Symon Patrick (1626-1707) and His Contribution to the Post-1660 Restored Church of England

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By

Nicholas Fisher

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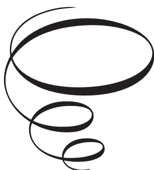

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This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-2838-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-2838-3

To my well-beloved Friends
the Parishioners of St. Bartholomew, Aldsworth;
St. Mary the Virgin, Great Barrington; St. Peter, Little Barrington;
St. Mary Magdalene, Sherborne; and St. Peter, Windrush,
in the Cotswolds

Symon Patrick by Sir Peter Lely (*c*. 1668)

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EPIGRAPH

Drawing by Brian Britton of the motif on the set of Holy Communion vessels bequeathed by Bishop Patrick to Dalham Parish Church, Suffolk

no person perhaps has done more than our Bishop in raising up a spirit of Devotion, which may be seen by the many excellent composures of this nature which have been & are of great service to well disposed Xtians, in all states & conditions of life.

Samuel Knight, CUL MS Add. 36, 250.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very pleased to be able to acknowledge the many debts I have incurred in writing this book. Encountering as an undergraduate at Newcastle University the variety and vigour of the literature of the Restoration Period proved to be a life-enhancing and life-changing experience. It was a privilege subsequently to conduct postgraduate research in the field under two sensitive and gifted supervisors, firstly Ken Robinson of the School of English Language and Literature at Newcastle and then Paul Hammond of the School of English at Leeds University. After such a thorough grounding, there was a logic in my feeling drawn later to study the Church of England during the second half of the seventeenth century.

This book would not have been possible without the opportunity provided by means of the Archbishop's Examination in Theology (now rebranded as Lambeth Research Degrees in Theology). Archbishop Rowan Williams launched the current thesis-based MPhil / PhD degrees programme in 2007, and it was under this scheme that the Council of the AET and its director, Jeremy Morris, accepted my study proposal and arranged for the research that lies behind this book to be supervised by two inspirational scholars, John Spurr and Douglas Hedley. From the perspective of their different disciplines they provided stimulation, challenge and encouragement and I am enormously grateful to them both.

My thanks are owed also to the librarians, archivists and staff of a variety of institutions who have been uniformly helpful and patient when attending to my enquiries and requests, especially the members of staff in the Manuscripts Reading Room at Cambridge University Library as I waded through its unparalleled archive of Patrick's papers. In addition, I warmly acknowledge the assistance provided by Tim Eggington, the librarian of Patrick's former college, Queens', Cambridge; and the staff at the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Lambeth Palace Library; Dr. Williams's Library, London; London Metropolitan Archives; the National Archives, Kew; the libraries at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Christ Church, Oxford; and Westminster City Archives.

I am grateful to the following for permission to reproduce the illustrations in this book: the National Portrait Gallery in connection with Lely's magnificent portrait of Patrick currently on display in Lyme Park, Cheshire; the curator of Lydiard House, Wiltshire, and Swindon Borough

Council for the portraits of Sir Walter and Lady Johanna St. John; The Rt. Revd. Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely, for the portraits of Bishop Symon and Mrs Penelope Patrick; the PCC and Churchwarden of St. Mary-the-Virgin, Dalham, for the reproduction of the engraving of Bishop Patrick's motif on a set of Holy Communion vessels; and Alice Hall, a graduate of Newcastle University, for her picture of St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden.

My wife Pam has shown the patience of a saint in not begrudging (well, hardly ever) the amount of time I have spent in the company of Symon Patrick, and it is a further pleasure to declare publicly my heartfelt thanks to her, as well as to several others who have been helpful in a variety of ways: my PhD examiners Kenneth Fincham and Jessica Martin, Elaine Arthurs, Rupert Baker, Brian Britton, Rachel Clover, my son Francis for his skill in charting bars, Jane Green, Grazyna Karwoska-Budd, Gerard Moate, Sarah Moynihan and the Warden and fellows of Merton College, Oxford, the latter affording me the great privilege of being able to enjoy the society and hospitality of their senior common room during lengthy periods of study at the Bodleian Library.

