

---

### 3: *New Thoughts and a Sublime Style*

It is one power which grasps and hold together all the diversity of the world, and leads the different movements towards one work, lest so immense an undertaking as that of the world should be dissolved by the dissensions of soul

Origen<sup>1</sup>

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,  
legato con amore in un volume,  
cio che per l'universo so squaderna;  
sustanze e accidenti e lor costume,  
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo  
che cio' i dico un semplice lume

Dante<sup>2</sup>

John Smith, as we have seen, espoused a theory of accommodation in which St. Augustine's views of figurative language held an important position. The function of metaphor in theological discourse is not only to accommodate divine things to the understandings of men, but also to awaken in men a perception of the divine.

Whensoever illustrative symbols are borrowed for the declaration of spiritual mysteries, from created things, not only from

---

<sup>1</sup>*de principiis*, 1.1.9.

<sup>2</sup>"I saw within Its depth how It conceives/ all things in a single volume bound by Love,/ of which the universe is the scattered leaves;/ substance, accident, and their relations/ so fused that all I say could do no more/ than yield a glimpse of that bright revelation." *Paradiso*, 33, 85-90, in Alighieri and Ciardi, *The Paradiso*. cf. Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, p.583.

the heaven and its orbs but also from meaner creatures, this is done to give the doctrine of salvation an eloquence adapted to raise the affections of those who conceive it from things unseen, corporeal and temporal, to things unseen, spiritual and eternal.<sup>3</sup>

For Smith, the “willing compliance” of “the Subject that receives” these convenient symbols, in mysterious fashion enlivening the words, provides the means whereby the “subject” (so to speak) is drawn to “the doctrine of salvation”<sup>4</sup>

St. Augustine “well assigned the reason why we are so much delighted”<sup>5</sup> with metaphoric language, in terms which we will find significant. He acknowledged that, “For the feeding and fanning of that ardent love by which, under a law like that of gravitation, we are borne upwards or inwards to rest, the presentation of truth by emblems has a great power: for, thus presented, things move and kindle our affections much more than if they were set forth in bold statements, not clothed with sacramental symbols.”<sup>6</sup> It is problematic why this is so, says Augustine, but he believes that, while the soul is less open to emotion if it is wholly “involved in earthly things”, “if it be brought to those corporeal things which are emblems of spiritual things, and then taken from these to the spiritual realities which they represent, it gathers strength by the mere act of passing from one to the other.”<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the soul is “carried away to rest by a more intensely glowing love.”<sup>8</sup> In this view, although the clearest and most exact representations might be preferable on metaphysical grounds, they bear with them inherent practical and aesthetic limitations, as Smith himself observed.<sup>9</sup> Emblematic and symbolic language makes use of a natural law - an inward determination, not an external decree - as being appropriate to the appetite of the soul. In leading the mind from the corporeal to the spiritual realities, from the sign to what it signifies, it strengthens or awakens that appetite, revealing the possibility of its satisfaction, and

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, *Epistle LV*, vii, 15.

<sup>4</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.315

<sup>5</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.378.

<sup>6</sup>St. Augustine, *Epistle LV*, xi, 21.

<sup>7</sup>St. Augustine, *Epistle LV*, xi, 21.

<sup>8</sup>St. Augustine, *Epistle LV*, xi, 21.

<sup>9</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.171, 173.

rest.

For Augustine, this close alliance with a natural law is made explicit in the analogy of gravity. The implied equation of love with weight, both seen as determinations towards a proper place or object, is clearly expressed in a famous passage from the *Confessions*:

Weight makes not downwards only, but to his proper place also. The fire mounts upward, a stone sinks downward. All things pressed by their own weight go towards their proper places. Oil poured in the bottom of the water, is raised above it: water poured upon the oil, sinks to the bottom of the oil. They are driven by their own weights, to seek their own places. Things a little out of their places become unquiet: put them in their order again, and they are quieted. My weight is my love: by that am I carried, whithersoever I be carried (*pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror*). We are inflamed by thy gift, and are carried upwards: we wax hot within, and go on.<sup>10</sup>

The passage gains its significance from being set in a universe of “elective affinities”,<sup>11</sup> in which all things naturally seek rest and are impelled to move towards the satisfaction of their desire. The motive force of this ceaseless dance, a universal striving for harmony and decorum, is “sympathetic”. Whether manifested in the kinship of species or the resemblance between things and places, the principle of such a cosmic power of affinity is the same: the attractive power of the similar, which explains also the aesthetic power of metaphor, through the rejoicing of like with like.

Recognition of this principle is indeed ancient. It is commonly associated with Empedocles, with Plato, and the Pythagoreans.<sup>12</sup> Democritus, too, was aware of the power of similarity, and the doctrine “was first systematically set forth by one Bolus of Mendes, called “the Democritean” who appears to have written about 200 BC”, from whom it passed into

<sup>10</sup>*Confessions*, 13:9. cf. St. Augustine, *Epistle LV*, x, 18.

<sup>11</sup>The term is applied to the universe which emerges from *Enneads*, IV.3.11ff, IV.4.32-41 etc in Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, p.215.

<sup>12</sup>cf. Empedocles, *fragments* 90, 109, 110; Plato, *Leges*, 873a, *Gorgias*, 510b; A. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, pp.110ff.; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, pp.64, 94, 96; O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle*, p.192.

Stoic thought.<sup>13</sup> Yet it was closely linked, in early times, with the creation of the universe by and through love, as in the (now lost) *Theocrasia* by Pherecydes of Samos, dating from the sixth century BC:

Zeus when about to create changed into *Eros*, because by combining the Cosmos out of opposites he brought it into harmony and love, and sowed likeness in all, and unity extending through all things.<sup>14</sup>

However, the principle of sympathy is perhaps most important for our present interests as it functions in the Eros-filled universe of Plotinus' *Enneads*.

There, sympathy is the power which cements the cosmos in its unity of purpose, providing a "balance" amidst the differentiation of its parts. "There must be differentiation - eyes and so forth - but all the members will be in sympathy with the entire animal frame to which they belong. Only so can there be a unity and total harmony. And in such a total, analogy will make every part a Sign."<sup>15</sup> In its mediation between unity and multiplicity, this sympathy, the manifestation of analogy as power in the universe, is the basis of universal cohesion and signification. The "quality of signifying"<sup>16</sup> follows upon the more immediate purposes of things, so that, in Mackenna's striking translation, "All teems with symbol."

All things must be enchained; and the sympathy and correspondence obtaining in any one closely knit organisation must exist, first and most intensely, in the All. There must be one principle ... enclosing the several members within the Unity.<sup>17</sup>

As the principle of unity in diversity this greater, cosmic affinity is productive of the narrow, human "phenomenon of sympathy; the response between soul and soul" is due to "the mere fact that all spring from that self-same Soul (the hypostasis Soul) from which sprang the Soul of All."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p.247; cf. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.107.

<sup>14</sup>Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.24; Rust, *Remains*, "The preface to the Reader", n.p.; T. Taylor, *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus of Plato*, I, p.431; and Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp.48-72.

