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Liberty, Providence and Participation: Free Will and Moral Perfection in the Cambridge Platonists

Kenjiro Harata

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the Cambridge Platonists' idea of liberty as an underlying concept both in theory and practice, by paying attention to their mode of thinking aimed at reconciling the reason of religion with that of the world, or morals with institutions. Through this, I hope to show the moral significance as well as the moral force of the term "liberty" proposed from the theological intellectualist tradition in early modern English thought. This paper also addresses the question of divine providence and freewill in the light of "participation", another characteristic idea of the Cambridge school on human engagement with God. By focusing on the conception of the temporal sphere that implements this engagement, I shall emphasise the intimate connections between the speculative and the practical, and contemplation and action.

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In conclusion, the paper returns to the discussion on God the original and eternal *idea*, who effects the realisation of liberty and salvation through some cooperative works in history, where the appropriate moral preparation for an afterlife by temporal institution is necessitated.

I. Introduction

The subject of liberty plays an important part in the Cambridge Platonists' thought ranging

from philosophy, religion and ethics to practical fields, such as church and politics. The past scholarship on them has certainly addressed this question, particularly that of freewill by scholars such as John Rogers, Stephen Darwall and J. B. Schneewind.¹ Yet the social and political aspect permeating their intellectual life has been slightly overlooked, much less their belief in liberty, theological, moral as well as practical. As if to exemplify this, for all its potential practical influence in society, the Cambridge school itself remains almost unmentioned in the history of social and political thought.² Yet it was the Cambridge Platonists, rather, who aimed to make some difference to the actual world, English society, by reforming religion essentially as a tolerating spirit³ compatible with modest worldly action and, based on this, developing a firm political conviction.⁴

So in the following discussion, I will try to reconstruct the coherent thought-world of the Cambridge Platonists, basing it on the key conception of liberty. To do this really demands of us to reach the very thinking boundary between God and man, and I shall emphasise the Christian revealed theological thrust of their argument sometimes missed out in the previous literature. As will be shown below, commentators such as Mintz and Schneewind suggest that Cudworth's position on free will (amid the tension between determinism and contingency) was insufficient and unclear.⁵ Starting with this dilemma, I turn to explore the consistent as well as a truly religious idea of freedom, and resolve the dilemma with a more theological structure of Cudworth's thought.

While the philosophical and theological formulation of freewill was seriously contested at that time, the place of liberty in relation to church government and the Christian state was, for Anglicans like the Cambridge Platonists, a vital concern. It then must be asked how they, by opposing both the High-Church Arminian and Calvinist positions, sought another reformed Anglican *via media*, and looked to formulate a moderate and reasonable political perspective built on the "philosophy of liberty". The task of ensuring the appropriate spheres for both temporal institutions and otherworldly perspectives, and of reconciling liberty with salvation—to make it a "freedom to salvation"—should be the reforming principle through which the disorders of English faith and society had to be settled in the Anglican fold. It is of course rather misleading to call them ordinary Anglicans, for they all had a Calvinist upbringing and were often charged with (qualified, of course) sympathies for the Puritan regime during the Interregnum.⁶ But having formally conformed to the established church in 1662, they were to become a reforming force within the Restoration church with their distinctive understanding of church and politics. It is through their influence on the latitudinarians or liberal Anglicans, I suppose, that we can locate them at the transitional period of seventeenth-century English politics.⁷

II. The Defence of the Freedom of the Will

In what follows, I intend to explore the moral and practical implications of the freewill argument. But before turning to it, we should first consider the metaphysical foundations on

which the exercises of human will and intellect are based.

First, the Cambridge Platonists' creational and ontological scheme is set deeply within the Neo-platonic world of the "ideal good" penetrating God and man. The original creation by God's working of spirit or *logos* was understood as the "emanation" and efflux of this infinite good, God being so abundant and omnipotent that He cannot but diffuse his own goodness over his creatures.⁸ Thus, being in a sense bounded by his natural goodness, God is said to be good because he is naturally good, not because he commanded it⁹, for "God hath no law but the perfection of his own nature".¹⁰ Embodying both nature and good, God the essence of all beings gave nature an ambiguously twofold meaning: an "original nature" at the Creation and, after the "Fall" from this, a "new" or "regenerate nature" by supernatural revelation.

As Christ, the mediator between divine and human nature, is defined as the "communication of the good",¹¹ the good as the supreme "form" (*idea*) also has a transforming and "re-forming" power to reestablish an even reciprocal relationship between God and man. It means that human beings made in the image of God were created to reform their lapsable nature constantly, and ultimately to participate in the supreme goodness through an essential faith in Christ, who was sent by God to enable man to communicate with him. While the Cambridge Platonists strongly maintain the divine innateness or "deiform nature" vested in human souls at the Creation, Christ's supernatural works are also considered indispensable for a true perfection of goodness. Thus, human creatures must be essentially ambivalent beings, the "middle man" in the universe,¹² who, being moved by both the immanent and transcendent powers, dwells in the temporal world, but nevertheless is to attain to God, always taking into account the fundamental tension between fallible nature and modest perfection.

It is clear that the Cambridge Platonists thought of free will as a focal point for the accountability for the good, or moral action. It will also be true that free will is a precondition or playing rule for all equal human beings to achieve a truly religious morality founded on a participatory view of natural and supernatural goodness.

Ralph Cudworth wrote *A Treatise of Freewill*, the main theoretical framework on the subject in this paper, not chiefly as a revealed theological treatise, but rather as a philosophical or natural theological refutation of determinism.¹³ In this section, therefore, I shall focus on the natural faculties of reason and will, not faith or revelation. First, Cudworth tried to establish the reality of the will's freedom to choose and avoid things contingently, free from any natural necessity. He held that the voluntary power of the will or *liberum arbitrium* is something that we know to have by the "instinct of nature", and is the foundation of praise and blame, without which we cannot be truly accountable for our own action and its results.¹⁴ It is the basis not only to be free from passions and senses, but to be active to actualise objects and qualities, as the intellectual nature of man is, in essence, a "plastic" one. Through such innatist or intellectualist principle, Cudworth intended to ascertain the real difference between good and evil founded on "the nature of things", and also to reawa-

ken the true significance of moral sin that ultimately works under God's remedying power of justice and goodness.

