"The Legacy of a 'Living Library': On the Reception of John Smith"
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John Smith (1618-1652) has never escaped the attention of scholars in fields as diverse as the history of philosophy, religious studies, theology, literature, history of science and mathematics. Smith's name appears, as often as not in a footnote crediting him with inspiring some other better-known figure, in a broad scholarly literature and it has for several centuries. Early Continental accounts of the Platonists of Cambridge often do not include Smith. This is most likely because, unlike others in this group, only his discourse on prophecy was translated into Latin and it is among his less philosophical work. Nevertheless, Smith was one of the first members of the group we know as the Cambridge Platonists. He was therefore able to influence not only his contemporaries like Cudworth and More but all those who followed him well into the twentieth century and beyond. This chapter offers a broad, but highly selective, overview of the reception and influence of Smith's life and work. It is intended, however, as a call for future research more than as an authoritative presentation of Smith's legacy. For, if the Cambridge Platonists have been underappreciated, none have been unjustly ignored as consistently as Smith.

Smith the Cambridge Platonist

While often underappreciated for his philosophical acumen, Smith is rightly understood as a Christian Platonist. His "Platonism" lies above all in his self-conscious identification with, and advocacy for, the Platonic tradition as developed in late antiquity and revived in the Renaissance in service of Christian piety. Smith does not embrace every doctrine associated with Plato. For example, he nowhere subscribes to Platonic reminiscence (*anamnesis*) nor the pre-existence of the soul. Moreover, Smith's sources and arguments are not always drawn from the Platonic tradition strictly considered. Like Plotinus, he makes regular use of many Stoic texts and concepts. Nonetheless, Smith consistently agrees with ancient Platonic authorities, especially Plotinus, Plutarch, Porphyry, Proclus, and Simplicius against Stoic, Aristotelean, and Epicurean authors. For example, Smith's arguments for the immortality of the soul are drawn above all from Plotinus' *Ennead* IV.7 (Smith 1660, 59-120).

In addition to his textual connections to the Platonic tradition Smith argues for a holistic and systematically presented philosophical theology that is consistent with what Gerson calls "Ur-Platonism" consisting of the conjunction of anti-materialism, anti-mechanism, anti-nominalism, anti-relativism, and anti-skepticism (Gerson 2013, 9-19). For example, Smith makes anti-materialist (68-84) and anti-mechanist (85-92) arguments for the immortality of the soul. His opposition to nominalism is nearly

everywhere on display (e.g., 8, 20, 62, 147-151, 381, 446, 464, etc.). And Smith's anti-relativism and anti-skepticism are central to the opening "Discourse of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge" (1-21). Conceptually then, as well as textually, Smith's thought is a form of Platonism.

Smith the Platonist is also a "Cambridge Platonist" despite the anachronism involved in applying this nineteenth-century label. Already by 1659, John Worthington thought of the work of Henry More as continuing and expanding on that begun by Smith on the question of the immortality of the soul (Worthington 1660, xxii). Worthington also acknowledges the assistance of Cudworth in bringing the prophecy discourse to publication (ibid.). The evidence is not definitive, but it is suggestive of a consciousness of Smith and his colleagues in Cambridge as a movement. That Cudworth, More, and Smith disagree on many particulars does nothing to lessen this status nor their Platonism for, as Gerson has emphasized, Platonists may "agree on first principles but disagree on what follows from these" (2013, 10).

Immediate Reception

Smith is rightly associated with his tutor Benjamin Whichcote. In fact, it has been said that Smith "lived upon Dr. Whichcote" (Salter 1753, xviii). In addition to being his academic mentor, Smith seems to have received financial support from Whichcote as well. Less well appreciated is the likely role that Smith played in recording the work of his mentor. If Samuel Salter's reports can be trusted, Smith took down many of

Whichcote's sermons, thus preserving his work for eventual publication (Salter 1753, xvii-xviii). John Worthington and Simon Patrick too suggest that among Smith's duties as a sizar to record his tutor's sermons. The degree of collegial cooperation, if any, between them must remain a matter of (irresistible) speculation for lack of clear records. But it may be that their relationship was collaborative in the way that professors and advanced graduate students often are in our time.