<sup>15</sup>*Enneads*, II.3.5; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.95.

<sup>16</sup>*Enneads*, II.3.7; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.96.

<sup>17</sup>*Enneads*, II.3.7; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.96.

<sup>18</sup>*Enneads*, IV.3.8; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.266.

As the responsive energy between “correspondent things”,<sup>19</sup> it is the source of magical efficacy, of perception, and all forms of communication between the different parts of the cosmos.<sup>20</sup>

Augustine himself was not free from the influences of Plotinus and Neoplatonism. But to the theologian, as indeed to any Christian, the power of sympathy was almost demonic in its autonomy. Despite deep suspicion, however, the principle penetrated Christian thought, and the Greek “enlinkment” became subordinate to the divine Goodness, Benignity and Love. Pseudo-Dionysius, extensively influenced by Proclus, described his divinity as the creator of all things, “the attractive Force that draws them; and all this in one single, ceaseless and transcendent act.”<sup>21</sup> Like Origen’s “one Power”<sup>22</sup>, the effects of the “Inexhaustible Power” of God’s loving goodness

enter into men and animals and plants and the entire Nature of the Universe, and fill all the unified organisation with a force attracting them to mutual harmony and concord. ... It preserves the mutual harmony of the interpenetrating elements distinct and yet inseparable, and knits together the bond uniting soul and body ... and governs the faculties whereby each kind of creature maintains its being and makes form the indissoluble permanence of the world, and bestows Deification itself by giving a faculty for it unto those that are deified.<sup>23</sup>

As the Beautiful, too, it “causes the harmonies and sympathies and communities of all things” and holds “all things together in existence by their yearning for their own Beauty.”<sup>24</sup>

The author of Pseudo-Dionysius identified the cause of the “yearning” with the “Yearning” itself, that is, with Christ. In this he concurred with Origen’s interpretation, in an effort to merge *eros* and *agape*, of the celebrated declaration of St Ignatius: “My love (*eros*) is crucified.”<sup>25</sup> Christ,

<sup>19</sup>*Enneads*, IV.4.32; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.316.

<sup>20</sup>cf. *Enneads*, IV.4.40, IV.5.3.

<sup>21</sup>*On the Divine Names*, 1.7.

<sup>22</sup>*de principiis*, 1.1.9.

<sup>23</sup>*On the Divine Names*, 8.5.

<sup>24</sup>*On the Divine Names*, 4.7.

<sup>25</sup>St Ignatius, *Epist. ad Romanos* 7. For Origen’s view see his Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, p.35; cf. Worthington, *Select Discourses*, p.192.

as the universal mediator, was and is the incarnation of that love which “must be conceived as an uniting and comingling power which moveth the higher things to a care for those below them, moveth co-equals to a mutual communion, and finally moveth the inferiors to turn towards their superiors in virtue and position.”<sup>26</sup> He is behind the hierarchical and harmonious order of the universe in which all good things “are disposed in fellowship towards one Good, and are kindly, of like nature, and benignant to one another.”<sup>27</sup>

The scale of nature is fixed by love, and love motivates the language of accommodation, fittingly so, since it is a language of mediation. The divine goodness “lovingly reveals itself” by illuminations which are appropriate to the creature and its faculties, and so “draws upwards” the holy mind into deiformity.<sup>28</sup> This is performed through a “love responsive to these gracious illuminations” which are “sacred veils” enclosing “spiritual truths in terms drawn from the world of sense ... clothing with shapes and forms things which are shapeless and formless.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, under the impulse of that yearning which moves co-equals to communion, men imitate theology, which uses “poetic symbolism” to provide “a means of ascent fitting and natural” to human intelligence.<sup>30</sup>

Both St. Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius share with the Neoplatonists a vision of the cosmos in which its multiplicity is bound in a transcendent unity of purpose by “one power”. From this unity in diversity stems the meaning which all things possess, through their secondary signifying functions. This love, which prompts all things to a mutual regard or harmony, also prompts and informs the metaphoric language and “poetic symbolism” of theology. Metaphor and symbol are thus incorporated into a conception of natural law, and are given divine sanction as a legitimate means of spiritual ascent. Language is given its proper place in the network of sympathies and affinities which manifest the Divine Love in creation.

Like St. Augustine, Smith felt assured of the truth that the end of man is “some solid and substantial Happiness”: “The whole work of this World is nothing but a perpetuall contention for *true Happiness*, and men

<sup>26</sup> *On the Divine Names*, 4.15.; cf. 2.10

<sup>27</sup> *On the Divine Names*, 4.21.

<sup>28</sup> *On the Divine Names*, 1.1.

<sup>29</sup> *On the Divine Names*, 1.4.

<sup>30</sup> *The Celestial Hierarchies*, 2.

are scattered up and down the world, moving to and fro therein, to seek it.”<sup>31</sup> “*Happiness* is that Pearl of price which all adventure for, though few find it.”<sup>32</sup> Since the “highest *Pleasure of Minds and Spirits*” is to be found in God, a “Divine Joy, pleasure and happiness commensurate to that Almighty Being and Goodness which is the eternal source of it”, man has naturally “a restless *appetite*” within him, which seeks after, which “craves” this “*Supreme and Chief Good*”.<sup>33</sup> It is a “*Natural Sense of God*”, present in even “the lowest and dullest sort of vulgar men”, which is always “roving” in search of supreme happiness. This Smith would rather call, in his stunning phrase, “ὄρμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν” - a rush towards god - than with Plutarch “θεοῦ νόησιν” - knowledge of God.<sup>34</sup>

This “Natural Sense” must be distinguished from *noesis* because it remains always “antecedent to any mature knowledge as being indeed the First principle of it.”<sup>35</sup> Its motions are the “faint strugglings of an Higher life with” which spring ultimately from “a true Intellect”.<sup>36</sup> But it is not, however, only “the *nimbleness and agility* of our own *Reason* which stirs up these hungry *affections* within us”. If it were, the “most ignorant sort of men” would not feel them. Rather “some *more Potent nature*” has “planted a *restless motion* within us that might more forcibly carry us out to it self.”<sup>37</sup> And because it comes from without, it cannot be brought to rest in any “self-sufficiency and Tranquillity” in our “own Mind and reason.”<sup>38</sup> A “constant serenity and composedness within” can be found only in conjunction with “something Supreme to its own Essence”.<sup>39</sup>

Those “Distasts of Vice, and Flashes of love to Vertue” which may occur in wicked or brutish men arise from this “*lux sepulta in opaci materia*”, light buried and stifled in some dark body.<sup>40</sup> But if this instinct is followed blindly we may mistake our true and proper object. After all, the Fall is not to be denied: “Ever since our Minds became so dim-sighted as not

---

<sup>31</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.136

<sup>32</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.137

<sup>33</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.445, 135.

<sup>34</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.50

<sup>35</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.50

<sup>36</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.13

<sup>37</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.136

<sup>38</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.135-6

<sup>39</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.138.