In order to achieve these goals, how reason and will would collectively be directed toward an ideal good was, for Cudworth, a prime concern. First he criticises what he calls "vulgar psychology", a position that holds that the will, being blind, is prescribed for no object or end and thus only follows the independent dictate of the understanding.¹⁵ Arguing against this "rationalist" account which in effect separates intellect and will, Cudworth places relatively great emphasis on the power of the will which is free. Will, being the prime agency of substantialising the good, constitutes a vital self-determining power in our souls, by being guided by the firm foundation of reason. He calls this self-ruling principle (*sui potestas*) a "hegemonicon" in the Stoic term, and it is one and the same subsistent thing that both understands and wills, or understands willingly and wills understandingly.¹⁶ This entire governing principle, comprising multiple faculties and instruments in man and nature, is destined to achieve fallible but still self-improving perfection to become a truly self-reflective "moral being".

Maintaining the deep union of reason and will to defeat both intellectualist and voluntarist extremes, the Cambridge Platonists certainly regarded reason as a crucially important agency in the construction of reasonable souls. For instance, Benjamin Whichcote, probably the most rationalist theologian of the school, says: "Reason discovers what is natural and receives what is supernatural", and it is the "divine governor of man's life" and the "very voice of God".¹⁷ Being the firm arbiter to accommodate natural, moral and even divine knowledge, reason should be not merely a discursive, but a deliberative, reflective and practical force to serve the highest good.

However, Cudworth still admits great difficulty for both will and reason to have the real power to attain true morality. So in the rest of this section, we must ask how the will, still indifferent and not fixed in the good, could be determined and bounded by the supreme end perpetually through a proper exercise of intellect and will, by examining the Platonic epistemological rule found in Cudworth.

First, he gives reason and will an ontological status as a "perpetual quest and longing for the perfect *idea*", the archetype and form of all earthly things, following the Platonic "recollection" (*anamnesis*) of the ideal good.¹⁸ The purest exercise of reason in man, being redefined as "intellectual love" or *eros*, is by nature destined to seek incessantly after its lost archetype, almost as an inherent and natural inclination. That is, as I conceive, where will might be united with intellect justly by the comprehending power of God's love—ontologically *eros*, but now re-creatively *agape*—to empower and enforce them both.¹⁹

In another treatise on freewill of the school, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (1675), Peter Sterry envisaged, as it were, a "triad of reason, will and love", all being bounded by their inherent and supreme goodness.²⁰ In addition to intellect's union with love (like Cudworth's account above), he also places love as both the object and motive of

the will. Thus, will and love share a common purpose, which is the good, for whereas the will seeks for the good, the essence and intent of love (as *agape*) must be the goodness stemming from God's equal care for all creatures. In the Sterrian order of divine goodness and charity which directs will and intellect to the good, the highest state of human souls should be the "communion with God in love". This too, as Cudworth intimates, is a supreme condition of purest liberty and inevitable necessity, where men's will freely chooses the good but at the same time is fixed in and constrained by the greatest good.²¹

It also follows that the determination of reason and will must be constructed so as to be fit and congruous to each person's fallible nature and qualities, giving rise to an essential "personal identity" or self-consciousness on which the real ground of moral accountability is to be based.²² Cudworth indeed asserts that human freewill or *liberum arbitrium*, contrary to infallible, absolute and perfect freedom which is only of God, is an essential property of every "imperfect rational creature" like us.²³ Therefore, this unified intellectual, volitional and moral faculty must build on, firstly, the original natural creation and, subsequent to this, God's re-creative works of grace and redemption perfecting our imperfection.

It is at this point that we should advance the question of freewill in a broader perspective of revealed theology. This is because some scholars such as Samuel Mintz hold (of Cudworth) that the question of the will's indifference especially toward *supernatural* goodness remains unresolved. He argues that Cudworth, by avoiding both the pitfalls of determinism and indifference, was in a "serious dilemma" over the relation between free will and moral good.²⁴ Therefore, we must ask further how human beings, still lapsable and peccable, can truly be perfectible in this good eternally with our confidence and faith in God, a subject which Cudworth, it seems, did not fully treat in his *Freewill*.

III. The Perfection of Moral Freedom: The Ideal of Christian Liberty

The question of freewill was a hugely controversial issue in Christian theology from Origen and Augustine to the then contemporary Calvinists and Arminians, especially in relation to the omnipotent God who was not to be the author of evil and sin. Cudworth certainly recognised this problem, and after defending his intellectualist and innatist philosophy (against Stoic fatalism, atheistic atomism and the predestinarian position),²⁵ he, or the Cambridge Platonists as a whole, must have presented a certain "theodicean" answer. A "theodicy" for them was intended to secure both God's retributive justice and human accountability of moral sin, together with their proper places in the universe, and to make God act in his providential scheme in which man endowed with reason, will and faith would participate.²⁶ Refusing both divine absolutism and full human autonomy, they thought they could find in them a certain middle ground.

As indicated earlier, Cudworth thought that freewill, primarily as natural freedom from (causal) necessity, was just a precondition for a higher state of mind, which is spiritual freedom from sin attainable only after supernatural revelation. He does see that the victory

over “sin”—understood chiefly as internal hell and spiritual death—is to be pursued so as to accomplish this state of freedom, a condition where man is voluntarily fixed in the real power of divine faith for the vanquishing of sins.²⁷

Cudworth admits that the cause of moral evil is rooted in both reason and will, or rather in *hegemonicon* itself, and is responsible for an overall abuse and fault of one’s own personality.²⁸ This assertion proceeds to the point on which the power of divine grace and charity effects. Making explicit in *Freewill* the necessity of divine faith in order also to shake off his alleged Pelagian heresy, Cudworth resorts to God’s superintending power of the Gospel in restoring and transforming our fallible nature:

Our own endeavours and activity of freewill are insufficient without the addition and assistance of Divine grace, for it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do, ‘by grace ye are saved’, and by the grace of God, I am what I am.²⁹

The indispensable works of redemption and forgiveness have their foundation in God’s intention of wishing and caring only for his creatures’ goodness and the prospect that, through Christ’s mediation, humans would truly become activated for voluntary repentance. Whichcote repeatedly emphasises the importance of this momentous repentance in the guilt of conscience as an indication of man’s self-reflective and transformative faculty to react to his willful disobedience to God, “a lapse upon a lapse”, which is the “greatest misery of mankind”.³⁰