Smith was almost certainly influenced by, and an influence upon, the more prominent Cambridge Platonists, Cudworth and More (Mijuskovic 1974, 23-6, 35, 63-70). Alan Gabbey has suggested that it may have been Smith, rather than Cudworth or More, who first took up the attack upon "mechanical religion" (2008, 121, 127n50). Smith's importance for these others is less a matter of shared doctrines than a general approach to philosophy and theology. Moreover, unlike Whichcote, it is with Smith, More, and Cudworth that explicit references to Plotinus become ubiquitous in mid-seventeenth century Cambridge. This suggests at least a mutual affinity for the great Neoplatonist if not also a causal influence between them (Patrides 1969, 17-8; Teply 2004, 18-21, 36-52).

Upon his death in 1652 Smith's impressive collection of books, primarily from continental authors and presses, were left to the Library of Queens' College. The only record of the collection as it existed in Smith's lifetime is a manuscript list of the volumes accepted by the College which also lays out the nature of the bequest (Queens'

MS 47). This list is of central importance for understanding Smith's intellectual world but it does not, unfortunately, record the complete contents of his library. Only those volumes that the librarian at Queens' thought worth adding to the College collection are now known (Saveson 1955).

Smith's known collection is remarkably broad in the range of interests it reveals in its collector; history, geography, languages, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and science all mingle together in the sort of eclectic mélange one would expect from a late Renaissance scholar. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes are well represented in his collection as are standard accounts of world history and geography. Rabbinic literature in Latin translation and the original Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as other Near Eastern languages, are also noteworthy both in quality and quantity. These Smith put to good use in his *Discourses* generally but particularly his work on prophecy.

Suspicious in their absence are editions of the works of many of the great Platonists Smith clearly knew well. Of the antique Platonists Smith's collection is only known to have included Plato's *Timaeus*, Proclus's *Platonic Theology*, Porphyry's works against killing and eating animals (*De abstinentia ab esu animalium* and *De non necandis ad epulandum animantibus*), and Iamblichus's *Vita Pythagorae* and *Exhortation to the Study of Philosophy* (*Protrepticae Orationes ad Philosophiam*).

Smith's bequest is still remembered among the very most important of the early contributions to the academic life of the College and it marked a vast improvement in

the Library's holdings at the time. No doubt this gift was a poor substitute for the loss of one Simon Patrick called a "living library" (1660, 506-7). But, Smith's donations have been an abiding consolation in the years since and a significant contribution to the scholarly life of the College (Eggington 2012; 2013).

The Cambridge Platonists have long been closely associated with the so-called "Latitudinarians." Indeed, figures such as Whichcote and John Wilkins often overlap the standard lists of both groups. The latitudinarians were members of the Church of England who nonetheless viewed specific doctrines (especially Calvinist predestination), liturgical practices, and polities as of minor importance compared to what C. S. Lewis called "mere Christianity" (Lewis 1952). Smith's relation to the wider "sect of latitude men" who are not also Cambridge Platonists is nowhere more clearly seen than in the case of his eloquent eulogizer, and first observer of the movement, Simon Patrick (1660, 481-526; P[atrick] 1662).

Patrick, who eventually went on to become bishop of Ely among other high offices in the Church of England, began his studies at Queens' within weeks of Smith's appointment as a Fellow there in 1644. While Smith was not Patrick's tutor, the two studied together during the latter's student days and they remained close when Patrick joined Smith as a Fellow. In his *Autobiography,* Patrick speaks with obvious affection for Smith. In particular, Patrick credits Smith with helping him to remove doubts about predestination and the use of reason in theology that never again troubled him (Patrick

1858, 419). It may safely be assumed that this theological mentorship played a significant role in establishing Patrick on the trajectory toward his long career as a cleric in the Church of England.

In Smith, Patrick found a role model for the central place of morality in religious piety over ritual or doctrine that came to guide the latitudinarians. Comparing his departed mentor to Socrates, Patrick remarks "that he could say nothing about the Gods and such like . . . but . . . he was continually busied and imployed; instructing of their Youth, amending of their Manners and making them truly virtuous . . . Such an one was the party deceased" (Patrick 1660, 491-2). And "he was always very urgent upon us that by the Grace of God . . . we would endeavor to purge out the corruption of our Natures and . . . to labor after Purity of heart, that so we might see God" (510). Likewise, from Smith, Patrick learned to trust in human reason as a guide in all things religious. "If he was not a Prophet like Elijah, yet I am sure he was . . . an Interpreter of the Spirit" (484). Thus, it can scarcely be imagined that Smith's rational religion, containing as it did a latitudinarian's appreciation for essentials and tolerance of things "indifferent," did not have a major impact on Patrick. While he is but a single well-known latitudinarian, Smith's impact on this significant member of a major movement in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Anglicanism is certain and worthy of additional specialized research.

