Chalcidius were unceremoniously dismissed. Above all, Aristotle—once so highly favoured by the medieval schoolmen and lately no less admired by the Protestant scholastics—was obliged to surrender his traditional designation as 'the Philosopher' to Plato or Plotinus or even (the unkindest cut of all!) to Epictetus, Hierocles or Simplicius.[5] Lastly, Luther

[1] The Cambridge Platonists thought that Augustine had altogether subordinated Platonism to Augustinianism. They knew that he acknowledged the extensive influence of the 'platonicks' in *Conf.*, VII, 9–21; that he endorsed Platonism in *De civ. Dei*, VIII, 4 ff.; and that he praised Plato and Plotinus in most extravagant terms in *Contra academicos*, III, 18 (*PL*, XXXII, 956). But they also knew that in *Retractationes*, I, he qualified his earlier pronouncements rather drastically.

[2] More, 'Preface', pp. xxi–xxiii; see further his *Antidote*, sig. A4, and *Democritus platonissans*, st. 75. I am inclined to think that the course of Platonism in the West can be read in terms of Origen's fluctuating fortunes. The road leads from his censure by St Jerome, through many years in the medieval wilderness, to his acceptance by the Florentine Neoplatonists and esp. by Erasmus, Colet and Sir Thomas More.

[3] I am now investigating the extent of Anselm's influence. On St Thomas' formulation of natural law, see below, pp. 149, 150. R. J. Henle's *Saint Thomas and Platonism* (The Hague, 1956) is a thorough study but not in the least relevant. It is also very dull.

[4] *Epistula* XXII, 29: 'What has Horace to do with the Psalter? Virgil with the Gospels? Cicero with St Paul?' (*Corpvs scriptorvm ecclesiasticorvm latinorvm* [Vienna, 1910], LIV, 189.)

[5] Their dates: Epictetus, late 1st cent. A.D.; Hierocles, 5th cent. A.D.; and Simplicius, 6th cent. A.D. Yet Aristotle's influence was as extensive on all the Cambridge Platonists as it had been on Plotinus. He is indeed repeatedly invoked: More cites him throughout his formal treatises *Ench. Eth.* and *Ench. Met.*; Cudworth commends the 'Aristotelical System of Philosophy' even as he bends

and Calvin and the entire array of Protestant theologians were greeted with the worst possible form of disapprobation: a stony silence.[1]

The return of the Cambridge Platonists to 'the ancient and wisest philosophers, as also the primitive fathers, the Greek especially', was a return to a tradition which included many more philosophers besides Plato, the Neoplatonists, the Greek Fathers, and the thinkers of fifteenth-century Florence. This tradition was rooted in 'the primitive theology of the Gentiles' which according to Ficino had begun with Zoroaster or perhaps with the mythical Hermes Trismegistus, had passed thence to Orpheus and Pythagoras and several others, and had at last found its way 'entire' into the books of 'our Plato'.[2] None of the Cambridge Platonists formulated this imaginative scheme with such precision, but a variant of it appears to be implicit in Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* and it was once outlined by More in lines which he mistook for poetry:

> Plato's school
> . . . well agrees with learned Pythagore,
> Egyptian Trismegist, and th' antique roll
> Of Chaldee wisdome, all which time hath tore
> But Plato and deep Plotin do restore.[3]

One is conscious of an irony as the Cambridge Platonists are here observed challenging one tradition only to confine themselves to another. Perhaps the most regrettable result of this development was their

---

it to demonstrate his belief that Aristotle 'trode in *Plato's* footsteps'; and Whichcote on occasion even alludes to him as 'the Philosopher' (*Discourses*, II, 95; III, 164; etc.). He was nevertheless 'out of request with them' (as 'S.P.' reports in his *Brief Account*, p. 14) because he was thought to have been 'not over-zealous of Religion' (Smith, *Discourses*, p. 48).

[1] The best study of the decline of Calvinism is by Cragg, esp. Ch. II. It has been argued that the Cambridge Platonists did not discard Calvin (Pauley, App. I), but while they do agree in some details, their spirit is utterly dissimilar.

[2] Ficino, p. 25 (*De christiana religione*, Ch. XXII): 'Prisca Gentilium Theologia, in qua Zoroaster, Mercurius, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras consenserunt, tota in Platonis nostri uoluminibus continetur.' This important formulation—also quoted by Shorey, p. 124, and Feibleman, pp. 209 ff.—is discussed by Aspelin, pp. 33 ff. and P. O. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, tr. V. Conant (New York, 1943), pp. 25 ff. See also D. P. Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI (1953), 100–20, and Charles B. Schmitt, 'Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXVII (1966), 505–32.