Of crucial importance in their theological scheme was how divine revelation or man’s faith in it relates to the original creation including the human faculties of reason and free-will. This is the major issue over which Whichcote and Cudworth were sometimes caught in a Calvinist-Arminian dispute, and in fact were associated with the latter by some contemporaries.³¹

While maintaining the reformed tradition as to “justification by faith” and the primacy of grace, Cudworth asserts that the grace of God also demands substantial practices grounded on divine faith and that the justification of God, accompanying not only “imputed” but “inherent righteousness”, necessitates real works of holiness and sanctification of man’s spirit. Justification is attained by faith alone, but faith without works is vain, according to Cudworth, who cites: “If a man say he hath Faith and have not Works, can such a Faith save him?” (James 2: 14).³² Aiming to overcome the antinomian error rooted in the Lutheran position (called *solafideism*) and utilising the often conflicting texts of Romans and James, Cudworth’s and Smith’s reconciliatory position would be that “faith and gospel perfect law and works, not abolish them”.³³ In Cudworth’s sermon warning against Puritan enthusiasts, this principle is expressed as the “law of Christ”, the rule of our divine life to imitate his spirit of perfect love, goodness and justice, or, in short, to “live in Christ”.³⁴ They of course stress that this “law” is not the old Jewish law of covenant, but the “new law” of the gospel and grace, which even excludes man’s “cooperation” with God in the

(semi-)Pelagian sense.³⁵ This would be vital in Cudworth finally saying:

The true liberty of a man is . . . when by the right use of the faculty of free will, together with the assistances of Divine grace, he is habitually fixed in moral good, or such a state of mind, as that he doth freely, readily, and easily comply with the law of the Divine life . . . ; or when the law of the spirit of life hath made him free from the law of sin, which is the death of the soul.³⁶

It becomes evident that to be fixed in moral good is achieved through incessant self-reform of reason and will, the edification of man's spirit and intellectual manner, and, hence, the true "habitualisation" of the good in his entire *hegemonicon*, all being guided by the ultimate divine goodness. This enables us to see the significant aspect of the Cambridge Platonists' participatory vision of God's providence or indeed "religious teleology". A slightly moderated teleology (of the good) for them principally means that fallible creatures aim for an ideal state of Christian liberty to be in God, where they are eternally placed under his supernatural care and the guidance of his goodness. Then we can fully understand Cudworth's assertion that the "power of contingent freewill is not independent upon God, but controllable by him".³⁷ As man's attainment to the highest presupposes a perpetual process of trial and error including the crucial evangelical path, humans are in effect invited to participate in the divine moral order not as independent, but fallible and communal beings, who are to prepare for God's rewards and punishments in the afterlife, always transforming themselves with God-given freedom.

We next consider what the general characteristics of this Christian morality are, in order also to clarify the natural-supernatural transition of the school's moral system. As Cudworth earlier intimated, any moral principle starts with a kind of "moral knowledge", an intrinsic union or mutual reflection between intellect and morality. Founded on an innate inclination and potential for the good—implanted as a *prolepsis* or "anticipation"—human souls as the vehicle of moral knowledge also need to be perfected by supernatural knowledge and truth. Based upon that structure, Cambridge Platonist morality, especially as represented in More's *Enchiridion Ethicum*, is sometimes branded as the "Christianised version of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*".³⁸

One of the most important virtues emphasised by the school is humility, a very Christian ethic, as Cudworth repeatedly calls for the virtues of self-denial, temperance and moderation in the minds of men.³⁹ Yet it should not be an exclusively Christian precept, for modesty and humility are also grounded as a natural disposition of every individual's moral attitude toward other beings (potentially including the highest). In Cambridge Platonist philosophy that stresses imperfect human nature,⁴⁰ the "sober" and "diligent use" of reason is required as an essential condition of human temper, and necessitates the exercise of virtuous prudence.⁴¹ As being vested in the constitution of human mind, the qualities of "in-

tegrity”, “ingenuity” and “alacrity” are also asserted.⁴²

The virtue of humility demands, particularly in Christianity, that we should take Christ as our perfect example or indeed archetype, with which our fallible nature is always contrasted. By continually improving ourselves and conquering self-interest and worldly vices, we could attain to higher moral virtues, such as charity and care for other beings including enemies, a truly equal relationship among creatures, and the demonstration of real justice in the world, all having been manifested in the life of Christ. From the fact that humility and moderation are a foundational attitude toward God and neighbours, we could also derive, in Smith’s view, a somewhat “heroic”, “bold” and “courageous” nature of that morality.⁴³ Since the life of Christian faith and practices should ultimately be an opportunity, chance or even “adventure” for each person to participate in God by submitting himself to often probable, not always certain or visible, things,⁴⁴ it needs such “courageous” act of determination and conviction of each.

It should also be pointed out that the real practice of Christian morality assumes multiple faculties in one’s soul, including not only reason, will and faith, but also sentiment and passion properly regulated. Given More’s *Enchiridion* that incorporates Descartes’ theory of passion, the highest apprehension of God is, as Smith puts it, that by “Spiritual Sensation” and “Intellectual touch of him”, rather than by dry reason or blind will.⁴⁵ Although being placed in a highly Platonic-intuitionist basis, what this unified moral faculty is destined to achieve is the true pleasure, happiness and enjoyment of God secured by the divine illuminated sense and the conduct of divine life.

The Cambridge Platonists were also concerned about actual ways of performing these moral virtues in a more practical and (supernaturally) regenerative structure, which I shall here briefly discuss.

As the exercise of morality belongs to the sphere of practical reason or prudence,⁴⁶ it starts firstly as right reason (*recta ratio*), the candle of the Lord or divine reason.⁴⁷ Assuming that divine virtue is both practical and spiritual, they will constitute a foundational principle uniting God and man or the perfect being and the fallible, which is “participation”. Reason of the Cambridge school becomes, according to Edmund Newey, “communicative” and “participative reason”,⁴⁸ essentially a divine gift that also demands human engagement in order to perfect him as a partaker of the divine nature.