I also express my gratitude for the financial support throughout the period of my research provided by the Director of Mission and Ministry in the Diocese of Gloucester, Andrew Braddock, and by the Governing Body of the Doctor South Trust at Christ Church, Oxford. Finally, I end by recording my indebtedness to Diana Rau and other friends who cast their eyes over the manuscript and made constructive suggestions; Larry Carver, with his truly heroic attention to detail, merits a special mention, but needless to say, any blemishes that still remain are my responsibility.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Symon[1] Patrick in Context

Archdeacon Samuel Knight (*c*.1677-1746),[2] gathering material in the mid-1720s for an intended biography of Symon Patrick, noted:

> His behaviour through the whole course of his life was truly exemplary, as a Xtian, a Minister, & a Bishop, he filled up all stations with suitable duties in each of them; and had nothing so much at heart as the good of this church & nation.[3]

While some hyperbole is perhaps only to be expected of a biographer, Knight's testimonial reveals nonetheless that, some twenty years after Patrick's death, his achievements were still allowing him to be remembered as a leading clergyman of his generation.

By any standard Patrick had a most successful career. Born in 1626 to a devout and prosperous Lincolnshire merchant who encouraged his son to

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[1] The spelling "Symon" was Patrick's normal use, but printers were less particular. See his signature in the registers of St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, held in Westminster City Archives, and his Will dated 1702 in the National Archives, London.

[2] Knight had been presented to the living at Burrough Green, Cambridgeshire, in 1707, and by the time of his death, he was combining it with appointments as rector of Bluntisham in Huntingdonshire, prebendary of Ely and Lincoln cathedrals, archdeacon of Berkshire, and chaplain to King George II. He was a collector of manuscripts and one of the "revivers" of the Society of Antiquaries in 1717; his biographies of Dean Colet and Erasmus were published in 1724 and 1726 respectively, and these preoccupations may explain why he never completed his projected biography of Patrick (see *Alumni Cantabrigienses* and W.M. Jacob, "Knight, Samuel (1677/8-1745)," *ODNB*).

[3] CUL MS Add. 36, 329. Cambridge University Library possesses the largest collection of Patrick's surviving manuscripts; it contains some two dozen gatherings, including his autobiography, which was owned at one stage by Knight, who wrote this undated comment on a blank page.

develop his scholarly talents, Patrick was admitted as an undergraduate to Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1644 aged seventeen years, and was later elected a fellow (1649-58). He was ordained by a presbytery on 8 April 1653 and then, convinced of the necessity of episcopal ordination, by a former bishop of Norwich the following year.

Patrick's first appointment (1656-57) was as the domestic chaplain at Battersea Manor, the London home of Sir Walter St. John, an uncle of the libertine wit and poet John Wilmot, 2nd. Earl of Rochester.[4] This was followed by incumbencies in two fashionable London parishes: St. Mary's, Battersea (1657-75), and St. Paul's, Covent Garden (1662-89), the latter having been created out of the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields as recently as 1646.[5] Patrick received further appointments as a chaplain in ordinary to both King Charles II and King James II (1671-89)[6] and as a canon and sub-dean of Westminster (1672-89) before rising to become Dean of Peterborough (1679-89). As Grant Tapsell points out (and the example of Archdeacon Knight affirms), "many of the most successful place seekers held multiple livings and appointments at the same time,"[7] and it was against this background that Patrick was consecrated Bishop of Chichester in 1689, translated to Ely in 1691, and died in office on 31 May 1707.[8]

Patrick's contemporary reception will be referred to in greater detail in chapter six below, but signs of the developing respect with which he was

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[4] Unexpectedly, a minor thread further links Patrick and Rochester. In one of the great satires of the period, *A Satyr against Mankind* (1679), line 74, Rochester refers to Patrick's *The Parable of the Pilgrim* (1665). See chap. five n. 5 below and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Poems and* "*Lucina's Rape*," ed. Keith Walker and Nicholas Fisher (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

[5] Greater London Council, *Survey of London, XXXVI: The Parish of St. Paul Covent Garden*, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard (London: Athlone Press, University of London, 1970), 105.

[6] National Archives, London, refs. LC 3/27, 3/29, 3/30, 3/32. For further information concerning the Court chaplains during the Restoration period, see Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 75-78.

[7] "Pastors, preachers and politicians: the clergy of the later Stuart church," in *The later Stuart Church, 1660*-1714, ed. Grant Tapsell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 75. Several of Patrick's fellow royal chaplains held three or more clerical posts: Edward Stillingfleet (1635-99), John Tillotson (1630-94), Thomas Tenison (1636-1715), John Sharp (?1645-1714), Francis Turner (1637-1700) and William Lloyd (1627-1717) (see *Alumni Cantabrigienses*).