[3] *Psychozoia*, I, 4 (Bullough, p. 12).

uncritical acceptance of the legend that 'the primitive theology of the Gentiles' had been profoundly influenced by Pythagoras who as a contemporary of Moses (!) had read the Hebrew Scriptures, had grafted their principal ideas to his own philosophy, and so had altered the character of the tradition which he bequeathed to Plato. The implications were neatly summed up in the oft-quoted rhetorical question ventured by Numenius of Apamea in the second century A.D.: *τί γάρ ἐστι Πλάτων ἢ Μωϋσῆς ἀττικίζων;* ('What is *Plato* but *Moses Atticus?*').[1] Cudworth saw the point without much difficulty. So did More, who in fact assures us

> that *Pythagoras* drew his Knowledg from the *Hebrew* Fountains, is what all Writers, Sacred and Prophane, do testifie and aver. That *Plato* took from him the principal part of that Knowledg, touching *God*, the *Soul's Immortality*, and *the Conduct of Life and Good Manners*, has been doubted by no Man. And that it went from him, into the Schools of *Aristotle*, and so deriv'd and diffus'd, almost into the whole World, is in like manner attested by all.[2]

Yet the Cambridge Platonists were not nearly so uncritical as might appear at first glance. Smith, for example, never committed himself to the legend of the Attic Moses, while Whichcote expressly said that the Greek philosophers attained their conclusions not through plagiarism from the Hebrews but 'by Natural Light'.[3] We need not doubt that More and Cudworth would also have discounted their theories if facts tended to dispute them. Never the slaves of any tradition, not even of the Platonic, we find that they lent their ears to Casaubon's thesis (1614) that the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were actually written after the advent of Christianity, and on being convinced, adjusted their attitude toward the Hermetic corpus accordingly.[4] Their reluctance to avail themselves of the writings of that other 'platonick',

[1] Numenius, *apud* Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, 22, 150; the (imprecise) translation quoted is by More, *Cabbala*, sig. B1 and p. 188. The debt of the Greek philosophers to the Scriptures had been argued by Tatian, *Oratio adversus graecos*, XI., but esp. by Clement, *Stromata*, V, 14; cf. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, VIII, 11. Consult further the references in Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 13–15. For one of the fullest seventeenth-century expositions, see Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles* (Oxford, 1671), Pt. II, Bk. II, Ch. II *et seq.*

[2] *Ench. Eth.*, p. 267; but see also his *Cabbala*, sig. B1, and 'Preface', pp. xvi–xviii. Cudworth's agreement is recorded in *Int. System*, pp. 12 ff. (I, i, 10).

[3] *Discourses*, II, 407.

[4] See the account by Yates, Ch. XXI, esp. pp. 423 ff.

Dionysius the Areopagite, was similarly affected by the discovery that his claim to have been the disciple of St Paul was altogether fraudulent.[1]

But it is time to take a closer look. I propose to start with Bunyan.

II

In 1671 Bunyan was still in prison, and incensed. Edward Fowler's *Design of Christianity* had just subordinated theology to mere ethics and Bunyan felt that the world should have the benefit of his views as well. He therefore launched into *A Defence of the Doctrine of Iustification* (1672) in which he sneered at the 'BRAVE Phylosophers' invoked by Fowler, denounced all their 'Moral Natural Principles', and at last uncovered (as he told Fowler) 'the rotteness of your heart'. Fowler rose to the occasion at once. Where earlier he had insisted on the importance of being 'unbyassed' and had earnestly sought to promote 'Genuine acts of Righteousness and true Holiness', he now called Bunyan a 'wretch', 'a most Black-mouth'd Calumniator', indeed a '*naughty* man', and denounced his treatise as 'hideous non-sense', 'lamentable stuff', '*deadly* poison'. The pamphlet containing these sentiments was entitled *Dirt wipt off: or a manifest discovery of the Gross Ignorance, Erroneousness and Most Unchristian and Wicked Spirit of one John Bunyan* (1672).

Fowler's conduct is by no means an isolated phenomenon in the seventeenth century: nearly everyone involved in a controversy would likewise wipe off the dirt flung at him, and return it promptly to its source. But as Fowler is often mentioned in connexion with the Cambridge Platonists, it is imperative to realise at the outset that the discrepancy between his theories and his practice stands in diametric opposition to the manner in which More or Whichcote engaged in controversies. Thus when Thomas Vaughan—the brother of the poet—published in 1650 two wildly speculative treatises, the *Anthroposophia theomagica* and the *Anima magica abscondita*, Henry More replied in an ambitious effort to curtail the ever-present tendency 'to bee filled with high-swoln words of vanity, rather then to feed on sober truth, and to heat and warm our selves rather by preposterous and fortuitous imagin-

[1] See my account in 'Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XX (1959), 155–66. Another evidence of constructive criticism is More's rejection of Josephus' celebrated 'testimony' on Christ as a forgery (*Godliness*, p. 318; cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates iudaicae*, XVIII, iii, 3, and the account of F. H. Schoedel, *Flavivs Iosephvs de Iesv Christo testatvs* [Leipzig, 1840]).