Having said that, More in *Enchiridion*, even recognising the insufficiency of mere philosophical reason, proposes, above all else, the “Boniform Faculty” of the soul⁴⁹, which in his terms indicates the prime moral aptitude in man. Combining intellect, sensation, prudence, and practical and divine forces, the “boniform faculty” is a “Relish and intrinsic Feeling” of the soul within, attests the most simple and divine things and senses, and “affords the highest Pleasure, the chiefest Beauty and the utmost Perfection of the Soul”, from which “all the Shapes and Modes of Virtue and Well-doing” would arise.⁵⁰ It will aim to accommodate and aggregate man’s every essential knowledge and apprehension and, by unceasingly trying to be in conformity with divine wisdom, ascend to the supreme moral

state in God.

All these moral principles become possible only by the dynamics of the continuous transformation from the natural to the supernatural. First, human beings remaining in this world have faith and hope for the eternal life and the last things, being in need of saving knowledge to secure deliverance (from sin). But next to this, having such hope and other-worldly perspective, they are still temporal beings destined to act in the world to work for a proper engagement among themselves. Amid the continual tension between the beginning and the end, and history and eternity, the temporal world means to them a crucially important stage in their spiritual life as preparing a moral condition for the afterlife and bodily death. An essential “purification of the soul” through inner self-restraint and temperance (which recalls quite a Pythagorean-Platonic asceticism) preconditions the way of practical work, and, as Smith confirms, this even gives us an internal conviction and assurance of salvation and eternal life.⁵¹

It is through these perspectives that we could at last understand humans to be finally “reconciled to God” and “God to this world”. Whichcote asserts that the foundation of Heaven within us “lies in a refined Temper, in an internal Reconciliation to the Nature of God, and to the Rule of Righteousness”.⁵² Equally important is that, since moral perfection is still a limited endeavour, it is essential that men should pursue “humble familiarity with God” in Smith’s words.⁵³ This would suggest a new Christian perspective on human fallibility exemplified in Cambridge Platonist theology that reconciles the (sometimes pagan) mystical tradition with the orthodox Protestant position.

Of the qualities of God ruling his “moral government” or “oeconomy of the world”, charity is—apart from goodness or righteousness—clearly the most emphasised one. Comprehending *agape*, *eros*, *caritas* and *philia* (friendship) all, love is conceived almost as a unifying force in human faculty as well as in moral value, bringing together reason and will, knowledge and practice, and even this world and the next. As the primacy of love in Cambridge Platonist morality has been recognised by, for instance, Darwall and Schneewind,⁵⁴ divine love or charity is, according to More, the “highest participation of divinity”.⁵⁵ Smith also held in a similar way that “everything that partakes of him [God], partakes proportionably of his Love”.⁵⁶

But how, then, can man truly be practical, rather than merely speculative, by engaging with others in this world to take part cooperatively in the historical scheme of God’s plan characterisable as, in essence, free as well as providential?

IV. Liberty in Church and State: Politics as Participation and Communication

In this section I shall argue how the Cambridge Platonists’ underlying idea, a true liberty in man, rooted in an essentially personal ground, was conceived to be realisable in their still

vague conception of the temporal political sphere.

In the first place, the temporal world is now given particular importance, not least as constituting a middle place for the moral preparation in a most purified soul to secure “holy living” as well as “holy death”. In that sense, Whichcote defines it as the “state of trial” or “probation”⁵⁷ in which human beings as the “middle life” are to act on such expectations. It was also made clear that the natural as well as the supernatural goodness will be not just an intellectual, but a morally practical one, for both reason and will, or soul and faith, are effected by the same force, the sovereign good, the creator and mover of them all. By this movement, the development (or reinforcement) from inward to practical morality, or from “self-“ to “outward government” could be established, whose transformative power is certainly God. As the real practices are founded on a truly illuminated reason, Whichcote again views the temporal world as the sphere of “communication” and “participation” between God and man, and the chief means endowed here is reason, which is even exalted as the “co-worker with God”, the voice of God and God’s vice-gerent.⁵⁸

The question of the relationship between religion and politics, or faith and secular order was imperative for all the forces involved in the confessional politics of seventeenth-century England. In Cambridge Platonist thinking, that question could be redefined basically as one between the world and the divine, or fallibility and perfection, and the Cambridge philosophers sought to find in them a certain reconciliation and another moderate but firm foundation of God in the world in neither theocratic nor confessional mode.

Following the definition of the temporal sphere as providing moral as well as material goodness and well-being for all, the object of politics there would be, for the most part, the securing of liberty and the moderation of human spirit to represent the supreme divine goodness in this world (and potentially the next). Strongly objecting what he calls Hobbesian or Machiavellian “political religion” (artificially contrived for the interest of political rulers), Cudworth envisions, as an antidote to this, a true political sovereignty founded on natural justice and individual’s real conscience.⁵⁹ He argues that every polity has its foundation in natural, i.e., non-positive morality—not in positive morality enacted solely by the will and command of a sovereign—which is immutable and conformable to “the nature of things”.⁶⁰ That political sphere should be the reliable place where individuals can *fallibly* be engaged in the moral order of God’s temporarily dispensing justice, and be connected to the eternal world transcending the material. Therefore all humans, being made as “sociable creatures”, are commanded by God not only to communicate with, but also to produce real equality and justice among fellow creatures, who are charged with the same capability of reasonable souls as an equal “divine workmanship”.⁶¹

The key structure of that moral world is, for all the Cambridge Platonists, the law of nature stemming from the eternal law of God to be substantialised into positive laws by men.⁶² In this regard, they follow Aquinas’s definition of the law of nature as “*participatio Legis aeternae in Rationali creatura*” (participation of the eternal law in the rational creature), especially in the case of Culverwell’s account (in his *the Light of Nature*, 1652). And

the imperfection of reason to acknowledge the natural law must be rectified through this partaking in, and in conformity with, the divine eternal law.

From that conception of moral order, one might derive the idea of the “great chain of being”—certainly observable in More and John Norris, as Lovejoy argues⁶³—a view which recalls a hierarchy of creatures from the supernatural (divine), the natural (human) to the material (animal) in the orderly universe. But the “chain of being” should not necessarily be a fixed one, and it teaches every human being, essentially equal but constantly different in their consciences and rational abilities, a true perception of fallibility and humility conformable to their own nature. Human beings, each placed on the proper place in the middle world, will be thus participating differently but cooperatively toward a same end, the highest God. This should be led to the perfection of divine providence translatable as “participation” and “communication” not only between God and man, but among (variously) fallible creatures.