[8] See J.H. Overton, "Patrick, Simon (1626-1707)," *DNB,* and Jon Parkin, "Patrick, Simon (1626-1707)," *ODNB*.

held by colleagues and contemporaries are frequently evidenced. Examples include a request for him to preach the sermon at a clergy convocation in Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster Abbey in November 1680;[9] his selection in November 1686 as one of two senior clergy invited to put the theological case for the Church of England against that of the Roman Church presented by two Roman Catholic priests in a private debate before the king; his appointment in October 1689 as one of the commissioners tasked with revising the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*; his selection by King William to be a member of a group of nine Church of England clergy chosen in 1690 to advise him on episcopal appointments in the Church of Ireland and then in 1695, as recorded by Gilbert Burnet, to be part of an "Ecclesiastical Commission" (alongside the two archbishops and three other bishops) "to recommend fit persons to all ecclesiastical preferments" to the king;[10] and, finally, on becoming one of the "most zealous and diligent supporters" of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, his nomination as a trustee in June 1701, the year it received its royal charter.[11]

While Patrick's star had largely faded within about a half-century of his death, his influence on his generation has not been entirely overlooked by modern scholars. John Spurr, in his major study of the Church of England during the second half of the seventeenth century, judged Patrick to be one of "the leading Restoration churchmen"; Melinda Zook has convincingly placed him "among the most gifted men in orders" of his generation; and Brent Sirota has acclaimed him as "perhaps the most popular devotional writer of the later seventeenth century."[12] Yet Patrick's contemporary renown has been eclipsed by the more enduring reputations of another six or seven senior Church of England clergy such as Burnet (1643-1715: Bishop of Salisbury); Henry Compton (1632-1713: Bishop of London); John Sharp (Archbishop of York); Edward Stillingfleet (Bishop

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[9] CUL MS Add. 36, 98; this sermon was not published.

[10] T.E.S. Clarke and H.C. Foxcroft, *A Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 332-33.

[11] W.O. Allen & Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1698-1898* (London: S.P.C.K., 1898), 21.

[12] John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1698* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 9, and see 13; Melinda S. Zook, *Protestantism, Politics, and Women in Britain, 1660-1714* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 148; and Brent S. Sirota, *The Christian Monitors: The Church of England and the Age of Benevolence, 1680-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 29.

of Worcester); Thomas Tenison and John Tillotson (both Archbishops of Canterbury); and John Wilkins (1614-72: Bishop of Chester). With the exception of Sharp, a biography of whose life (written by his son) appeared a century after the archbishop's death, all these men have been subject of biographies published a few years after they had died, followed by important studies during the twentieth century;[13] and apart from Compton and Tenison, they have all had major editions of their work republished after their death.[14] It is a matter of surprise that Patrick has been excluded from this company, for in terms of any extended appreciation he has merited only a nine volume edition in 1858 by Alexander Taylor (which on closer inspection is revealed to contain less than half of the author's output) and almost exactly a century later, unpublished university master's and doctoral theses by Elizabeth Edwards and Mary Pickard, respectively.[15] Some reasons for this situation will be explored in the concluding chapter.

Patrick and these senior clergymen exercised their ministry during a time of great tension between the Established Church and other parts of the reformed tradition; this had originated in the Anglican crisis, which began in 1533 (when Anne Boleyn became England's first Protestant queen);[16] as Christopher Haigh notes, by 1588, "At all levels, and in all

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[13] For Burnet see in the bibliography under Jean Le Clerc (1715) and Clarke and Foxcroft (1904); for Compton see Nathaniel Salmon [1715] and Carpenter (1956); for Sharp see Thomas Sharp (1825) and Hart (1949); for Stillingfleet see [Timothy Goodwin] (1710) and Carroll (1975); for Tenison see Thomas Tenison [?1716] and Carpenter (1948); for Tillotson see F[rancis[H[utchinson] (1717), Thomas Birch (1752) and MacKay (1945); and for Wilkins see John Wilkins, *The Mathematical and Philosophical Works* (London, 1708), Henderson (1910) and Shapiro (1969).
[14] T. Burnet, ed., *Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time* (London, 1724-34); John Sharp, *The Works Of the Most Reverend Dr. John Sharp* (London, 1749); *The Works of Edward Stillingfleet*, 6 vols (London, 1700); R. Barker, ed., *The Works Of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, *Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1742-44); and Wilkins, *Mathematical and Philosophical Works*, 1708.
[15] *Works of Symon Patrick D.D., Sometime Bishop of Ely. Including his Autobiography*, ed. Alexander Taylor, 9 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1858); "*Works*," below, refers to this publication. See also Elizabeth R. Edwards, "A Literary Study of the Work of Simon Patrick (Seventeenth Century Divine)" (unpublished M.A. thesis, King's College, London, 1953) and Mary Harlowe Pickard, "Symon Patrick 1626-1707, Bishop of Ely: Divine, Theologian, Ecclesiastical Statesman" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1961).
[16] Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 214-15, and endorsed by Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie: "English Protestantism was a movement which failed to transform society as it