<sup>40</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.6.

to pierce into that Original and Primitive blessedness which is above, our Wills are too big for our Understandings, and will believe their beloved prey is to be found where Reason discovers it not."<sup>41</sup> So that, in a sense, when "men most of all *flie from God*" trying to find "some *satisfying good*" in this world, "they still *seek after him*".<sup>42</sup> Though there are some "*Radical Principles* of Knowledg that are so deeply sunk into the Souls of men, as that the Impression cannot easily be obliterated", yet that impression may be so "darkned" as to reveal itself only in the workings of some roving instinct.<sup>43</sup>

The instinctual desires of the soul cannot "be satisfied with those jejune and insipid morsels which this Outward world furnisheth their Table with."<sup>44</sup> They are, as Peter Sterry said, "*Infiniteness* budding forth from its *Seed* in the Soul. Those *Desires* are ever in Motion and Restless, till they put forth into *Infiniteness* it self."<sup>45</sup> They will not, in Smith's words, "be satisfied with any thing less then infinity it self."<sup>46</sup> The only "proper Objects" which can satisfy "a Mind and Spirit are *Divine* and *Immaterial* things, with which it hath the greatest affinity".<sup>47</sup> We are able to "know when our Souls are in conjunction with the Deity", and to "relish the ineffable sweetness of true Happiness" only through the experience of "an internal sensating Faculty", "a Natural instinct of Devotion seated in the Minds of men."<sup>48</sup> This faculty naturally seeks out its own object and satisfaction, as does every other.<sup>49</sup>

But without a "lively, vigorous, active, quick Sense of God", man is "alienated" from him; his faculties are "lost", being deprived of their "Object". Then man has only "Motion without rest; for Rest is in the Center; and you can never come at the Center, if you attain not God."<sup>50</sup> The magnetic as-

<sup>41</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.136.

<sup>42</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.136. cf. Whichcote

<sup>43</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.135.

<sup>45</sup> Sterry, *The Rise, Race and Royalty of the Kingdom of God*, p.139; cf. John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p442. On the divine seed, see Durr, *On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan*, pp.125ff' and Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, App. C, pp.356-368.

<sup>46</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.135.

<sup>47</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.416; cf. Whichcote, *Works*, IV, p.286, 313.

<sup>48</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.138, 350.

<sup>49</sup> cf. John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.416, 137, 288; Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.331.

<sup>50</sup> Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.336. The pattern of motion towards a centre

sumption which appeared in Augustine was evidently valid for Whichcote also, incorporated with the belief that man's true place is at the centre of creation, with his God.

Only some hint of God, some slight approach from him will reveal that "latent and hidden virtue in the Soul of man" which will bear him to his maker. For, as Whichcote makes abundantly clear,

In Nature many virtues of things lye still and do not appear, till things that harmonize and correspond meet. I will give you an Instance: the Instance of Iron and the Loadstone; keep these two at a distance, and the Affection that is between these two does not appear. But this causes Motion: So that what before seemed in these two dull and sluggish; when it comes to meet with its match, when its correspondent doth appear; then it does declare its inward Principle; having received a touch from the Body that is proper to awaken its inward Virtue, it doth presently exert the same. ... God doth order Nature so, that things in this lower World have sundry virtues lying hid and do not appear till things meet with their Mates, and then there is a Motion by contact. The Soul of Man otherwise is not matched, and therefore is not at all excited nor sufficiently drawn forth, save in conjunction with God; but then it doth display its liveliness and sprightliness.<sup>51</sup>

Motion is intimately connected with the affinity which exists between the faculty and its object, in this case, the mind, "that Faculty whereby Man is made capable of God, and apprehensive of him, receptive from him, and able to make returns upon him",<sup>52</sup> and God. The submerged metaphor of "re-turns" assumes a more literal significance, and the Platonists' acceptance of innate ideas, and their insistence upon an "Intellectual touch"<sup>53</sup> are placed in a vital context.

The "insatiable appetite in the Soul" for the Good has a double aspect; disquieting the wicked, who wander "up and down the world, destitute, afflicted, tormented with vehement hunger and thirst after some satisfying

---

of rest is evident throughout his writings; cf. *ibid*, pp. 10, 147, 190, 210, 255, 276, 301, 311, 313 etc.

<sup>51</sup>Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.329.

<sup>52</sup>Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.253.

<sup>53</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.3.

Good;” bestowing upon the virtuous “inward composedness and tranquillity of spirit ... and full satisfaction in God”.<sup>54</sup> If man could achieve that Stoic *ataraxia* of Smith was so critical, and find himself “withdrawn from all terrene and Material things”, his “Mind, like an Hermite sequestered from all things else, by a recession into itself”, he would still discover “something within him that would not let him be at rest, but would rend him from himself.”<sup>55</sup> While the soul is “tossed with restless and vehement motion of *Desire* and *Love*”, its own “sense of an *inward* indigency doth stimulate and enforce it to seek its own contentment *without* it self.”<sup>56</sup> The soul is thus forced to turn once more to God to begin the return to its heavenly home, and, in its reasonable sacrifice of it self, to make God some return for his Love.

Whichcote’s magnetic analogy is by no means superficial. Like the speculation by Smith that, were there any other good equal to the divine unity, “man’s Soul would hang *in aequilibrio*, equally poised, equally desiring the enjoyment of both, but moving to neither; like a piece of Iron between two Loadstones of equal virtue”,<sup>57</sup> the metaphor of attraction places the motion in the realm of natural gravitation towards a proper place or object observed in St. Augustine’s writings. The Platonists’ belief that “God hath given Men souls, which naturally move upwards and apply to God, even as light things do ascend and heavy things descend; everything to its Centre”<sup>58</sup> occurs within what has been called “an Augustinian universe of *desiderium* and *egestas*: that world of divine wants and desires in which the soul longs for its Felicity, its Happiness.”<sup>59</sup> The pattern of *Confessions* 13:9 and *Epistle* LV, in which “things a little out of their places become unquiet”, and are driven by their own weight (in man equated with his love) to seek their “proper places” is reflected, for instance, in Cudworth’s magnificent 1647 *Sermon*.

The strong *Magick* of Nature, pulls and draws everything continually to that place which is suitable to it, and to which it doth belong; so all these heavy bodies presse downwards, towards

<sup>54</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp. 420, 421, 423.

<sup>55</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp. 419, 420.

<sup>56</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp. 420, 421.

<sup>57</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.415.

<sup>58</sup> Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.338 (mispag. as 339).

<sup>59</sup> Martz, *The Paradise Within*, p.40. The pattern of a similar world is articulated in “Dante’s Sun Symbolism”, in Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought in the “Paradiso”*, p.136.

the Centre of our earth, being drawn in by it: In like manner Hell wheresoever it is, will by strong *Sympathy* pull in all sinne, and *Magnetically* draw it to it self: as true Holinesse, is always breathing upwards, and fluttering towards Heaven, striving to embosome it self with God: and it will at last undoubtedly be conjoynd with him, no *dismall shades* of darknesse, can possibly stop it in its course or beat it back.<sup>60</sup>

Less personal in tone and development than the passage quoted above from *Confessions* 13:9, Cudworth's statement depends upon the same principles, the same fundamental belief in the providential workings of a good god.