It is on this modest condition for both men and God that the Cambridge Platonists disagree with the voluntaristic political conception underlying Hobbes and the Calvinists, and envision, so to say, the intelligible and reasonable political sphere. The rational socio-political order founded on “eternal and immutable morality” distinct from positive morality was created, in essence, to enable humans to know the real difference between good and evil including the accountability to them, and to practise it themselves as a rational creature by the constant self-reform of reason and spirit tied to an inherent goodness.

The role and office of civil and ecclesiastical polities are thus defined to reflect this divine order of goodness, justice and charity, and this is the place where cooperation and communication between the governor and the governed are also to be pursued. The Cambridge Platonists admit wide latitude in human arrangements and institutional means for such goals, arguing that God or Christ never commanded or prescribed any particular form of government—the divine right claims of church and state are thus rejected—and that it is dependent on different conditions for different places and times.⁶⁴ Why men still need temporal institutions was because, since no man can fully know the ultimate truth of God until the last judgement, he ought inevitably to experience a non-linear way of trial and error in the fallible world that also embraces certain visible and collective entities leading people to the afterlife. In this respect, Cudworth rejects both a theocratic absolutist God and the full autonomy of human politics.⁶⁵

In the political realm, the magistrates as well as the people are charged with the essential cooperative faculty of reason, such an important measure in government as well as in moral prudence with which God endowed all human beings.⁶⁶ Strongly disposed to represent God’s nature in this world with divine assistance, the two institutions of God on earth, church and state, are ultimately united to constitute Christian polity. The ideal perfection of a Christian commonwealth means, to More and Cudworth, a situation where the governor and the governed are genuinely intertwined by a common bond called political “probity”⁶⁷ to achieve temporal goals, such as the security of liberty (to salvation) and the

advancement of the public good. Cudworth argues that the magistrate, as a soul of law embodying the spirit of laws, has an obligation to perform his duties according to the law of reason, and that the people are obliged to support these lawful commandments from a free conscience and to participate in public responsibility to implement temporal peace and good order.⁶⁸ He argues that

Conscience, and religious obligation to duty, is the only basis, and essential foundation, of a polity or commonwealth: without which there could be no right or authority of commanding in any sovereign, nor validity in any laws.⁶⁹

Hoping to overcome the confessional state of English faith and order, he just provided a legitimate ground on which the people can genuinely sustain government law for the sake of their conscience—not from fear of a Leviathan state, but from true fear of God and his justice in the afterlife—as well as limits on kings that they cannot transgress their rightful office as a “Christian prince” (by being regulated by their fellow counsels). And the moral limits on politics were purely transcendent, non-positive and non-institutional, and are yet founded on the faculties of individuals. That is what Cudworth demanded for a true union of government power and religious conscience, and a firm foundation of political sovereignty in the principles of natural morality, being also intended to build a most powerful Christian nation in England.⁷⁰

Of the two divine institutions, church was given a crucial role to provide moral and spiritual, rather than material, goods and arrangements for salvation. Yet church, basically the Anglican ministry in the English constitution, had to be, in Cambridge Platonist thinking, intrinsically a human organisation, especially with regard to its form, ceremonies and disciplines. This is where their specialty as Anglican theologians lies. Whichcote states that “of two things in religion, morals and institutions, morals (which may be known by the Reason of the Things) are nineteen parts in twenty of all religion, while institutions depend upon one Text of Scripture only”.⁷¹ Given this assertion, church was clearly conceived as a “superaddition” to God’s original creation, namely Christ’s chief instrument of mediation to restore man’s corrupt nature.

While the chief and sole ordinance from God was the establishment of a church as Christ’s institution—which must be true, “one, holy, apostolic and Catholic church”⁷²—the Cambridge Platonists also recognised that in the course of human history church organisation unavoidably entails human artifice and designs, in much the same way as the state. More than recognised the current split in the whole Christendom over the difference in government and doctrines certainly between Catholics and Protestants⁷³ as an inevitable consequence of human invention (professed to be) grounded on a convinced faith. In countering this, the Cambridge Platonists reinvented a new liberal thinking in Anglican church theory, arguing that the church government (of form and disciplines) is not to be justified by divine right, but rather belongs to *adiaphora* or “things indifferent” and accessory to salva-

tion, and that it could be bounded by a minimal creed such as faith in Christ as our saviour and redeemer.

Admittedly, the institutional viewpoint is fairly weak in Cambridge Platonist thought compared with other contemporaries. They only emphasised non-institutional unity in spirit and morality, as Whichcote remarks that he “belongs to no denomination . . . other than a Christian”.⁷⁴ This kind of attitude made some critics view them as undermining the church or simply “men of latitude”. Yet in fact, the Cambridge Platonists greatly valued the church, exactly as an instrument for the comprehension and inclusion of maximum (Protestant) believers, whose role was to secure the freedom to engage with their diverse spiritual concerns and assure plural ways to salvation. Emphasising the need to prefer unity in essentials over the difference in non-essentials and to accept the mutual attitude to “agree to differ”, Whichcote still finds an essential Christian unity in church as a temporal *modus vivendi*. “Unity in diversity” in church and state was most valued as a collective umbrella under God’s eternal ideal inviting us to the afterworld, in which case the Christian polity must be plural and comprehensive. Concerning the non-institutional spirit uniting Christian believers, Whichcote puts it as follows:

Our Fallibility and the Shortness of our Knowledge should make us peaceable and gentle: because I may be Mistaken, I Must not be dogmatical and confident, peremptory and imperious. I will not break the certain Laws of Charity, for a doubtful Doctrine or of uncertain Truth.⁷⁵

He that never changed any of his opinions, never corrected any of his Mistakes: and He, who was never wise enough, to find out any Mistakes in Himself; will not be charitable enough, to excuse what he reckons mistakes in Others.⁷⁶

It is clear that Whichcote places the spirit of charity or mutual toleration even as a precondition of man’s mind. Having this awareness, man can reexamine his faith unceasingly by taking into account other positions, and collectively build a polity that will accommodate diverse personalities and qualities.