places, the new religion brought disunity . . . The Reformation had created not a united Protestant England but a deeply divided England," a crisis which, Diarmaid MacCulloch adds, "has not stopped since."[17] MacCulloch draws particular attention to "the great fault-line which opened up within English Protestantism between the Established Church and Dissent after the Restoration of Charles II," and emphasises that the Established Church that emerged under Charles II produced an "Eton Mess of Anglicanism" which has meant that "ever afterwards, it has lived not only with internal contradictions, but with a vigorous external Protestant critique."[18] This is a persuasive interpretation, but despite approval of Judith Maltby's neat summary that "in 1689 a *national* church was finally replaced by the more pragmatic idea of an *established* church," the long, continuing trajectory that MacCulloch depicts inadvertently omits to emphasise the significance in 1689 of two matters: the successful passage of the Act of Toleration and the failure of a Comprehension Bill. Even if these circumstances did not end tensions between Protestants, they certainly removed a major source of internal contradictions.[19]

The fault-line identified by MacCulloch, however, had begun to open in Cambridge prior to the return of Charles II. Well before the Civil War, there was polarisation among the colleges covering the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism. Nicholas Tyacke has summarised the essence of Arminianism as "a belief in God's universal grace and the freewill of all

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hoped . . . it could not convert the nation; but it could, and did, permanently divide it" (*The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13). From the perspective of the Restoration period, Peter Heylyn saw the "*Uniformity* of the Church of *England*" as ending with Archbishop Bancroft's death in 1610 (*Cyprianus Anglicus* (London, 1668), 62, quoted by Patrick Collinson in *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English Society 1559-1626* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 43).

[17] *English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 214-15; *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016), 361 and 243; and Marshall and Ryrie, *Beginnings of English Protestantism*, 13.

[18] *All Things Made New*, 360-63.

[19] Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 235. But see MacCulloch's earlier analysis: "The Act of Toleration was . . . an event of great significance, for . . . it was a faltering step in allowing Christians of opposing views to live side by side. Whatever its official claims, the Church of England had now surrendered in its attempt to represent the only Christianity which could have a true existence in the kingdom" (*Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 532).

men to obtain salvation," on account of which Arminians rejected the teaching of Calvinism that the world was divided into the elect and the reprobate whom God had arbitrarily predestinated, the one to Heaven and the other to Hell. In the Cambridge colleges, "rival groups openly battled for supremacy": Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex were associated with puritanism, and Jesus, Pembroke, Queens', St. John's and most famously Peterhouse were viewed as fervently Laudian.[20] It was out of this polarisation that emerged not only the sermons Patrick preached against puritanism in 1652 and 1657,[21] but the influential movement that has become known as Cambridge Platonism.

By the 1630s, Emmanuel College (during the early part of the seventeenth century the only Cambridge college not to use the *Book of Common Prayer*) had attracted a disparate company of scholars and thinkers who have come to be viewed as forming the kernel of a group now referred to as the Cambridge Platonists. John Tulloch in 1872 identified the "chief names," centred on Emmanuel College, as comprising Benjamin Whichcote (1609-83), "by common consent, the group's acknowledged leader"; Ralph Cudworth (1617-88) "the real theoretical founder of the school"; John Smith (1618-52); and finally Henry More (1614-87), a fellow of Christ's College, and exceptionally the only member without an affinity with Emmanuel.[22] As Susan Doran and Christopher Durston point out, this group of scholars can be understood as having shared the "moderate strain" and "liberal and conciliatory tradition" that had been a feature of the Great Tew Circle. This company of literary and religious men had included the clerics William Chillingworth and John Hales (but also the uncompromising future

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[20] Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution," in *Seventeenth-century England: A Changing Culture*, ed. W.R. Owens, 2 vols (London: Ward Lock Educational, 1980), *II: Modern Studies*, 130; and Tyacke, "From Laudians to Latitudinarians: a shifting balance of theological forces," in *The later Stuart Church, 1660*-1714, ed. Tapsell, 48. See also John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution 1625-1688* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990), 25, 36-37.

[21] "A Sermon preached at the Funeral of Mr John Smith . . . who departed this life Aug. 7. 1652" (London, 1660) and *The Hypocritical Nation Described* (London, 1657). The different focuses of Patrick's polemic writings during his ministry accurately reflect the changing threats to the national church.