Mention should also be made of Smith's early theological influence in Scotland. For example, among his early admirers there was the pietist Henry Scougal, whose *Life of God in the Soul of Man* shows the influence of Smith (Rivers 1991, 244). Moreover, Smith's discourse on "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion" was published in Glasgow in 1745. David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, put forward an abridged edition of Smith's *Select Discourses* in 1756.

One of the less well-known aspects of Smith's legacy is his impact on the development of mathematics at Cambridge. He began teaching mathematics in a university lectureship founded by John Wollaston in 1648. In this capacity, Smith may have taught Isaac Barrow, the discoverer of the fundamental theorem of calculus who became the first Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in 1663. Barrow famously taught Isaac Newton, who would finish his work toward calculus as well as taking up the study of optics like Barrow, and prophecy like both Barrow and Smith (albeit in less orthodox ways than his teachers). The connection is not absolutely sure for lack of good records about the teaching of mathematics at Cambridge in the seventeenth century, but it is very likely that Smith (as well as Cudworth and More) stands among those "giants" upon whose shoulders' Newton stood (Feingold 1990; 2003).

The still relatively new phenomenon of publishing philosophical and theological works in English helped Smith's influence spread immediately across the North Atlantic to the British colonies of New England and Virginia. The libraries of the extant

colonial colleges of America all have seventeenth-century copies of Smith's *Discourses* (Harvard, William & Mary, Yale, Princeton, UPenn, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth). Smith and the other Cambridge Platonists were well known, if not always approved, in colonial Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. In fact, by the early eighteenth century, Smith formed a key part of the inspiration for a divine working on the frontier of European settlement in western Massachusetts named Jonathan Edwards.

Eighteenth-Century Reception

While Smith is mostly remembered today as an ancillary curiosity or source of contextual or rhetorical leverage for the study of the more famous Cambridge Platonists (Cudworth and More especially) in the more immediate aftermath of his brief career, Smith exerted a profound influence on many divines. This was especially the case in the eighteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. Of particular interest is the deep affinity between Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley on the "spiritual senses" of the soul and way they both drew upon Smith for their theories thereof.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is "widely acknowledged to be America's most important and original philosophical theologian" (Wainwright 2002). He was born into a family of Congregational ministers in East Windsor, Connecticut in 1703. In 1716 Edwards enrolled at Yale where he read Newton, Locke, Malebranche and the Cambridge Platonists. After briefly ministering to congregations in New York and

Bolton, Connecticut, he returned to Yale where he completed his Master of Arts and became a senior tutor in 1724. Edwards was chosen to succeed his grandfather as minister of the church in Northampton Massachusetts in 1725 where he oversaw and commented definitively on the religious revivals of 1734 and 1740–41. This period of renewed enthusiasm in evangelical religion has come to be known as the first "Great Awakening." The experiential Calvinism of this Awakening has been a primary distinguishing factor in American Evangelicalism ever since. Edwards' defense of the revivals and criticisms of their excesses culminated in his first major treatise, the *Religious Affections* in 1746 (Edwards 1959).

Disputes over qualifications for church membership led to Edwards's dismissal from ministry in 1750. Instead of accepting offers to preach elsewhere in North America and Scotland, Edwards took up work at the Indian mission at Stockbridge where he had charge of two congregations, supervised a boarding school for native boys, and completed his last major works, *Freedom of the Will* (1754), *Original Sin* (1758), *End of Creation* and *True Virtue* (1765). Edwards was appointed President of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1757 but died from complications arising from a smallpox inoculation on 22 March 1758, less than five weeks after taking up the post.

As Wainwright has demonstrated, Edwards's writings stress two themes above all, "the absolute sovereignty of God" and the "beauty of God's holiness." Divine sovereignty is most clearly defended in Edwards' occasionalism. He argued that the

only real cause of physical and mental events is God. Divine beauty is discussed "in accounts of God's end in creation, and of the nature of true virtue and true beauty." Divine creation "manifest[s] a holiness which consists in a benevolence which alone is truly beautiful. Genuine human virtue is an imitation of divine benevolence and all finite beauty is an image of divine loveliness. True virtue is needed to discern this beauty, however, and to reason rightly about 'divine things'" (Wainwright 2002).

References to the influence of Smith abound in the massive literature on Edwards. Four areas of this influence have been identified; the doctrines of spiritual sensation, deification, morality, and Edwards' rhetoric all draw heavily on Smith and the other Cambridge Platonists.