The most important value in the Cambridge Platonists’ Christian politics was undoubtedly freedom of conscience. Not to mention Whichcote, More asserts that the freedom of conscience or liberty of religion is the “common and natural right of all nations and persons” universally acknowledged and must be defended more than anything else as the core value of state government advancing the general interest of the Christian world.⁷⁷ Assuming that all those who believe in God and his dispensing justice should (basically) be given full toleration, he even asserts that “they have the right to examine their religion, to hear the religion of strangers, and to change their own, if they be convinced”—so long as it brings no disobedience to moral law and lawful magistrates.⁷⁸

But how, then, is freedom of conscience given its proper theological foundation, and what does More take to be a true religious liberty? First, conscience does not consist only in

an individual's private or personal mind, but could only be established when, by divine assistance, one's soul is fully compliant with the divine will and is firmly instituted as God's dictate, the voice of God in one's heart.⁷⁹ Yet conscience still has its foundation in reason and nature, not solely in divine revelation—the point on which the Cambridge Platonists oppose enthusiasts such as the Quakers—and demands the constant self-improvement of one's own moral faculties, through which the appropriate self-regulation for the external use of conscience (toward others and in society) might be established.

The free exercise of one's conscience within due limits will, thus, be aiming to participate differently in the public good to keep social order and the peace of the church not as private, but as common conscience and reason. This requires everyone to renounce selfish interests and private mind and, as More says, to be more careful about the public and eternal concerns (that is, salvation)⁸⁰ out of a spirit of fallibility, moderation and charity. Perhaps necessarily related to this is Whichcote's word that the supreme operation of the common "public good" is actually Christ.⁸¹

Discussing the way of institution and temporal order, however, we should still return to the consideration on the divine and the spirit, since we are in the midst of a permanently continuing tension between this world and beyond. In the concluding section of the book on Christian practical morality, More tells us of the "Eternal Good" and "supreme virtue" which ultimately surpass earthly things.⁸² The highest virtue in man stands, in his view, for the soul's contemplation and communion with God in love and, hence, the acquiring of divine blessings leading to manifest the "glory of the Church of Christ". He exalts the potential force of the "blessed immortal Souls" being "fully absorbed with God" even as the following: It is

where Love and Friendship are always Young, still Unblemished, and evermore Sincere. Here Holy Angels, and all those Resplendent Beings, which are above, do not onely behold the Beauties of each other, but Communicate, and even Discourse, by some unspeakable Way: But this is sure, that Truth shines out in its most Purity, and Virtue is bright and manifest in all they say. Besides, here are no Vicissitudes, all is Peace, all Security, and all things are Stationary and fixed.⁸³

Liberty, primarily of spirit and souls, was required, especially for mystical-tempered More and Smith, as an indispensable condition to achieve these spiritual ends, and it was, needless to say, the freedom "toward" and "to be in God". Therefore, liberty must be essentially personal or non-political in its basis, participating and moving in the eternal time which is only of God, to providentially perfect the divine freedom as an imitator of him.⁸⁴

V. Conclusion

I have attempted to show the possible correlation of liberty ranging from philosophical and

religious to practical fields by regarding it primarily as a faculty, capability and force to an end. Based on this conception, I have also shown how, in the Cambridge Platonists' vision of Christian government, liberty and providence should inextricably be intertwined. The exercise of freewill is the focal point of that transformative achievement and eventually the hope to be built on human commitments to take part in the historical perfection of God and himself. It was these conditions that the Cambridge Platonists aimed to elaborate a communicative and participatory view of the temporal world that implements "unity in diversity" in Christian polity, in order that different human beings could cooperatively be united toward a shared goal.

In reconstructing the purely theoretical, rather than contextual, coherence of the thought-world, I have emphasised the sometimes neglected revealed theological aspect of their thought also to try to penetrate to the core of the internal basis for any outward or institutional design of liberty in politics. In the current scholarship on early modern English thought, this understanding of liberty, intellectual as well as practical, could be one of the key notions in uncovering not only the continuity, but also the change and tension in any particular philosopher's (or school's) thought and influences. The question of freewill and its morality, the main argument in this paper, has become even more contentious in modern thought, particularly after the seventeenth century, which saw the decrease of realist and innatist assumptions, the occasional rise of determinism, and secularised concepts of reason and nature. Yet in the age that has also seen the prominence of social and political, i.e., external liberty, and when a moral aspect or personal foundation of it has been rather discarded, what I considered here, including the connections between the speculative and the practical, and worldly and otherworldly things, could have some weight.

Even if the "political philosophy" of the Cambridge Platonists might seem heavily idealistic compared with, say, Hobbes or Locke, it was something of which they were always conscious. Social and political thought was not an accidental outcome of their ethical and religious thought, but what motivated this most, and it was, after all, an application of beliefs to life (in the principles of liberty, reason and participation).⁸⁵ By examining that subtle and ambiguous thinking that in a way stands between religiosity and secularity, we can measure its unique place in seventeenth-century English thought and, possibly, reverse the secular picture of modern political thought that caused the very neglect of the Cambridge Platonists.⁸⁶

Notes

¹ G. A. J. Rogers, "More, Locke and the issue of liberty", in Sarah Hutton(ed.), *Henry More (1614-1687): Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), pp. 189-99; Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal "Ought", 1640-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 5, esp. pp. 130-47; J. B. Schneewind. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of*

Modern Moral Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ch. 10, esp. pp. 210-4.

² For instance, one of the most acknowledged textbooks in early modern political thought, *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700* mentions only the name of Cudworth once (J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 593).

³ Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. by Samuel Salter (London, 1753), no. 712.

⁴ Whichcote and Cudworth had actually been influential figures in the Cromwellian government, advising on university appointments and sitting in the Whitehall committee on the return of the Jews. For their political involvement, see G. A. J. Rogers, "The Other-Worldly Philosophers and the Real World: Platonists, Theology and Politics", in Rogers, J. M. Vienne & Y. C. Zarka (eds.), *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics, and Religion* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997), pp. 3-15.