[22] John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the 17th Century*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1872), *II: The Cambridge Platonists*, 6; these four are traditionally "regarded as the most prominent representatives" of the Cambridge Platonists (Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 196).

Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert Sheldon), who regularly gathered in the 1630s at the home of Lord Falkland in Great Tew, Oxfordshire. The Circle had opposed the rigid dogma of Calvinism and argued for the laity's right to interpret scripture for themselves, guided by their private, individual reason. Additionally, they advocated a non-dogmatic, liberal and rationalist form of Anglicanism with a view to bringing about a greater unity among English Protestants.[23]

In broad terms, the "Cambridge Platonists" reacted in common, too, against the stringency of Calvinism—More, for example, was shocked when he first appreciated the implications of the doctrine of predestination.[24] The temper of this "little circle of choice spirits at Cambridge" was "the perfection of 'sweet reasonableness',"[25] and shared features of their thought were the denial of predestination, the importance of Christian living, the appropriateness of philosophy as "a way of life for a reasonable and moderate man or woman," and a frequent description, derived from *Proverbs* 20.27, of the spirit as "a candle of the Lord."[26] The Cambridge Platonists were "reconcilers, men of peace in a difficult and bellicose world, tacking and trimming between two primary and opposite modes of thought" as they "sought a middle way between the Laudians on the one hand and the Calvinists on the other, and they were opposed to the bitter and factious spirit of both."[27]

C.A. Patrides helpfully stresses that the Cambridge Platonists believed that St. Augustine had "subordinated Platonism to Augustinianism," and that Aristotle's writing was "condensed" in that of Plotinus.[28] Augustine himself admitted in his *Confessions* that he had been initially influenced by Platonism, but subsequently had become more convinced by the epistles of St. Paul. The teachings of Augustine were not entirely rejected by the Cambridge Platonists, for Augustine himself had, after all, gained a greater understanding of Scripture through the writings of Platonists:

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[23] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and religion in England, 1529-1689* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 31.
[24] Twigg, *History of Queens'*, 147-48; Gillian Rosemary Evans, *The University of Cambridge: A New History* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 191; and Tulloch, *Rational Theology,* II, 306.
[25] Fredericke J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 17.
[26] Evans, *University of Cambridge*, 196.
[27] Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment. A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 92-93; and Gerald R. Cragg, The *Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970; repr. 1990), 68.
[28] *Cambridge Platonists*, ed. Patrides, 3, 5 n. 1.

> having read . . . these Bookes of the *Platonists*, having once gotten the hint from them, and falling upon the search of *incorporeall truth*; I came to get a sight of *these invisible things of thine, which are understood by those things which are made . . .*[29]

Rather, the situation was that Augustine's philosophy was now under challenge from such different quarters as French Catholicism, Arminianism and Calvinism. John Twigg, further, notes their rejection of the scholastic western theological tradition derived from Augustine and which underpinned the Calvinistic understanding of predestination and inherent human sinfulness. This interpretation resulted in humanity being viewed not as free but subject to God's intervention and grace. In its place, the influence on their thinking was in relation to the divine goodness, rationality, and happiness propounded by Plato and his Neoplatonist successors Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus. As Douglas Hedley helpfully stresses, "The importance of the Cambridge Platonists is quite overlooked if they are detached from the roots and ramifications of their Platonism." Cambridge Platonism, in summary,

> stemmed from a small group of Cambridge intellectuals who were active and prominent from the late 1640s and especially during the 1650s. . . Their thinking was characterised by an emphasis on the rational aspects of Christianity, a rejection of much religious dogma and the many minor distinctions which divided the Christian community, and a tolerant, irenical spirit in religion.[30]

Later historians initially used the term "Cambridge Platonist" interchangeably with "Latitudinarian." Thus Tulloch, for example, in the course of making reference to the presence during the second quarter of the seventeenth century of two opposing movements─one "mainly ecclesiastical, aiming at a wider extension of the Anglican Church system" and connected with Oxford, and the other "mainly philosophical and

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[29] William Watts*, St. Augustines Confessions translated* (London, 1631), Book 7, chap. 20, 404 and chap. 21, 407.

[30] Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: 'Aids to Reflection' and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35; and Twigg, *History of Queens' College*, 147-48. Jaroslav Pelikan offers a different, but equally valid, understanding of the character of the thinking of the Cambridge Platonists as being based on the four central convictions of sovereignty of the good, true and beautiful; the goodness of inquiry; participation in the Life of God; and the goodness of Creation (*Cambridge Platonist Spirituality*, ed. and introd. Charles Taliaferro & Alison J. Teply, pref.by Jaroslav Pelikan (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 7).