Smith was an important, and widely cited, source for Edwards' doctrine of the "sense of the heart" (Walton 2002, 121-2; Wainwright 2012, 224-40; Withrow 2011, 58, 62-3, 194). However, scholars have been overly tentative in asserting a clear line of influence. As Brad Walton puts it, "all commentators since John E. Smith have recognized that John Smith's own discussion of the 'spiritual sensation,' presented in the first chapter of the *Select Discourses*, constitutes a clear anticipation of Edwards, and probably exercised a direct influence on his own thinking" (Walton 2002, 121). This merely "probable" case for Smith's influence is rooted in the mistaken notion that it is only in the first *Discourse* on the "True Way of Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge" that Smith discusses "spiritual sensation." This tendency ignores the role

of spiritual or intellectual sense in Smith's arguments for theism, his account of prophecy, and the role of sensibility in practical religion as well (Michaud 2017). Far from merely a likely influence, Edwards drew directly and definitively from Smith's *Discourses* and quotes him at length on the "inward sense of the Divine goodness" (Edwards 1959, 217-9; Smith 1660, 361). Edwards also quotes at length the closing passage of Smith's *Discourse* upon "The Shortness of a Pharisaick Righteousness" on the "boiling up of the imaginative powers," commenting that it is a "remarkable passage" (Walton 2002, 121). Moreover, since Smith employs the spiritual senses throughout his theology we would be wise to look more broadly than "religious experience" in Edwards for his influence on the American Evangelical.

Edwards has received significant attention in recent years for his theory of sanctification or deification. Brandon Withrow, for example, has noted the strong resemblances between Edwards' view and those of patristic and later Orthodox theologians, such as Origen, the Cappadocians, and Gregory Palamas (Withrow 2008). While the similarities are striking, there is, however, no reason to believe that Edwards had access to these Greek sources directly. McClymond and McDermott have more recently argued that Edwards' theory of divinization should be read "against the backdrop of Renaissance and early modern Neoplatonism, and specifically the writings of the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists" including Whichcote, Cudworth, More, and especially John Smith (McClymond and McDermott 2012, 413-4). Indeed,

many passages in Edwards' *End of Creation* are anticipated by Smith in both arguments and even phrasing (Smith 1660, 142, 147, 155; Edwards 1989, 436-44). The influence of Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677) on Edwards and the connections between Scougal and Smith are also likely sources of the New Englander's concerns for the inner life of Christian piety too (Cragg 1968, 30).

Additionally, "Edwards's moral reflections were . . . shaped by his reading of the Cambridge Platonists, especially John Smith and Henry More" (McClymond and McDermott 2012, 534). Like the Platonists, Edwards also rejected the harsh and arbitrary portrayal of God in mainstream Calvinism and like Smith, in particular, he argued that God is "fundamentally goodness and love" (Micheletti 1976, 327). Moreover, just as Smith had argued that "God judges creatures not by an arbitrary will but by his own internal goodness" so too did Edwards. One finds a remarkable similarity in Smith and Edwards's views that "everything good in the created world is an emanation from God" (McClymond and McDermott 2012, 534). This is, of course, a classic Platonic notion, but Edwards' source for this ancient wisdom seems to have been Smith and the rest of the Cambridge Platonists, rather than the original authors themselves. Edwards's own record of his library and reading does not include Plotinus at all and only an abridged edition of selected dialogues of Plato (Edwards 2008).

Finally, Smith seems also to be an inspiration for Edwards' rhetorical style. Compare for example the following passage from Smith and the proceeding from Edwards.

> God does most glorifie and exalt himself in the most triumphant way that may be ad extra or out of himself . . . when he most of all communicates himself . . . And we then most of all glorifie him when we partake most of him (Smith 1660, 142).

> As there is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God . . . and as this fullness is capable of communication, or emanation ad extra; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams. . . . They are all but the emanation of God's glory; or the excellent brightness and fullness of the divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word, existing ad extra (Edwards 1989, 433, 445).

Since Edwards is the first great New World philosopher in English and "America's Evangelical" there is great interest in understanding his sources and influences (Gura 2005). Moreover, it may well be that a lasting echo from Smith persists today in and through the continued appeal of Edwards. For all these reasons, future research on the influence of John Smith on Jonathan Edwards is needed, especially with regard to the spiritual senses and the rational piety associated therewith.