I have to indicate here that the term "Cambridge Platonists" was initially the product of nineteenth-century scholarship referring to a group of like-minded thinkers at Cambridge including Whichcote, Cudworth, More, Smith and other minor figures like Nathaniel Culverwell and Peter Sterry—while S. T. Coleridge suggested renaming it the Cambridge "Plotinists" (C. A. Patrides (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 3). But I use it as a popular usage now. For a further complication in terminology, see Patrides' introduction and also the recent anthology, Charles Taliadro & Alison J. Tepley (eds.), *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004).

⁵ Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 130; Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 213-4.

⁶ There was a persistent suspicion about the members' true Anglicanism among Royalist and High-Church Anglicans throughout the Restoration period because of their rationalist theology and involvement in the Cromwellian regime. Whichcote and Cudworth barely welcomed the return of the king and episcopacy, and More published *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660) defending his Anglican orthodoxy, and *The Apology* (1664) for it in reply to Joseph Beaumont's criticism.

⁷ For the relationship between the Cambridge Platonists and latitudinarianism, see Martin I. J. Griffin, Jr., *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992); W. M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1993).

⁸ This theory of "*bonum diffusivum sui*" or God's self-communication of the good also indicates the Platonic feature in Aquinas. See Arthur Little, S., *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1951).

⁹ Ralph Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, March 31, 1647* (London, 1647), p. 102.

¹⁰ Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality With A Treatise of Freewill*, ed. by Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 166.

¹¹ Whichcote emphasises the mediation of God as the working of "communication" (Benjamin Whichcote, *The Works*, Aberdeen, 1751, vol. II, p. 23, vol. III, pp. 189-91).

¹² Paul Elmer More & F. L. Cross, *Anglicanism* (London: SPCK, 1935), p. 641ff.

¹³ *Freewill* was first published posthumously in 1838 with notes by John Allen from the manuscripts in the British Library. There are several other writings on moral philosophy and theology by Cudworth: *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (1731), essentially a meta-

physics of moral knowledge, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), his multi-subject *magnum opus*, and unpublished manuscripts on “Liberty and Necessity”, the first two of which I shall occasionally quote. But I shall mainly focus on *Freewill* and *Sermons* (1647 & 1664), as well as More’s *Enchiridion Ethicum* (1667) and Smith’s *Select Discourses* (1660), all of which are about practical ethics. More and Cudworth, longtime friends, had a “quarrel” in the mid-1660s when both had the same plan of publishing an ethical manual in plain English. But because of this dispute, More instead published *Enchiridion* in Latin, and Cudworth never published.

¹⁴ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 155-7.

¹⁵ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 167-8. See also Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, p. 128.

¹⁶ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, p. 171, 175-6, 178-9. He ascribes this notion of *hegemonicon* or reasonable souls to Origen, who was also influenced by Stoicism. The influence of Origenist Christian philosophy on the Cambridge theologians is significant, ranging from the emanation theory, salvation and freewill theology to the preexistence of the soul proposed in Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, 1659.

¹⁷ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 76, 99.

¹⁸ See, for example, Dominic Scott, “Reason, Recollection and the Cambridge Platonists”, in Anna Baldwin & Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Platonism and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 139-50.

¹⁹ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 173-5. Cudworth’s theory generally resembles Locke’s argument in “Of Power” in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that what determines the will is some “pressing uneasiness” for, or the want of, “the greater good” or “absent good” in the minds of men (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by P. H. Niddich, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 180, 249ff).

²⁰ Peter Sterry, *A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will* (London, 1675), pp. 136-8

²¹ Cudworth, *Sermon in 1647*, p. 76. Smith also states that man “finds himself most free”, “when he is under the most powerful constraints of divine Love” (John Smith, *Select Discourses*, London, 1660, p. 395).

²² Darwall regards Cudworth as a principal figure in the “accountability strand” of autonomist internalism in modern ethical theory (Darwall, *The British Moralists*, p. 147).

²³ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, p. 196.

²⁴ Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, p. 130. Schneewind too suggests the similar insufficiency of Cudworth’s account (Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, p. 214).

²⁵ He thought that this position would end up “attributing everything to God and nothing to man” and leave creatures wholly dependent upon arbitrary will and divine fate.

²⁶ Discussing liberty, providence, fallibility and theonomy, this paper as a whole intends to address the question of “theodicy” in Cambridge Platonism.

²⁷ Ralph Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable Society of Lincolns-Inne* (London, 1664), pp. 22-7; Cudworth, *Sermon in 1647*, p. 74-7.

²⁸ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 181-2.

²⁹ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, p. 208.

³⁰ Whichcote remarks that “the ground of man’s Misery is not the *first* Fall, but the second fault; a lapse upon a lapse: for a second Sin, is not only *Another* of the same kind; but a Consummation of the first” (*Aphorisms*, no. 525). The undermining of the high Calvinistic depravity theory characteristic of Cambridge Platonism is analogous to Origen’s early view of the Fall and original sin. See Norman Powell Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Longmans Green, 1927).

³¹ In a most notable event, Puritan divine Anthony Tuckney complains of Whichcote being too

much of “moral divinitie” in his frequent use of the scholastic term such as *recta ratio*, and suspects the opponent’s Socinian and Arminian deviance. See their exchanges in Benjamin Whichcote, *Eight Letters of Dr. Anthony Tuckney and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote* (London, 1753).

³² Cudworth, *Sermon to Lincolns-Inne*, p. 22. See also Whichcote, *Works*, vol. I, p. 363.

³³ See Smith, *Select Discourses* (London, 1660), pp. 382-4.

³⁴ Cudworth, *Sermon in 1647*, pp. 7-8, 15, 18, 42, 47.

³⁵ See John Smith, “Of the Difference between the Legal and the Evangelical Righteousness, the Old and the New Covenant” in his *Discourses*, pp. 285-346.

³⁶ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 196-7.

³⁷ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, p. 205.

³⁸ See Jill Kraye, “Conceptions of Moral Philosophy”, in Daniel Garber & Michael Ayers (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1306.

³⁹ Cudworth, *Sermon in 1647*, p. 10, 59, 60; Henry More, *An Account of Virtue, or, Dr. Henry More's Abridgment of Morals, Put into English* (London, 1690), Bk 2.

⁴⁰ For the characterisation of it as “rational sceptical theology”, see Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England*, pp. 21-2.