[having] directly in view the interests of rational religion [and] exclusively connected with Cambridge"─could describe those connected with the Cambridge colleges as being represented throughout by "a succession of well-known Cambridge divines, sometimes spoken of as 'Latitudinarians' and sometimes as 'Cambridge Platonists'."[31] In consequence, Gordon Rupp was only uttering the developing orthodoxy of the twentieth century that better understood Cambridge Platonists and Latitudinarians as two clearly identifiable groups that, while overlapping, were distinguishable; this allowed H.R. McAdoo to observe succinctly, "The Latitudinarian movement is Cambridge Platonism minus the sense of wonder and genius."[32] Subsequently there has been some dispute concerning both the composition of the groups and the definition of the term "Latitudinarian."

Frederick Powicke, for example, proposed that Nathaniel Culverwell (1619-1651) and Peter Sterry (1613-72), who were both fellows at Emmanuel, should be considered Cambridge Platonists alongside Whichcote, Cudworth, Smith, and More (significantly, Patrides did not chose to include contributions by Culverwell and Sterry in his influential *Cambridge Platonists)*. Of greater help has been the emphasis by scholars including W.M. Spellman who have emphasised the generational difference between Cambridge Platonists and "Latitudinarians." He defined the latter as consisting of a younger, later group of Cambridge graduates who embraced a moderate, reasonable churchmanship, and included such men as Isaac Barrow (1630-77), Edward Fowler (1632-1714), John Moore (1646-1714), Patrick, Stillingfleet, Tenison, and Tillotson but also, illogically, Whichcote. The basis for including the first three, however, is questionable. Barrow, while educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and ordained shortly after the Restoration, was a theologian but primarily a mathematician who held a series of academic posts at

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[31] Tulloch, *Rational Theology,* II. 5-6.

[32] Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 30; and McAdoo *The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965), 158. Norman Sykes claims "The line dividing the Cambridge Platonists from their Latitudinarian successors is devious and difficult to draw . . . The term 'Latitudinarian' indeed covered a wide diversity of opinion and outlook" (*From Sheldon to Secker: Aspects of English Church History 1660-1678* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 45-46). Less obviously, Aidan Nichols sees the difference as being one of adiaphorism, which contributed to the "doctrinal vagueness of the Latitudinarians" (*Panther and the Hind*, 83, 87, 92; and see also 83-93). For a further discussion of adiaphorism, see Jacqueline Rose, "John Locke, 'Matters Indifferent', and the Restoration of the Church of England," *Historical Journal* 48 (2005), 601-21.

Cambridge; Fowler, although influenced by the Cambridge Platonists, particularly Henry More, took a first degree at Oxford before a master's at Trinity, Cambridge, three years later in 1656, and his inclusion would appear to rely largely on his attacks on nonconformity and Roman Catholicism rather than as the result of an endorsement of the via media, *per se*; and Moore, a former fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, but twenty years younger than Patrick and ordained priest only in 1671, seems to have come to attention only as a "popular preacher" rather than as a writer. Unsurprisingly Spellman concludes, "As seventeenth-century labels go, 'Latitudinarianism' is as broad and problematic a term to define as 'Puritanism'."[33]

An immediate difficulty arises when the term "Latitudinarian"[34] is used to refer to both the Cambridge Platonists and their successors who became leaders in the church a quarter of a century later. Isabel Rivers added an initially helpful clarity to the situation when she identified the two generations of latitude-men as originally being "students at Cambridge before the Civil War and fellows and heads of colleges during the Interregnum," and then later comprising scholars "during the late 1640s and the 1650s predominantly at Cambridge" who were strongly influenced by the first generation. In that first group she highlighted Whichcote, More, Smith, and Cudworth, and among the later group "the most important are Simon Patrick . . . and especially John Tillotson," together with Barrow and Stillingfleet.[35] Although, as Rivers accepts, problems are caused by considering both groups as "latitudinarian," the idea of the existence of two generations of scholars and churchmen is helpful because it serves to emphasise the existence of a difference in outlook. The Cambridge Platonists, based at the University, were able to ponder a theoretical application of reason, human happiness and fulfilment, whereas the younger generation, many of whom became ordained ministers in

[33] *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (Athens, Georgia & London: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 1, 8-9, 25. See Fowler, *The Principles and Practices, Of certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England* (London, 1670) and *The Resolution of this Case of Conscience* (London, 1683); John Spurr, "Fowler, Edward (1631/2-1714)," *ODNB*; and Peter Meadows, "Moore, John (1646-1714)," *ODNB*.