Smith's influence can also be traced to John Wesley. The founder of Methodism was born near London in 1703 and he enrolled at Christ College, Oxford in 1723. There Wesley earned both a bachelor's before and a master's after being ordained a deacon in the Church of England in 1726. Wesley then served as a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford while beginning to minister to the parish of Wroote. In the 1730s he began to

meet with a small group, including his brother Charles, to pray and study scripture that was dubbed the "Holy Club" by opponents who saw this as unjustified "enthusiasm." It was around this time that others began to refer to the Wesley's as "Methodists" a name originally meant to signify their over-eagerness in spiritual matters but which was eventually co-opted (Tomkins 2003, 12-42, 95-100).

John Wesley's major teachings include the possibility of Christian perfection and the denial of Calvinist predestination, both sentiments that resonate well with the Cambridge Platonists and Latitudinarians of the Church of England (Oden 2012-2014; Thorsen 2013, 29-57, 72-87). While Wesley himself never left the Anglican Church, his movement, "Methodism," is today a major branch of Protestant Christianity which has itself given rise to the Holiness Movement as well as Pentecostalism.

Most relevantly for our purposes, Wesley's doctrine of the spiritual senses owes much to his reading of John Norris, who was influenced by Smith's circle, especially Henry More, in addition to Malebranche (English 1991, 55-69; Mealey 2006, 20). Moreover, in addition to publishing an abbreviated edition of Smith's *Select Discourses* in his *Christian Library*, Wesley may also have drawn on Smith's version of the spiritual senses in formulating his own approach (Mealey 2006, 26-7; Mealey 2012, 241-56).

As Isabel Rivers has ably shown, John Wesley was among a significant group of clerics in the 18th century to use various means at their disposal to promote work of several we now call Cambridge Platonists (Rivers 2013). Relative to Smith this took the

form of publishing selections from Smith's *Discourses* in his *Christian Library*. Wesley included parts of the Preface by Worthington and portions of the *Discourses*, thus making for essentially the publication of an abridgment of the *Select Discourses* (Smith 1752). In addition to keeping Smith in print, Wesley's abridgment lent some of his own spiritual authority to the Cambridge Platonist too, helping to keep him on the minds of evangelicals both in Britain and North America.

Unfortunately, we have no better guide to Wesley's reasons for republishing the works of Smith than a brief note included just after Worthington's preface that while they are often "scarce intelligible to unlearned readers" he could not resist offering "so great a Treasure" (Wesley 1752, quoted by Christie 1888, 30).

Among the possible influences of Smith on Wesley, the most likely involves the spiritual senses of the soul. Whereas the "philosophical avant-garde" in the eighteenth century (e.g., Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Reid) developed notions of moral and aesthetic sensation, Wesley's spiritual senses stand far more closely in the tradition of the "various heart-religion movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Mealey 2006, 26-7). In this, Smith stands chronologically *before* and conceptually *between* Shaftesbury and Wesley with a dynamic combination of intellectual, imaginative, and affective versions of spiritual sense (Michaud 2017, 97-189). Like Smith too, Wesley draws from the Greek Patristic Fathers, especially Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and others (Mealey 2006, 28).

Mealey suggests that Wesley's "doctrine . . . resembles the Macarian homilies much more than it does, say, John Smith the Cambridge Platonist" (Mealey 2012, 256). This judgment, however, ignores the deep similarities between Smith's doctrine and the Greek spirituality found in Pseudo-Macarius. For example, both the Cambridge Platonist and the monk emphasize the role of the spiritual senses in discerning one's path through life (Pseudo-Macarius 1992, 50-62; Smith 1660, 3, 8-9, 12-3). Moreover, both authors speak of progress by degrees in the perception of divine things (Pseudo-Macarius 1992, 244-6; Smith 1660, 17-21). Wesley may have been particularly drawn to the Macarian corpus but important themes therein are not wanting in Smith either.

Nevertheless, Mealey is correct that care should be taken to distinguish between the influences of others, including Smith, and Wesley's unique development of this theme in his own particular way (Mealey 2006, 29-30). Clearly then, the additional careful study of the similarities and important differences, between Smith's and Wesley's spiritual senses is necessary.