⁴¹ More, *Morals*, pp. 98-103.

⁴² A notion of “ingenuity” is important in Whichcote as well as in entire seventeenth-century English thought, as suggesting the new “modern” talent of scientific insight exemplified by Bacon, Wilkins and Newton. See Robert A. Greene, “Whichcote, Wilkins, “Ingenuity”, and the Reasonableness of Christianity”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42-2 (1981), pp. 227-52.

⁴³ Smith, *Discourses*, p. 424, 428.

⁴⁴ Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, pp. 181-2.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Discourses*, p. 2, 3.

⁴⁶ More, *Morals*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ For the revival of the concept *recta ratio* in England by the Cambridge Platonists, see Robert Hoopes, *Right Reason in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 174-85. For another related idea of conscience or “synderesis”, see Robert A. Greene, “Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52-4 (1991), pp. 617-44.

⁴⁸ Edmund Newey, “The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor”, *Modern Theology*, 18-1 (2002), p. 21. The fundamental “reciprocity” between God and man could be established by Whichcote’s word “*Res illuminata, illuminans*”, meaning that the “candle of the Lord” is “lightened by God, and lighting us to God” (Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 916).

⁴⁹ More, *Morals*, pp. 16-7, 156-7.

⁵⁰ More, *Morals*, p. 106, 157.

⁵¹ Smith, *Discourses*, pp. 427-8, 442-3.

⁵² Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 100.

⁵³ Smith, *Discourses*, p. 424.

⁵⁴ Darwall, *The British Moralists*, pp. 128-30; Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, p. 201, 205.

⁵⁵ Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660), p. 372.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Discourses*, p. 326.

⁵⁷ Whichcote, *Works*, vol. I, p. 182, 289, 323, 341.

⁵⁸ Whichcote, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 219-20, vol. IV, p. 68, 115-6, 399; Cudworth, *Freewill*, ed. Hutton, p. 184. For Smith’s description of reason as the “vinculum of God and man”, see his

Discourses, p. 389.

⁵⁹ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, tr. by J. Harrison (London, 1845), vol. II, pp. 635-640, vol. III, pp. 495-514. In Cragg's anthology, the subject of politics is dealt with under the very title of "political sovereignty" containing Cudworth's extract "Civil Authority and Religious Belief". See Gerald R. Cragg (ed.), *The Cambridge Platonists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 347-65.

⁶⁰ Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London, 1731), pp. 525-36.

⁶¹ Whichcote, *Works*, IV, pp. 74-5; J. D. Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in Seventeenth Century England* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 109-12.

⁶² Smith, *Discourses*, p. 154ff.

⁶³ A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 200-2, 246, 294-7.

⁶⁴ For criticisms on the divine right argument, see for example More, *Mystery of Godliness*, pp. xvii-xx; Whichcote, *Works*, vol. IV, p. 183.

⁶⁵ The political viewpoint of the Cambridge Platonists is closely related to their intended innovation in eschatology and apocalyptic interpretation. See for example Philip C. Almond, "Henry More and the Apocalypse", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54:2 (1993), pp. 189-200.

⁶⁶ Whichcote, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 219-20, vol. IV, 115-6.

⁶⁷ More, *Morals*, pp. 123-4.

⁶⁸ Cudworth, *System*, vol. III, p. 514; More, *Morals*, p. 124.

⁶⁹ Cudworth, *System*, vol. II, p. 636.

⁷⁰ A classic but important work that put emphasis on the political aspect of Cudworth's philosophy is J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). According to him, the essential idea of the good life has its characteristics in (1) freedom, (2) rationality, (3) impartiality or disinterestedness, and (4) orderliness and beauty. These principles could fairly be applied to his social and public philosophy concerning law and polity, thus enabling his ethics to be fully humanistic and active in politics "without ceasing to be Christian" (chapter VI, esp. pp. 72-3, 79).

⁷¹ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 586.

⁷² See Henry More, *Divine Dialogues, Containing sundry Disquisitions and Instructions Concerning the Attributes of God and His Providence in the World* (London, 1668), vol. II, p. 493; Henry More, *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity* (London, 1664), the first part, pp. 162-4.

⁷³ More, *Mystery of Godliness*, pp. 492-6.

⁷⁴ Whichcote, *Eight Letters*, p. 53; Roberts, *From Puritanism*, p. 195. They were still vague even about the real construction of a comprehensive church. But Whichcote proposes several requirements for the "mind" of the Protestant "reformed church" in England: It is (1) rational religion, (2) goes to God by the mediation of Christ, acknowledging the Trinity (3) under the grace of God, and, most importantly, (4) admits a "very great latitude and liberty" left to us in matters indifferent, by preserving charity among people under temporal authority (Whichcote, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 324-6).

⁷⁵ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 130.

⁷⁶ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, no. 53.

⁷⁷ More, *Mystery of Godliness*, pp. xxvii-xxviii. 521.

⁷⁸ More, *Mystery of Godliness*, p. 521.

⁷⁹ Smith, *Discourses*, pp. 435-8. More, *Morals*, pp. 14-7.

⁸⁰ More, *Mystery of Godliness*, p. 92, 97-8.

⁸¹ Whichcote, *Works*, vol. II, p. 300. More likewise says that Christ is “a public gift of God to the world” (*Mystery of Godliness*, p. 322).

⁸² More, *Morals*, pp. 255-68.

⁸³ More, *Morals*, pp. 265-6.

⁸⁴ This is not meant to say that More and Smith were simply mystics or unworldly, although they are commonly understood to represent the mystical or theosophic side of Cambridge Platonism.

⁸⁵ See Passmore’s argument in *Ralph Cudworth*, pp. 68-78.

⁸⁶ Regarding the linkage between religious and political ideas, the recent work by Ben Carter emphasises the importance of Cudworth’s Trinitarian theology (*The Little Commonwealth of Man’: The Trinitarian Origins of the Ethical and Political Philosophy of Ralph Cudworth*, Leuven: Peeters, 2010, forthcoming). But unfortunately, it was not available at the time of my writing. Similar arguments by Leslie Armour about the theological implications of the ideas of unity and pluralism in Cudworth’s social thought benefitted me (“Trinity, Community and Love: Cudworth’s Platonism and the Idea of God”, in Douglas Hedley & Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, pp. 113-29).