To this John Smith also subscribed unequivocally:

Where a Spirit of Religion is, there is the *Central force of Heaven* it self quickening and enlivening those that are informed by it in their motions towards Heaven. As on the other side all unhal- lowed an defiled minds are within *the attractive power of Hell*, ... being strongly pressed down by the weight of their Wicked- ness ... As *Plutarch* hath well observed, Every nature in this world hath some proper Centre to which it is always hastening to.<sup>61</sup>

The dictum that "Every like in Nature draweth to its like"<sup>62</sup> formed, in a spiritualised sense, the foundation of the Platonists' "ethical inwardness".

St. Augustine said that "My weight is my love"; in the *Select Discourses*, and indeed the writings of the Cambridge Platonists generally, that weight

<sup>60</sup>Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at Westminster March 21, 1647*, p.50. Significantly, he goes on to quote *Odyssey*, XVII, 218: "As ever, the god is bringing like and like together".

<sup>61</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.441; cf. p.464 and Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.313.

<sup>62</sup>Traherne, *Christian Ethicks*, p.295. Timothy Manlove observed that "There is in every thing so great tendency to unite with its *like*, that 'tis become even a Proverb, *like to like, simile gaudet simili*" (*The Immortality of the Soul* (London 1697), p.38.) cf. Peter Sterry's preface to Sterry, *A Discourse of the freedom of the will* in Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan*, p.133; and Samuel Cradock Cradock, *Knowledge & Practice: Or, A plain discourse of the chief things necessary to be known, believ'd & practised in order to salvation*, p.359: "*Similitude is the cause of love.*" For Proclus, see T. Taylor, *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus of Plato*, I, p.175.

is interpreted as a magnetic attraction. The central concept is sympathy, the energy whereby communication between soul and body is maintained and preserved in co-respondent harmony. It provides an area of mutual participation of “consent” in the animate, primarily to the benefit of the body. The relation is analogous to that of the body itself to the external world:

For our Body maintains not onely a conspiracy and consent of its own parts, but it also bears alike relation to other mudane bodies with which it is conversant, as being a part of the whole Universe.<sup>63</sup>

The important words are “consent” and “conversant”: even in speaking of the material universe, Smith thinks of sympathy in terms of harmony and communication. The phenomenon is not one of subjugation and mastery, of domination by a demonic power; but one of suggestion and response, the dual structure which the Platonists sought and found in sense-perception.

In both its musical and magnetical aspects, sympathy was the basis of cohesion and communication between all parts of the universe. Musically, it operated through “absolute Harmony & Decorum” in movement, “the Musical laws of some Almighty Mind.”<sup>64</sup> Magnetism was primarily, in Henry Vaughan’s phrase “a tye of Bodies”<sup>65</sup> According to Henry More, it was the principle of *Physis*, “the universal comprehension of Spermaticall life dispersed throughout”, by which the world was made and is sustained.

This enters and raiseth up into life and beauty, the whole corporeal world, orders the lowest projection of life, viz. the real Cuspis of the Cone infinitely multiplied, awakening that immense mmist of Atomes into several energies, in fiery, watery and earthly; and placing her Magick attractive points,, sucks hither and thither to evry center a due proportion, and rightly disposed number of those Cuspidal particles, knedding them into Suns, Moons, Earths &c. and then with a more curious artifice, the particular Archei frame out in every one such in-

---

<sup>63</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.119.

<sup>64</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.46.

<sup>65</sup> H. Vaughan, *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*, p.46.

habitants and ornaments, as the divine Understanding thought fit.<sup>66</sup>

This primitive magnetism, obviously a forerunner of Cudworth's "Plastick Nature", is the energy of "an Artificer's imagination separate from the Artificer, and left alone to work by itself without Animadversion",<sup>67</sup> it self a remarkably "curious artifice" on More's part. In the created world there is a residuum of this energy, from which "begins the life of Sympathy/ And hidden vertue of magnetick vein", for in it "Each outward form's a shrine of its magnetick spright."<sup>68</sup> It is this residuum which is now "the universal magnet which binds this great frame and moves all the members of it to a mutual compassion."<sup>69</sup>

"Compassion" may seem an odd word to describe the effects of magnetism embedded in the universal structure, though it has a near affinity with "sympathy". But it points, not only to the passages of Pseudo-Dionysius cited above, but also to the theoretical origins of magnetism, especially when considered as the mutually attractive power of living things. This origin, the source of the concept's powerful implications, was Love, the divine Yearning, Eros. John Norris' statement, in the 1680s, reflects the continuance of the identification of magnetism with love throughout the movement's history.

Every man has a restless Principle of Love implanted in his Nature, a certain *Magnetism* of Passion, whereby (according to the *Platonic* and true notion of Love) he continually aspires to something more excellent then himself, either really or apparently, with a design and inclination to perfect his Being. This affection and disposition of Mind *all* Men have, and at *all* times.<sup>70</sup>

One reason for this survival was the apparently respectable psychological basis for the equation or analogy. Edward Reynolds made it quite explicit:

<sup>66</sup>More, *Philosophical Poems: 1647*, p.345.

<sup>67</sup>More, *Philosophical Poems: 1647*, p.12.

<sup>68</sup>More, *Philosophical Poems: 1647*, p.12.

<sup>69</sup>Thomas Vaughan, *Coelum Terrae*, cited in Chapman, "Henry Vaughan and Magnetic Philosophy", p.215.

<sup>70</sup>"A Discourse Concerning Heroic Piety", in John Norris, *A Collection of Miscellanies*, p.226.

Love then consists in a kind of natural expansion or egress of the heart and spirits to the object loved, or that whereby it is drawn and attracted; whatsoever therefore hath such an attractive power, is in that respect the object and general cause of love. Now, as in Nature, so in the affections likewise, we may observe from their objects a double attraction. The First, is that natural or impressed sympathy of things, whereby one doth inwardly incline to an union with the other, by reason of some secret vertue and occult qualities disposing either subject to that mutual friendship, as between Iron and the Loadstone: The other, is that common and more discernable attraction which everything receives from those natures or places; whereon they are ordained and directed by the Wisdom and Providence of the First Cause, to depend in respect of the perfection and conservation of their body.<sup>71</sup>

In pursuing the distinction, Reynolds makes clear his view that magnetism is a form of love, but also enlarged his interpretation to include a kind of vital gravity, as the Platonists did. By so doing he added the spatial connotation long since present in Dubartas' suggestion that

th'hidden love that now a-dayes doth hold  
The Steel and Load-stone, *Hydragive* and Gold,  
Th'Amber and Straw; that lodgeth in one shell  
*Pearl-fish* and *Sharpling*; and unites so well  
*Sargons* and *Goats*, the *Sperage* and the *Rush*,  
Th'*Elm* and *Vine*, th'*Olive* and the *Myrtle-bush*;  
Is but a spark or shadow of that Love  
Which at first in evry thing doth move,  
When as th'Earth's *muses* with harmonious sound  
To Heav'n sweet *Musick* humbly did resound.<sup>72</sup>

The forms of sympathy not only direct things to their proper objects and places in the seventeenth century as they did for St. Augustine. They

<sup>71</sup>Reynolds, *A treatise of the passions and faculties of the soule of man*, p.74. Reynolds agrees that love and hatred are "the two *radical*, fundamental, and most transcendent passions of all the rest; and therefore well called the *Pondera* and *Impetus animi*" (ibid.,p.39).