[34] For further useful explorations of Latitudinarianism, see G.R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 61-86; and John Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," *Historical Journal* 31(1) (1988), 62, 69, 82.

[35] Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780. Volume I: Whichcote to Wesley*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 28, 30.

London parishes, were forced to temper these ideas to accord with the practical demands of parish ministry.

But Rivers then adds a further layer of complexity by proposing that Whichcote and Wilkins should be seen as the "key figures" of the first generation.[36] Acknowledging the predicament caused by terming Wilkins a Cambridge Platonist, for the reason that it "obscures the continuity of interest between the first and second generations," she significantly weakens her thesis. It will be argued in the next chapter that Wilkins should be considered the archetypical Latitudinarian (and deservedly[37]) not as the direct result of his Cambridge connection, but because of his appointments in London after the Restoration of the monarchy as Preacher at Gray's Inn in 1661 and then Vicar in the influential parish of St. Lawrence Jewry between 1662 and 1668. This latter position became the focus of Latitudinarian activity in London and also provided Wilkins with the platform from which to become "the effective leader of the Latitudinarian circle" in the Capital.[38] More recently, Rosemary Dixon has further blurred the definition by adding the non-Cambridge Burnet to the number on account of his preaching.[39]

Ultimately, though, as Spurr points out in a key exploration,

> The word "latitudinarian" is now too deeply embedded in the way we think and write of Restoration religious and intellectual life to be uprooted, yet if we make the effort to hear and read it as contemporaries did, we may come to share their suspicion of this and the other "affrighting names" which litter the religious polemic of the period.[40]

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[36] Rivers, 29. Wilkins, after being Warden of Wadham College, Oxford from 1648 until 1659, was for a year the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. The short period Wilkins spent at Cambridge University hardly qualifies him to have become in that time a driving force for Cambridge Platonism.

[37] Ibid. 28; and Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," 72-73.

[38] John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment: Science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 49; and Barbara J. Shapiro, *John Wilkins 1614-1672: An Intellectual Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 154. Shapiro adds, "John Tillotson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, was the most promising member of the coterie of liberal young clerics that gathered around him." It should also be noted that at the same time, Whichcote was a member of the London clergy as Curate of St. Anne's, Blackfriars (1662-66) and succeeded Wilkins at St. Lawrence Jewry (1668-83).

[39] "Sermons in Print, 1660-1700," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. Hugh Adington, Peter McCullough and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 462.

[40] "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," 62.

Even though historians have shown a unanimity in perceiving a link between the Cambridge Platonists and their second-generation "latitudinarian" successors, there has been a difference of interpretation as to whether Latitudinarianism was a temper or a theology. Spurr and Rivers provide the most detailed exposition of the opposing views.[41]

Spurr has cogently argued that "No specifically 'latitudinarian' party of outlook can be distinguished among the Restoration churchmen. 'Latitudinarian' was their opponents' word," and he further emphasises "how little the attitudes of putative 'latitudinarians' differed from the views of most anglican clergymen on what were, after all, among the major intellectual concerns of the day." Supporting this view, Cragg has written: "Latitudinarianism stood for a temper rather than for a creed. It was primarily an outlook on life and its religious significance," to which Doran and Durston have added that "It none the less remains true that there existed within the late seventeenth-century church a group of churchmen who adopted a tolerant approach towards dissent, were willing to respond to the discoveries of the early natural scientists, and were interested in the relationship between religious belief and reason."[42] But that this remains a minority view is evidenced by Nicholas Tyacke's description of Latitudinarianism as "a movement best understood as the liberal theology of its day" and Ronald Fritze, in an otherwise helpful entry, terming Latitudinarians as "A party that appeared in the Church of England after 1660."[43]

Significantly, however, Spurr emphasises the infrequent use of the term "Latitudinarian" in Restoration literature. Having discovered around only thirty distinct references, he proposed that in the 1680s the term was "quietly passing into desuetude" and that it was only the ecclesiastical repercussions of 1688 that gave the "tired slander" a new lease of life. He gives his argument further credibility by pointing out that not all clergy who played a leading role in the Church's repudiation of puritan soteriology were labelled "latitudinarian," citing as examples George Bull (1634-1710), Sherlock, Robert South (1634-1716) and Samuel Parker (1640-88). These facts enabled Spurr to reach a powerful and convincing conclusion that it is not through pursuit of the "chimera

