Whether or not the story is true that at the Synod of Dordt 1618-'19, which was responsible for the expulsion of the Remonstrant party from the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, the English chaplain John Hales bade John Calvin good night, it is clear that in the second quarter of the seventeenth century many English theologians said farewell to traditional Calvinistic theology and adopted a more liberal way of theological thinking, marked by a distinct sympathy for and affinity with some of the fundamental ideas of Dutch Arminianism. Hales himself became one of the protagonists of the new theological outlook; in many respects, his ideas were similar to those of the Cambridge Platonists, whom he probably influenced indirectly and perhaps also in a direct way. The Cambridge Platonists, in their return had many contacts with the Dutch Remonstrants and were accused of propagating the Arminian heresy in
the university of Cambridge: "...the general outcry was that the whole University was over-run with Arminianisme...". Bishop Burnet, who had a deep sympathy for "...this set of men at Cambridge" remarked: "...They read Episcopius much". They received the nickname "men of latitude" or "latitudinarians", which was soon turned into a name of honour. In his defence of "...the principles and practices of certain moderate divines of the Church of England" (here, in particular the group of the Cambridge Platonists is meant) Edward Fowler makes one of the participants in "...a discourse between two intimate friends" thus react to the description of a latitudinarian as "...a gentleman of wide swallow": "...Very good! It seems then his Conscience is the Seat of his Latitude, and that his name includes the forementioned Lovely Character".

Indeed, the Cambridge Platonists were men of peace and toleration; Fowler wrote in their spirit, when he appealed to his readers "...to lay aside our uncharitable and (therefore) unchristian heats against each other ... and throw water upon the Flames that threaten our destruction...".

There is much which connects them with the latitudinarian movement of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, of which Simon Patrick, Bishop of Ely, and John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, are typical representatives. Still, there is a difference between the Cambridge Platonists and the later latitudinarians. Perhaps H. R. McAdoo is not quite fair to a generation which was deeply influenced by the spirit of the Cambridge Platonists, when he remarks: "...The Latitudinarian movement is Cambridge Platonism minus the sense of wonder and the genius"; but as the latitudinarian movement developed, the mystical element receded into the background and the climate became more distinctly moralistic than it had been in the time of the earlier Cambridge theologians.

The later seventeenth century latitudinarians were men of a period of

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7 G. Burnet, History of his Own Times I, Oxford 1823, p. 324.
8 [E. Fowler], The Principles and Practices of certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England... Truly Represented and Defended... in a Free Discourse between two Intimate Friends, London 1670, p. 10.
9 Op. cit., p. X.
10 H. R. McAdoo, op. cit., p. 158.
11 There is some confusion with regard to the use of the term "latitudinarian". While Tulloch, McAdoo and C. R. Cragg (From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, London 1966, ch. IV) tend to reserve the term for the later seventeenth century latitudinarians, Marjorie Nicolson ("Christ's College and the Latitude-Men", Modern Philology 27, 1929-30, p. 36 note 2) and T. A. Birrell ("Introduction" to S.P., A Brief Account..., p. III) rightly point out that the term was used first of all for the Cambridge Platonists and that thus all Cambridge Platonists were "latitudinarians" in the original sense of the word.