ations, then to move cautiously in the light of a purified minde and improved reason'.[1] He therefore attempted to tabulate Vaughan's errors but managed only to become the recipient of an abusive counter-attack in *The Man-Mouse taken in a Trap* (1650). But he persisted, issuing next his bitingly satiric *Second Lash*, whereupon Vaughan responded with *The Second Wash: or the Moore scour'd once more* (1651). A badly-shaken More decided at last to sound retreat, aware now that the appeal to reason could not possibly influence a narrow-minded fanatic. But the principle was not compromised. Convinced even before his encounter with Vaughan of the destructive nature of fanaticism in any form—be it secular or religious 'enthusiasm'—he generalised his recent experience in a work issued in 1656, the *Enthusiasmus triumphatus*, voicing in it the concern he was to express on many occasions, that 'if ever *Christianity* be exterminated, it will be by *Enthusiasme*'.[2]

The conviction that the most serious threat to Christianity is posed by the irrational, not the rational, underlies also the views set out in 1651 by Whichcote in reply to the strictures of Anthony Tuckney. Whichcote was at the time Provost of King's College, Cambridge, as well as the University's Vice-Chancellor; Tuckney was Master of Emmanuel, and would in a few years be appointed Master of St John's and then Regius Professor of Divinity. Tuckney had been distressed ever since Whichcote first began to deliver his 'discourses' in Trinity Church (1636), and now decided that the constant emphasis on 'reason' had reached a point where his intervention was a matter of the utmost necessity. In the first of the six letters the two men were to exchange,[3] Tuckney asserted the supremacy of faith over reason in what at first sight appears to be the uncompromising position of a Calvinist. But classic Protestantism had been just as uncompromising, whether in asserting with Richard Sibbes in 1638 that 'it is the greatest reason, to yeeld reason to Faith', or in urging with Francis Quarles in 1640 that

> In the Meditation of divine Mysteries, keep thy heart humble, and thy thoughts holy: Let Phylosophy not be asham'd to be confuted, nor Logick blush to be confounded; What thou canst not compre-

[1] *Observations* (1650), Preface. On the More–Vaughan controversy see Bullough, pp. lxviii ff., but esp. Nicolson, 'Cartesianism', pp. 364 ff., and Greene, pp. 456 ff.

[2] *Godliness*, p. vi. See further below, pp. 24 f.

[3] See Whichcote, *Letters*. Brief accounts of this correspondence are provided by Tulloch, pp. 59 ff., and Jones, pp. 292 ff. Tuckney's position should be studied in the light of his *Forty Sermons*, ed. Jonathan Tuckney (1676).

> hend, beleeve; and what thou canst beleeve, admire; So shall thy Ignorance be satisfied in thy Faith, and thy doubts swallowed up with wonders; The best way to see day-light is to put out thy Candle.[1]

'Sir,' replied Whichcote to a parallel assertion by Tuckney, 'I oppose not rational to spiritual; for spiritual is most rational.'[2]

It requires no profound knowledge of the intellectual developments in the seventeenth century to recognise that here if anywhere we have one of the boldest challenges to the mode of thought characteristic of traditional Protestantism. All that the Cambridge Platonists ever uttered reverts in the end to Whichcote's refusal to oppose the spiritual to the rational, the supernatural to the natural, Grace to Nature. John Smith was merely echoing his master when he proclaimed that 'Truth' —the truth of divine revelation—'needs not any time flie from Reason, there being an Eternal amitie between them'. Could it be otherwise so long as all the Cambridge Platonists shared More's belief that Reason connects man to God, that it is 'so far from being any contemptible Principle in man, that it must be acknowledged in some sort to be in God himself'?[3] Such an acknowledgement does not of course terminate in itself. It leads inevitably to the persuasion that the Primal Reason has imparted to the created order a religion at once 'rational, accountable, and intelligible'. It involves the conviction that every 'motion of Religion doth begin with Reason', that indeed Reason is 'awakened, excited, employed, directed, and improved' by religion. It assents to the proposition that there is divine sanction for any endeavour 'to satisfie a Man's self, in the Reason of things; to look to the Grounds and Assurance that Man hath for his Thoughts, Apprehensions, and Perswasions'. Most importantly, it regards as 'greatly Mistaken' anyone who thinks that in religion 'we are not to know, but only to believe'.[4] No man should ever be invited to say with Anselm, *credo ut*

[1] Sibbes, *The Fovntaine Opened* (1638), I, 22, and Quarles, *Enchyridion* (1640), III, 91. Cf. Pascal: 'There is nothing that so conforms with reason as this renunciation of reason' (*Pensées*, § 465; tr. J. M. Cohen [1961]).

[2] *Letters*, p. 108; cf. *Aphorisms*, § 1183: 'what is most Spiritual is most Rational'.

[3] Smith, *Discourses*, p. 14, and More, *Cabbala*, sigs. A7^{v}–A8. Cf. S.P., *Brief Account*, p. 11. Here as elsewhere one is reminded of Hooker. Yet his influence remains nominal, not actual. See Munz (above, p. 2, note 2).

[4] Whichcote, *seriatim: Sermons*, p. 75 (also in *Aphorisms*, § 220; but see esp. § 889 [below, p. 334]); *Discourses*, I, 54, and IV, 253 (also in *Sermons*, p. 298); *Sermons*, p. 58; and *Discourses*, III, 34.