[41] "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church"; and Rivers, 25-88.
[42] "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," 62; Cragg, 81; and Doran and Durston, 32.
[43] Tyacke, "From Laudians to Latitudinarians," 49, 64; and Ronald H. Fritze, "Latitudinarians," in *Historical Dictionary of Stuart England, 1603-1689,* ed. Ronald H. Fritze, William B. Robison and Walter Sutton (Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 283.

of ‘latitudinarianism’” that an understanding of the Church of England in the late seventeenth century will be gained, but through an examination of how the Church repudiated Calvinism.[44]

Rivers responded by claiming that Spurr had “overstate[d] the case against modern historians’ use of the label,”[45] and she did not address the detail of his observations. Her understanding of the Latitudinarians, therefore, is misleading. She describes them initially as “an influential group of men” in the 1650s and early 1660s with unorthodox views concerning doctrine and discipline, but whose numbers were “relatively small and their influence restricted, though increasing” in the 1660s until by the 1690s they had become “the dominant . . . party in the Church of England”;[46] but in so doing, she implies the formation of a party with an agreed theology enjoying a steady upward trajectory over a period of some thirty-five years until it achieved its commanding position. Tim Harris, in quoting the definition by the anonymous author of *The Detector Detected* (1743), supplies a corrective for the notion that the Cambridge Platonists, or early Latitudinarians, might have constituted a “party” at this stage:

> *A Party* is, when a great Number of Men join together in *professing a Principle, or Set of Principles*, which they take to be for the *publick Good*, and therefore endeavour to have them established and universally professed among their Countrymen.[47]

By this definition, the Latitudinarians did not constitute a party because they neither comprised a sufficient number of adherents nor jointly professed a common set of principles. While a shared emphasis on moderation can be discerned,[48] they did not agree on other fundamental matters. Tillotson and Wilkins, for example, were keen to accommodate nonconformists within the State Church, whereas Stillingfleet and Patrick were opposed to that (Patrick violently so, as evidenced by his *Friendly Debate* series of publications between 1668 and 1670). A “loose

[44] “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church,” 82.
[45] Rivers, 26 n. 5.
[46] Ibid. 25-26.
[47] *The Detector Detected* (London, 1743), 58, quoted in Tim Harris, *Politics under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society 1660-1715* (London & New York: Longmans, 1993), 5.
[48] See Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720* (New York & London: Gordon and Breach, 1976), 35.

confederacy of churchmen" best describes the Latitudinarians at this stage.[49]

A further weakness in Rivers' argument is exposed by her attribution to Symon Patrick of the pamphlet that contains the first use in print of the term "Latitude-men," and which is also "commonly held to be the definitive apologia for Anglican naturalism": *A Brief Account of the new Sect of Latitude-men Together with some reflections upon the New Philosophy*.[50] First published in 1662 with a London, Oxford, and Cambridge imprint and its author enigmatically indicated on the title-page as "*S.P.* of *Cambridge*," its contemporary importance is evidenced by the appearance of further issues in 1669, referring to "Latitudinarians" in the title, and in 1708, the latter in a collection of scarce pieces which "manifestly discover the Seeds and Principles from which the greatest Events, and perhaps Revolutions in Church and State, have taken their rise."[51] Since before the turn of the last century, the work has generally been attributed to Symon Patrick, albeit with varying degrees of confidence, an association Rivers does not challenge despite Spurr's assertion that the linkage, "which rests on little more than the coincidence of initials, remains at best unproven."[52]

Whoever the author, *Brief Account* usefully offers at least a working understanding of the theological position contemporaries believed to be occupied by "Latitude-Men":

> they conceive there ought by all means to be a settled Liturgy, it having alwayes been the practice both of the Jewish and Christian, and more or less retained by all reformed Churches; that there can be no Solemnity of publick worship without it . . . They do highly approve that vertuous mediocrity which our Church observes between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of *Rome*, and the squalid sluttery of Fanatick conventicles . . . Reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of every thing.[53]

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[49] Jacob, *Newtonians and the English Revolution*, 43.

[50] Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland's 'De Legibus Naturæ'* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society at the Boydell Press, 1999), 34.

[51] [John Dunton], *The Phenix: or, A Revival of Scarce and Valuable Pieces*, 2 vols (London, 1707-08), II. iv. A further edition followed in 1721 in *A Collection of Choice, Scarce, and Valuable Tracts*.

[52] Rivers, 27; and Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," 70. For the argument against Patrick's authorship, based in part on a stylometric analysis of the text, see Nicholas Fisher and Peter Millican, "Did Symon Patrick *really* write *A Brief Account of the new Sect of Latitude-men* (1662)?" (forthcoming).

[53] *Brief Account*, 7, 10.