Along with Wesley's influential abridgment, an additional edition was printed in Edinburgh 1756 by Lord Hailes (David Dalrymple); further evidence of the continued interest in Smith's *Select Discourses* in the English-speaking world. Earlier in the century, however, and after two complete editions in English, Smith's lengthy discourse in thirteen chapters on prophecy was translated into Latin for an international readership. This translation was appended to Jean Le Clerc's (1657-1736) Commentary on the

Prophets, part of his massive commentary project on the entire Bible (Smith 1731, i-xxix). It seems especially fitting that Le Clerc, a pioneer in the critical exegesis of scripture with special attention to the historical context and purpose of biblical books, included Smith's discourse. In "Of Prophecy" Smith includes long passages from Jewish authors, especially Maimonides among others, bringing their native insights to bear on Old Testament prophecy rather than simply reading it through a Christian lens. In this way, Smith contributed, albeit in a roundabout way, to the development of modern critical biblical scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Indeed, "Of Prophecy" remained an important resource for biblical scholars well into the mid-nineteenth century (Kitto 1845, 2: 568). William B. Collyer too cites Smith as an authority on prophecy in his *Lectures on Scripture Prophecy* (Collyer 1809, 20, 79). Even in our own time, Smith has been referenced as an important commentator on prophets and prophecy (e.g., Johnson 1992, 57-8; Mack 1995, 62-4, 282-3; Raymond 2010, 189-204; and Juster 2011, 35, 42).

Nineteenth-Century Reception

Smith's influence in the English speaking world continued apace well into the nineteenth century as his *Discourses* appeared in print several times (1820, 1821, 1859, 1864, 1882, 1885) and his thought stimulated some of the great minds of the era on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, there was hardly a generation without a new edition or significant abridgment of the *Discourses* from the middle of the 18th through the end of

the 19th centuries. This alone speaks to the continued appeal of Smith's thought among philosophers, moralists, divines, and increasingly, the general public too.

The appreciation that the great English Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) had for John Smith is well documented but worthy of mention. Coleridge commented favorably on a number of Smith's *Discourses* in several places including his *Aids to Reflection* (1825, 246) and in his *Literary Remains* (1836-1839, I: 213-4, III: 415-9). On a trip to Sicily, Coleridge "gratefully noted" Smith's thoroughly platonic observation that as "the eye cannot behold the Sun . . . unless it be Sunlike . . . neither can the Soul of man, behold God . . . unless it be *Godlike*" (Beer 2010, 128; Smith 1660, 2-4). This language of participation in God on analogy with light and the sun remained a consistent theme throughout Coleridge's literary career (Beer 2010, 128; Coleridge 1961, 21-64). While Plato is the source of the image it was via Smith that the truth thereof found its way to Coleridge.

Smith was also an important source for Coleridge's conception of Christian philosophy as a spiritual discipline (Hedley 2000, 98-9). Like Smith, Coleridge is highly critical of mere speculation in philosophy and theology (Hedley 2000, 225, 281). Notions such as the platonic commonplace of the soul as a mirror and more specific images such as the Christological heart of morality too may well find their roots in Coleridge's reading of Smith (Hedley 2000, 109, 175). Finally, in his distinction between the "external" nature of the Jewish Law and the "inward" transformation of Gospel

righteousness Coleridge follows not just the Apostle Paul but also John Smith, the "most eloquent of the Cambridge Platonists" (Hedley 2000, 190, 284).

Both Coleridge and Smith exerted a deep influence on Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), one of the founders of American Transcendentalism. Thus, the Cambridge Platonist's legacy extends to the second noteworthy moment in the history of American philosophy after Jonathan Edwards. Notably, the third, C. S. Peirce and William James's Pragmatism, too is a New England development, born of learned Puritan ancestry, first at Smith's Emmanuel College and later at Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

While Emerson drew on a far wider range of sources than the Cambridge Platonist was in a position to (i.e., Indian texts and traditions), he found in Smith inspiration and confirmation of the lasting significance of critical thought in religion and of Platonism in particular. A quotation from "Plato; or, the Philosopher" in *Representative Men* (1850) gives something of the flavor of this influence upon Emerson and his school.

> How many great men Nature is incessantly sending up out of night, to be his men, - Platonists! the Alexandrians, a constellation of genius; the Elizabethans, not less; Sir Thomas More, Henry More, John Hales, John Smith, Lord Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Ralph Cudworth, Sydenham, Thomas Taylor . . . (Emerson 1850, 23).

Here John Smith takes his place in the Transcendentalist pantheon beside Plato, Plotinus, Jeremy Taylor, and Thomas Taylor. Jay Bregman reports that Thomas Moore Johnson, the great American Platonist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries who helped bring about the contemporary study of the Platonic tradition on both sides of the Atlantic, "always spoke positively of the Christian Cambridge Platonists" (Bregman 2015, iv). Clearly then, Smith was an important representative of the Platonic tradition in modern America (Bregman 1990, 99-119).