<sup>72</sup>Grosart, *The Works*, pp.114-5.

remain the means of sacrifice, too.

The most important aspect of this vital gravity in the *Select Discourses* is its spiritual function with the context of “θέωσις, or God-becomingness”,<sup>73</sup> which is characteristic of the Cambridge Platonists. It reflects that motion intended by Gregory of Nyssa when he said that “the most beautiful and supreme good of all is the Divinity itself, to which incline all things that have a tendency towards what is beautiful and good.”<sup>74</sup> As such, too great a stress on its operation is open to serious theological dangers. Cudworth’s “Magick” and Smith’s “attractive power” lead easily and naturally to an interpretation more properly fitted to the theurgy associated with Iamblichus or some of the Florentine Platonists. St. Augustine’s metaphor of love as weight retains an orthodox relation between man and God. “We are inflamed by thy gift, and are carried upwards: we wax hot within, and we go on.”<sup>75</sup> The Cambridge Platonists’ metaphor of attraction lends itself to the submergence of this mutual relationship in a magical *theosis*.

But, at least in the *Select Discourses*, the metaphor is kept firmly under control. Magnetism may fittingly be regarded as a symbol for divine influence, precisely because it was not conceived as the reversible power which a renaissance theurgy demands, nor as an attraction from a single point. William Gilbert explicitly said that “in magnetism motion is not caused by attraction, but by a coming together or agreeing together of both parts: the attractive power, as it were, residing not in the one only, but in both.”<sup>76</sup> It thus becomes an apt symbol, as indeed it is a real manifestation of divine love, which, as God’s goodness, “taking a fast & sure hold of an innate and correspondent Principle in the Soul of man, raiseth it up above the confines of Mortality, and the day of its mighty power makes it become a free-will Offering unto God.”<sup>77</sup> The importance of sympathy in the operation of sacrifice was hinted at by Dubartas, but in the *Select Discourses* it becomes crucial.

The “active Sympathy” of our Souls “with some Absolute good” is reiterated in Smith’s prose as the central religious experience of the holy

<sup>73</sup>Manlove, *The Immortality of the Soul Asserted*, “To The Reader”, n.pag.

<sup>74</sup>*de homine opificio*, XXI, 9, in Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises*, p.398.

<sup>75</sup>*Confessions*. 13:9.

<sup>76</sup>Gilbert, *de magnete*, n.pag. The translation is from Chapman, “Henry Vaughan and Magnetic Philosophy”, p.226.

<sup>77</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.396.

man.<sup>78</sup> It is “a *free and noble Sympathie* with the Divine love” which dissolves man, makes him yield himself up to God as the only acceptable sacrifice.<sup>79</sup> It is this form of love, its responsiveness typified in the story of Eros and Anteros, which is “alwaies alive and burning in the Temple of our Souls”, and which impels us “to sacrifice our selves back again to him” who sent forth his “Efflux” into our souls.<sup>80</sup>

The Augustinian context of desires and needs reflected in the *Select Discourses* was, of course, a pervasive influence through the seventeenth century. Smith’s articulation of sympathy as the motive power behind man’s restlessness, until he centres in, and sacrifices himself God, is not without its analogies. Henry Vaughan, for instance, insisted that since the Fall

Man hath stil either toyes, or Care,  
He hath no root, nor to one place is ty’d,  
But ever restless and Irregular  
About this Earth doth run and ride,  
He knowes he hath a home, but scarce knows where,  
He sayes it is so far  
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.<sup>81</sup>

Since

He drew the Curse upon the world, and Crackt  
The whole frame with his fall,<sup>82</sup>

man longs for “home”, and sighs for Eden, in a world without immediate local satisfaction for him. He is precisely deficient in that spiritual magnetism to the existence of which Smith tries to make us attentive.

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,  
Nay hath not so much wit as some stones have  
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes,  
By some hid sense their Maker gave.

<sup>78</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.148.

<sup>79</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.336.

<sup>80</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.382, 157, cf. 395.

<sup>81</sup>“Man”, in H. Vaughan, *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*, p.105f.

<sup>82</sup>“Corruption”, in H. Vaughan, *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*, pp.59-60.

To his being in this world, God has “order’d motion, but ordain’d no rest.”<sup>83</sup>

If Vaughan stressed the unceasing motion of man as he strives, at the prompting of his sense of “home”, to attain rest, Thomas Traherne shared Smith’s greater optimism. At the outset of his *Centuries* he invoked the *appetitus naturalis*, whereby “*omnia appetunt bonum*, all things seek their own good”,<sup>84</sup> testifying that

I have found, that Things unknown have a Secret Influence on the Soul: and like the Centre of the Earth unseen, violently Attract it. We lov we know not what: and therefore evry Thing allures us. As Iron at a Distance is drawn by the Loadstone, there being some Invisible Communications between: So there is in us a World of Lov to somewhat, tho we know not what in the World that should be. There are Invisible Ways of Conveyance, by which som Great Thing doth touch our Souls, and by which we tend to it.<sup>85</sup>

He adopted throughout the movement of object to centre, faculty to object. Thus he prepares his reader for his allusion to St. Augustine’s *pondus meum amor meus*<sup>86</sup> by speaking of the “Centre of Eternity”:

As on evry side of the Earth all Heavy things to tend to the Centre; so all Nations ought on evry Side to flow in unto it. It is not by going with the feet, but by Journeys of the Soul, that we Travail thither. ... Where the Carcasse is thither will the Eagles be Gathered together. Our Eys must be towards it, our Hearts set upon it, our Affections Drawn and our Thoughts and Minds united to it. When I am lifted up saith the Son of man I will draw all Men unto me. ... But by what Cords? The Cords of a Man, and the Cords of Love.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup>“Man”, in H. Vaughan, *Silex Scintillans: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*, p.106; cf. “The Pursuite”, p.27; “Distraction”, p.26.

<sup>84</sup>Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholie*, I, p.161.

<sup>85</sup>*Centuries*, 1, 2. My view of Traherne is indebted to Cox, “Traherne’s ”Centuries”: A Platonic Devotion of ”Divine Philosophy””. Among the principal studies of Traherne and the Platonists are Beachcroft, “Traherne and the Cambridge Platonists”; C. L. Marks, “Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism”; and Salter, *Thomas Traherne, Mystic and Poet*, pp.80ff.

<sup>86</sup>*Centuries*, 1, 59.

<sup>87</sup>*ibid.* 1, 55-7.

The burden of Traherne's *Centuries* is that "You are as Prone to lov, as the Sun is to shine,"<sup>88</sup> And the desires of love are the essence of his prose; "Wants are the Ligatures between God and us. The Sinews that convey Sense from him into us; wherby we liv in Him, and feel his Enjoyments."<sup>89</sup> Love is the principle, for Traherne, of "a secret Instinct" or "Natural Desire and Inclination to the search of this Sovereign Good", though which "the Soul is always Working & Moving towards God", for whom it has a "Secret Sufficiency" to be satisfied.<sup>90</sup> As such, it is the basis of his sacramentalism. Love is a responsive emanation, a vital act of the Son, who is "the Lov of the Father":

Where Lov is the Lover, Lov streaming from the Lover, is the Lover; the Lover streaming from Himself: and Existing in another Person.<sup>91</sup>

By implication, at least, therefore, the responsive sympathetic love of man for his God, is that by which he participates in the divine nature of Christ, whose love "By secret passage without Stirring ... proceedeth to its Object, and is as Powerfully present as if it did not Proceed at all."<sup>92</sup>

For Traherne, no less than for the Cambridge Platonists, divine love was both cause and power behind the world's creation. Unlike many Protestants, they emphasised the thesis of the *Timaeus*, that God created the world without self-interest, or the desire that it might make returns of praise to his glory.<sup>93</sup> John Smith insisted "That the Divinity transformed into Love ... to copy forth and shadow out itself as it were in created Being",<sup>94</sup> and consequently "derived himself through the whole Creation, so gathering and knitting up all the several pieces of it again; that as the first production and the continued Subsistence of all things is from himself, so the ultimate resolution and tendency of all things might be to him."<sup>95</sup> The

<sup>88</sup>ibid. 2, 65.

<sup>89</sup>ibid. 1,51

<sup>90</sup>*Church's Year-Book*, f.85.57. See C. L. Marks, "Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism". cf. Cudworth, *A treatise of Freewill*, p.28.

<sup>91</sup>ibid. 2,42.

<sup>92</sup>ibid. 2,40.

<sup>93</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.408-9.

<sup>94</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.326; cf. pp. 434, 145.

<sup>95</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.399. cf. Culverwel's famous passage beginning "Tis love that glews and fastens the whole Creation together" in Culverwel, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, 143.

love of such a creative God as Smith and Traherne envisage is very close to that spoken of by Pseudo-Dionysius, the “Universal Cause which filleth all things.”<sup>96</sup>

It would seem that the magnetic love which preserves the cohesion of the material universe is a manifestation of the divine love which created it, parallel to that which, if man responds to it, will bring the soul to its proper place through free self-sacrifice. The resemblance between the experience of sympathy in the *Select Discourses* and the notion of the Gospel presented in them, “a *Vital Influx* ... spreading it self over all the Powers of mens Souls, and quickening them into a Divine life”, is clear and significant. The Gospel, we have seen, is identified with “a *Christ-like* Nature in man’s Soul”, Christ appearing in the soul by “the mighty power of his Divine Spirit.”<sup>97</sup> The sympathetic love of God is peculiarly released by Christ,<sup>98</sup> and adds a new dimension of life, by which man is more intimately related to his source, and made positively aware of it.

In the interplay between natural powers, human affections and faculties, and divine principles, which both Smith and Cudworth exploit, Christ occupies a special position, as he must in any Christian work. It owes something perhaps to the pattern of thought which may be observed also in Thomas Vaughan, when he refers to “the infallible *Magnet*, the *Mystery of Union*”:

By this all Things may be attracted, whether Physicall or Meta-physicall, be the distance never so great. This is *Jacob’s Ladder*: without this there is no *Ascent* or *Descent* either *Influentiall* or *Personall*. The absence of this I conceive to be that *Gulph* between *Abraham* and *Dives*. This answers to God the Son, for it is that which mediates between Extremes, and makes Inferiours and Superiors Communicate.<sup>99</sup>

It is related “to the instinctive bond between temporal objects and divine

---

<sup>96</sup>*Divine Names*, 2.20.

<sup>97</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.319

<sup>98</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.330-1; cf. Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at Westminster March 21, 1647*, pp.34-5 and Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable Society of Lincolnes-Inne*, pp.9-10.

<sup>99</sup>T. Vaughan, *Anthroposphia Theomagica or A Discourse of the Nature of Man and his state after death*, p.23; cf. Rudrum, “An Aspect of Vaughan’s Hermeticism: The Doctrine of Cosmic Sympathy”, pp. 129-138.

ideas.”<sup>100</sup> Christ is the “great Interpreter of Heaven”,<sup>101</sup> from whom all true Christians are descended. Their participation in God’s sympathetic influences is dependent upon their participation in Christ, in the divine nature, the mediator of the influence to that “innate and correspondent Principle in the soul of man,”<sup>102</sup> through the awakening of which man comes back to his God.

A universe of “elective affinities” is also one of emanations and influences, or correspondances and analogies. Where the radical principle is love, the structure of its emanation will be repeated throughout the creation. Ficino, who expounded many virtually synonymous terms of the triadic cycle, conceived its triunite structure “as a kind of overflowing (*emanatio*) which produced a vivifying rapture or conversion (called by Ficino *conversio*, *raptio* or *vivificatio*) whereby the lower beings were drawn back to heaven and rejoined the gods (*rereatio*).”<sup>103</sup> Just such a structure, it may readily be observed, is inherent in Smith’s expression of religious experience. The influence of the Divine Spirit of love flow forth into the soul, awaken our faculties, and we are borne willingly back to God. The hidden virtues of the soul, its affinity with the creator whose image it bears, are aroused by divine grace, become aware of their proper object, and move irresistibly and incessantly towards it. The central experience of this structure, the human response to the divine, is consistently figured as an “enlivening”, the kindling of a divine life in the soul of man, a sacramental fire to be offered back to God. It is exactly the experience rendered by Ficino’s *vivificatio*.

Smith’s vision of the Divine Love is deeply rooted in the concept of emanation. He sees it as always issuing forth in “free” and “blissful Ef-

---

<sup>100</sup>Rudrum, “An Aspect of Vaughan’s Hermeticism: The Doctrine of Cosmic Sympathy”, p.134. The doctrine and the position assigned to Christ are not exclusively Hermetic, needless to say. Even Culverwel, the most “Puritan” of the Cambridge group, claimed that “The love of God in Christ is attractive and magnetical, and draws the soul along with it when once it toucht with it” (*The White Stone*, in Culverwel, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, p.126. He also says that Christ “comes to restore all things to their primitive love: he restores the powers and faculties of the soul to their first and original concord; he knits his gifts and graces in the bonds of love: he comes to reconcile Beings, to make antipathies kisse each other” Culverwel, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, p.144. Expand ref.s

<sup>101</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.381.

<sup>102</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.396.