Twentieth Century Reception & Beyond

The twentieth century saw a proliferation of publications that selected, extracted, and anthologized texts from the Cambridge Platonists. In these collections, several of Smith's *Discourses* almost always appeared, including especially the first on the "True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge." The editors of these collections have played an absolutely invaluable role therefore in keeping the attention of new scholars fixed on the group as a whole and Smith specifically. In particular, Campagnac (1901), Cragg (1968), Patrides (1969), and Taliaferro and Teply (2004) have helped keep these texts in the hands of successive generations. However, contemporary assessments of Smith are frequently subject to misinterpretation by the selection process. Too often, for example, the *Discourses* are treated as standalone texts. However, the first five were intended to form a single work of rational theology (Worthington 1660a, v; and 1660b, 280-1).

In 1979 the entire first edition of Smith's *Select Discourses* was reprinted in facsimile with a brief introduction by C. A. Patrides (1979). This edition has since been the go-to version of the text despite the helpful (though limited) annotations added by

various editors in later editions. With the advent of the internet, and especially the scanning of entire books by Google (http://books.google.com/) and scholarly projects like Early English Books Online (http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home), access to the various editions of *Discourses* has become as widespread as it is currently possible to imagine. That said, a critical edition of the *Select Discourses* is a project worthy of the considerable labor required as there is no single edition that has both a consistently reliable text and accurate annotations.

There was a distinct turn in the disciplinary attention paid to Smith in the twentieth century toward literature and criticism, owing at least in part to the references to him and his circle in the works of figures such as Coleridge and Emerson. Indeed, it is often not among the theologians or philosophers that one finds the most enthusiastic (and knowledgeable) readers of Smith, but instead among the poets, critics, and historians of English literature. Cudworth and More have enjoyed a far better reception among philosophers and theologians in recent decades but ironically when one wants to make one of their points clearly and briefly, it is often a good idea to quote Smith instead.

Nevertheless, Smith did not go unnoticed among twentieth-century philosophers and theologians. Indeed, there have been several notable promoters of Smith in the century just passed. In particular, William Inge in Britain and Rufus Jones in the United

States kept alive a historical and philosophical appreciation for the Cambridge Platonists in general and Smith in specifically.

William Ralph Inge (1860-1954) wrote widely and frequently on Neoplatonism and Christian mysticism (Fox 1960). Dean Inge is perhaps best-known today for his Gifford Lectures on Plotinus (published in two volumes in 1918) but he also kept alive an interest in specifically Christian Platonism in the early twentieth century. While Whichcote appears to be his favorite Cambridge Platonist, Inge's early *Christian Mysticism* makes frequent approving references to Smith (1899, 9, 285-96). *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* opens with an adaptation from Smith, "Such as men themselves are, such will God appear to them" (Inge 1907, 1; cf. Smith 1660, 5). Such references continued throughout Dean Inge's career. Perhaps most importantly, Inge had a natural understanding of the practical rational piety of Smith. "A study of . . . Smith's *Select Discourses*, may not make the reader a better Catholic or a better Protestant, but they cannot fail to make him a better Christian and a better man" (Inge 1906, 172). The impact of Inge's "Smithian" outlook had a profound impact on Anglican theology that can still be felt today (Thomas 2009, 1-17).

Rufus Jones (1863-1948) was among the organizers of the *Quaekerspeisung* after World War I. In 1938 he traveled to Berlin seeking a personal meeting with Hitler after *Kristallnacht*. His efforts as a peacemaker were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for the American Friends Service Committee in 1947 (Bernet 2009, 3-17). Jones was also a

noted historian, theologian and philosopher who singled out Smith as one of two examples of the "spirit of Cambridge Platonism" (the other was Whichcote) and dedicated an excellent chapter to him in his *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th & 17th Centuries* (Jones 1914, 305-19). He also made passing use of Smith throughout his twenty-two books and many articles (for bibliography see, Bernet 2009, 49-136). Given the importance of the relationship between Henry More and Anne Conway, and since the controverted nature of Quaker religion lies at the heart of that relationship in its later stages, it seems Cambridge Platonism and the Society of Friends had a significant influence upon each other (Nicolson and Hutton 1992; White 2008, 11-38). Nevertheless, the influence of Smith on modern Quakerism, beyond the example of Jones, is in need of additional specialist research.