<sup>103</sup>Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, p.37f.

fluxes”, “alwaies overflowing”.<sup>104</sup> The principle of emanation from redundancy, of a Godhead “infinitely full”, common to many of his Neoplatonic sources, was one Smith regarded as respectably Platonic in origin: “as *Plato* sometimes speaks of the Divine love, it arises not out of *Indigency*, as created love does, but out of *Fulness* and Redundancy; it is an overflowing fountain, and that love which descends upon created Being is a free Efflux from the Almighty Source of Love.”<sup>105</sup> It is a perfect love which, as it issues forth to the creation, “alwaies rests satisfied within it self, and so may rather be defined by a *stasis* then a *kinesis*, and is wrapt up and rests in the same Centrall Unity in which it first begins.”<sup>106</sup>

The fountain is, of course, a common Neoplatonic figure, as for the soul, so too for a God who is, in Plotinus’ words “the wellspring of Life, wellspring also on Intellect, beginning of Being, fount of God, root of Soul”<sup>107</sup> For Smith, God is “the onely Fountain of life and power”, a “Fountain of Peace & centre of Rest”; he speaks of “the Divine grace and bounty” as “the only Fountain of all Righteousness and Happiness.” “Every thing as it partakes more of God, and comes nearer to him, so it becomes more *active* and *lively*, as making the nearer approaches to the Fountain of life and virtue.”<sup>108</sup> The Fountain is an image of the divinity as the source of all created being, and of the operations of the divinity in creation: an especial symbol of the divine love. Smith is careful to exploit all the implications of benignity, liberality, and expansiveness which may be found in the metaphor. The Divine Fountain is unlike any earthly fountain: it is inexhaustible and constant, flowing, yet never departing from itself: running freely throughout the whole universe, yet steady and motionless.<sup>109</sup>

This character is shared by the fountain of created light, the sun, which is Smith’s most pervasive figure for the source of supernal light: “God

<sup>104</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.140, 142, 103.

<sup>105</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.409; cf. Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the Universe*, pp.122f, 207, 375, 886 etc. On the Christianity or Platonism of this concept, see Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology*, p.35; Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, pp.28ff.; Armstrong, “Platonic Eros and Christian Agape”; Markus, “The Dialectic of Eros in Plato’s Symposium”.

<sup>106</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.130.

<sup>107</sup> Mackenna’s translation; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.622.

<sup>108</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.475, 413, 309, 470; cf. pp.409, 431, 434, 437 etc.; cf. Worthington, *Select Discourses*, p.96.

<sup>109</sup>cf. Traherne’s pattern of love.

being that in the *Intellectual* world which the Sun is in the Sensible.”<sup>110</sup> However light may flow from the sun, it never diminishes its source, nor is it severed from that source, as the Fathers had long since established.<sup>111</sup> It represents to us the liberality of that God

whose name is LOVE, and II whose Dispensations to the Sons of men are but the disspreadings and distended radiations of his Love, as freely flowing forth from it through the whole orbe and sphear of its creation as the bright light of the Sun in the firmament, of whose benign influences we are then only deprived when we hide and withdraw our selves from them.<sup>112</sup>

And the divine sun, in a manner far transcending the sensible sun, is the source of life, as we noted above.<sup>113</sup>

The sun-light is also a figure of “those Sun-beams of Eternal Truth” which eventually “kindle into an unquenchable fire” within us.<sup>114</sup> As such it has an obvious affinity with the *lux sepulta* which still prompts men with “Flashes of Love to Vertue”.<sup>115</sup> The light of nature, no less than the gracious light of divine illumination, participates in the divinity. And the impulse towards God, arising from man’s needs and desires, is really analogous to the eye’s desire for the light, as Gregory of Nyssa made clear:

For as the eye, by virtue of the bright ray which is by nature wrapped up in it, is in fellowship with the light, and by its innate capacity draws to itself that which is akin to it, so was it needful that a certain affinity with the Divine should be mingled with the nature of man, in order that by means of this correspondence it might aim at that which was native to it.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.384.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Quasten, *Patrology*, pp. 68, 69, 89 for statements by Athanasius and Origen, pp. 196, 475 for statements by Chrysostom and Asterius. See also, Hunter, “Milton’s Arianism Reconsidered”.

<sup>112</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.334. cf. Rust, *Remains*, pp. 5f, 19f etc.

<sup>113</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.16f; cf. pp.2, 330, 364-6 etc.

<sup>114</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.329.

<sup>115</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.6.

<sup>116</sup> *The Great Catechism*, 5. cf. Origen, *de principiis*. II,11,4: “This desire, this longing, we believe to be unquestionably implanted within us by God; and as the eye naturally seeks the light and vision, ... so our mind is possessed with a becoming and natural desire to become acquainted with the truth of God. ... Now we have received this desire

The metaphor of illumination and light, which runs quite through the *Select Discourses*, unifies the structure of emanation. It comprehends the intellectual light of internal illumination, emanating from the “Eternal Father of Lights”, the light naturally implanted in the human soul, and that “constant irradiation of the Divinity upon the Souls of men in the life to come.”<sup>117</sup> Light brings man into conjunction with God, as at once the real and metaphoric medium of all communion between Creator and his creation. Man’s distinction is that his soul is not merely a glass<sup>118</sup> to reflect light back to his God, but “The soul of man is the candle of the Lord”.

Behind Smith’s light symbolism lay the precedents of the Neoplatonic tradition and of the Fathers. It draws powerful support, too, from the solar theology of the Renaissance Florentine Platonists, who added greatly to the affective connotations of the symbolism. One might compare St. Augustine’s statement that “God is the Intellectual light in Whom and from Whom and by Whom shine intellectually things that do intellectually shine”<sup>119</sup> with Ficino’s justification of Pseudo-Dionysius. The Florentine argued that

Dionysius is quite justified in comparing God to the Sun, because as the sun illuminates and warms the body, so God provides to our spirits the light of truth and the ardor of love. ... The divine philosopher says that the light of the mind for understanding everything is the same God himself by whom everything was created, and he compares God and the Sun with each other in in that God stands in the same relation to minds as the sun to eyes.<sup>120</sup>

Ficino’s more precise awareness of the relation stems from his intimate knowledge of Plotinus, in whose influential statement that relation was embodied for the Cambridge Platonists: “To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never

from God, not in order that it might never be gratified, or be *capable* of gratification”, but that it might have satisfaction.

<sup>117</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.409.

<sup>118</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.156, 430ff.

<sup>119</sup> *Soliloquies*, 1:3.

<sup>120</sup> Ficino, *Commentary on the Symposium*, pp.134, 206. cf. Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition*, pp.104f.

can the Soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful.”<sup>121</sup> The application, however, is not merely to the understanding. Love and knowledge go hand in hand for the Platonists, as mutually responsive aspects of the mind, both comprehended in the experience of spiritual sensation. That sensation, for both Smith and Whichcote, is wholly inseparable from Plotinus’ position:

For as the Eye which sees the Sun, must be ... Sunlike, *ie* clear as the Sun; so must also the Mind that sees God, be ... Godlike, and partake of his Holiness. In an impure Soul no true Notion of God can lodge, no right sense of him; We best know God by imitation and resemblance of him; for then we feel him.<sup>122</sup>

The symbolism of light and sun inseparable from the pattern of desire and love which obtains in a universe of analogies and correspondences. For that pattern is itself, at root, one of likeness.