From the mid-twentieth century, onward Smith has remained an important influence upon some strands of contemporary work in philosophy and theology. Pierre Hadot, for example, placed Smith in the historical context of the reception of Simplicius' important *Commentary on the Manuel of Epictetus* (Hadot 1987). Mario Micheletti's monograph on Smith's religious thought (1976) has been far less well appreciated than it deserves, perhaps because it was written in Italian. In it, the general contours of Smith's thought are clearly presented in reference to his intellectual milieu.

More recently, Charles Taliaferro, Sarah Hutton, and Douglas Hedley have contributed to the historical appreciation of Smith and made constructive use of his

thought as well. Taliaferro's *Evidence and Faith; Philosophy and Religion Since the Seventeenth Century* makes this debt clear by referencing Smith often and to great effect (2005, 3-4, 11-5, 17-24, 26, 29, 31-8, 40, 42-55, 62, 79, 117, 136-8, 168, 178, 384). In addition to her other work on the Cambridge Platonists more generally, Sarah Hutton has helped to keep alive an appreciation for Smith with her entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (2005) as well as an important paper on Smith's theory of prophecy (Hutton 1984, 73-81). Hedley's *Coleridge, Philosophy, and Religion* highlights the influence that Smith had on the Romantic poet-philosopher (2000, 98-9, 109, 175, 190, 225, 281, 284). His trilogy on the religious imagination too makes frequent, constructive, reference to Smith (Hedley 2008, 5, 15, 22, 31, 48, 81-2, 89-90, 93, 108, 117, 133-4, 145, 184, 186-7, 224, 265, 270, 273; 2011, 11-6, 51-6, 58, 109-11, 113-9, 121-3, 125, 136, 183, 201-24, 226; 2016, 26, 46-7, 53, 141, 151, 153-4, 166-7, 254, 256).

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

When one begins to look John Smith appears as a consistent, and significant if sometimes subtle, influence across the modern North Atlantic world. He played an important, even if peripheral, role in the development of theology (Latitudinarianism, American Evangelicalism, and Methodism), philosophy (Platonism, Cartesianism, and Transcendentalism), literature (Romanticism), and mathematics (calculus). His understanding of prophecy too was long held in high esteem across Europe. Indeed, Smith was a ubiquitous authority among eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholars in

Britain and the United States. With the close of the Victorian era, Smith began to fade from favor as various forms of positivism, existentialism, and scientism came to displace the idealist and romantic modes of thought that had been so congenial to his brand of Christian Platonism. However, through the consistent publication of selections from his *Discourses* and the regular historical study and constructive use of his thought Smith's influence has never vanished.

Along with issues of historical and textual interpretation, the theological and philosophical viability of Smith's system requires careful constructive attention. Our period is poised to benefit from the lessons Smith has to teach about faith and reason generally, and religion and science in particular. Smith speaks exactly to our situation with the apparent conflict between piety and rationality brought on by superstitious anthropomorphic conceptions of God (Smith 1660, 25-37). Perhaps by purging religion of these false idols born of all-too-human fear and turning instead to the transcendent Divinity of Smith's Christian Platonism the tired conflicts between "religion" and "science" can be overcome. Such a development would require movement on the part of many religious people and perhaps most scientific naturalists, but the prize to be won is a more humane worldview that lacks neither rigor nor living existential power.

In personal spirituality and communal worship too Smith's appeal to essentials in religion provides a calming voice for our time. Against the secular relativistic approach to religions that make them all equal in their irrelevance, Smith offers genuine

friendship based on actual unity in essentials and an eagerness to tolerate adiaphora in the name of that essential unity. "*In necessariis unitas*, *in dubiis libertas*, *in omnibus caritas*" (de Dominis 1617, 676).

Finally, as I have argued at length elsewhere, Smith's theology and spirituality critically depend upon the spiritual senses (Michaud 2017). It is by means of an encounter with Divine goodness, truth, and beauty that one comes to know and, more importantly, to live into and out of true communion with God. Perhaps, then, renewed attention to, and development of, this traditional way of thinking and being is called for as Christians continue to navigate and (co-)create their world; seeking to be at home, whole, and aware of otherness and transcendence too (cf. Cunningham 2012, 156-88). A renewed Christian Platonism, at once theological and humanistic. A theology that lets one think what one feels and binds the believer to the Good that they may be God's hands and feet in the world. These are the constructive tasks that Smith's memory calls for in our time.

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