Pseudo-Dionysius provides a very full parallel to Smith’s metaphoric pattern in his description of the Good as the Sun. The Good, he says, is the source of the “light which is an image of Goodness.” As the Good remains all-transcendent, even while it embraces all things, “gives light to all ... that can receive it”, “vitalizes” and “perfects” them, is the “Cause” and “end” of all; so the sun, “which is the visible image of the Divine Goodness” echoes this activity. It illumines everything “that can receive its light”, yet retains “the utter simplicity of light.” It enlivens, nourishes, “perfects and purifies” things, draws all things to itself, as their beginning, cohesive power and end. As the “visible image” of the Good, “All material things desire the sun.”<sup>123</sup>

Pseudo-Dionysius’ complex analogy is echoed in the basic patterns of Smith’s light imagery, its unity, its emanationist structure, its foundation in correspondence. Most importantly, it emphasises the role of sympathy, the reality of Christ made manifest in the universe. For although the sun “usually appears” as one in a series of emanations from the One, and “as such ... receives vigour from higher levels and in turns passes it on to lower levels of the universe; it enjoys the unique distinction of embodying

<sup>121</sup>Mackenna’s translation; Plotinus, *Enneads*, p.64.

<sup>122</sup>Whichcote, *Several Discourses*, IV, p.361. cf. John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.3.

<sup>123</sup>*Divine Names*, 4,3.

both mundane and supermundane power,"<sup>124</sup> in Neoplatonic writers; it is still more specifically significant in the *Select Discourses*.

God implicitly identifies the sun as the physical type of Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness" which rises "with healing in its wings" (Malachi, 4,2). The relationship between the two is reflected in Smith's allusion to

the antient opinion of *Empedocles*, who held there were two Suns, the one Archetypal, which was alwaies in the inconspic-able Hemisphear of the World, but the beams thereof shining upon this World's Sun were reflected to us, and so further en-lightened us.<sup>125</sup>

Christ is the archetype of this world's sun, and there is a real resemblance between his operations in the microcosm of the soul, and those of the sun in the outer world.<sup>126</sup> Yet in Smith's persistent expression of the birth of Christ's influence as a kind of dawn in the soul, no distinction is possible. Christ is the Sun.

The soul is conceived as a psychic microcosm, parallel in its structure to the material world, both of them bearing the image, more or less directly, of the same creator. Their processes are correspondingly analogous, and the drawing forth of exhalations by the rising sun to form "meteors", subsequently dispersed by the same warmth, thus aptly figures the psychic experience of a religious awakening or illumination. As the sun breaks through the clouds and mist which obscure it from us, as it rises above the horizon to end the night which was previously about us, so Christ, the divine sun, pierces through the clouds of "ignorance and sin" to reveal a "clear heaven, a Region that is calm and serene."<sup>127</sup>

For Smith, the illumination which enables us to see the truth of his analogy is itself a dawning of that same Sun, which is also the light source that mediates between the visible and intelligible worlds. Smith's exposition depends, not upon a transposition between internal and external worlds, but upon the light that illuminates both. Christ, as the sun, draws both

<sup>124</sup>Hunter, "Two Milton Notes".

<sup>125</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.231.

<sup>126</sup>cf. Cudworth's ectypal structure in *The Union of Christ and the Church: in a Shadow* (London, 1642), discussed in Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, II, p.200.

<sup>127</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.425; cf.pp. 331, 385, 424, 432, 440, 471. Smith's meteorology is consonant with contemporary theory.

worlds into unity, and, by means of the affinity which is between the mind and the light thus incorporated in Smith's prose, unites also the reading mind to that light.

This process is encouraged by the structural affinity which exists between God, the sun and the mind. of this affinity Smith made the reader specifically aware : in somewhat Augustinian fashion, Smith observes that in its power to "bind up *Past, Present and Future* time together" the soul "seems to imitate ... God's eternity", and makes "an essay to free itself from the rigid laws" of its own finite nature. Although it is "continually sliding from it self ... in the constant variety of its own Effluxes and Emanations; yet is it alwaies returning back again to its first Original."<sup>128</sup> So his sun-beam is "perpetually flowing forth" from the sun, and "ever returning back to it again."<sup>129</sup> He thus places the active soul in a complex analogical relationship with both God and the sun. By imitating the divine freedom from time, the mind is seen to reflect a structure present also in the material creation. It is a vital point, for the *Select Discourses* were intended to appeal, through convenient language, to the structure of the reading mind, and to evoke a response through presenting to it "fair Representations and Pictures of ... Mind."<sup>130</sup>

The light imagery which pervades Smith's prose is intimately connected with the ascent of the soul from its fleshly cave, its liberation from the confines of time and mortality. Nothing, says Smith, so "embases and enthralls" the soul as "this short span of *Time*."<sup>131</sup> The soul naturally desires to be "dilating and spreading it self boundlessly beyond all Finite Being."<sup>132</sup> When the soul is possessed of faith, "it enlarges and dilates it self as much as may be according to the vast dimensions of the Divine Love."<sup>133</sup> By that love the dilation is related to the imagery of flowing streams and fountains which reflects also the emanation of light and its return. Thus Smith says that

We know not what latent powers our Souls may here contain within themselves, which then may begin to open and dilate

<sup>128</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.83.

<sup>129</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.83.

<sup>130</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.xxix.

<sup>131</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.134.

<sup>132</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.124; cf. p.125.

<sup>133</sup> John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.337; cf. pp.336, 402, 442.

themselves to let in the full streams of the Divine Goodness when they come nearly and intimate to converse with it.<sup>134</sup>

Dilation, emanation and conversation are by their nature inseparable.

The theme is summed up by Cudworth, when he contrasts the “straitness” of sin with man’s natural capacity, the freedom which comes when “he loveth everything that is lovely, beginning at God.” Man then

injoys a boundless liberty, and a boundlesse sweetness, according to his boundlesse Love. He inclaspeth the whole World within his outstretched arms, his soul is as wide as the whole Universe, as big as *yesterday, today and forever*.<sup>135</sup>

Such an experience is, in Smith’s words,

the budding and blossoming of Felicity in our Souls ... the inward sense and feeling of the true life, spirit, sweetness and beauty of Grace powerfully expressing its own Energy within us.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, p.44; cf. pp.394,405.

<sup>135</sup>Cudworth, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at Westminster March 21, 1647*, p.78. cf. Whichcote’s insistence that man must “universalise himself”, in Whichcote, *Works*, III, pp.325-6; and George Rust, *Remains* (London, 1686), p.7.

<sup>136</sup>John Smith, *Select Discourses*, pp.442-3.