

7-1-1963

John Colet's Significance for the English Reformation

Carl S. Meyer

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyer, Carl S. (1963) "John Colet's Significance for the English Reformation," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 34, Article 44.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol34/iss1/44>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

John Colet's Significance for the English Reformation

CARL S. MEYER *

JOHN COLET, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, died in 1519. Two years later Henry VIII wrote the *Assertio septem sacramentorum*, his polemic against Martin Luther. Although Colet's death occurred (16 Sept. 1519) 20 months before Luther's books were burned in St. Paul's Cathedral courtyard (12 May 1521), he knew of Luther and Luther's books before his end came. We must include him among the *maximi* of whom Erasmus wrote to Luther: "Habes in Anglia qui de tuis scriptis optime sentiant et sunt ii maximi."¹ But Colet had died before the "Germans" were beginning to discuss Luther's writings in the White Horse Inn in Cambridge or Robert Barnes had ended his career as Luther's martyred "St. Robert."² Neverthe-

less the question of Colet's significance for the spread of Reformation ideas remains among the most intriguing problems of the history of the English Reformation.

Extreme assertions were made in an earlier day that Colet belonged to the 16th-century reformers.³ A recent work on Colet refers to him as "a reformer before the Reformation."⁴ Seebohm's designation of Colet, More, and Erasmus as "the Oxford Reformers"⁵ has linked these names, even in textbooks used in secondary schools⁶ in a glib generalization. Colet was not a "reformer" in the commonly accepted sense of the term, although Seebohm, it is true, does not make him a proto-Protestant or a precursor of Protestantism. Clebsch describes Colet as a "re-pristinator" rather than a reformer whose Platonization of Paul is the key to his historical particularity.⁷ Miles, in his analysis of Colet's Platonism, points out that Protestants and Roman Catholics alike have

* This article is a revision and expansion of a paper read at the Central Renaissance Conference, University of Missouri, Columbia, 20 April 1963.

A comprehensive "John Colet Bibliography" has been prepared by the author and is available upon request to the School for Graduate Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

¹ P. S. Allen, ed., *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), III, 606, ep. 980, Erasmus to Luther, Louvain, 30 May 1519. Hereafter cited as Allen, *Ep. Eras.*

John B. Gleason, "Studies in the Thought of John Colet" (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1957), p. 245, n. 1, discusses this letter at length, indicating that Colet was not necessarily included among the *maximi*.

Preserved Smith says that Erasmus may have been thinking of John Colet. P. Smith, *Age of the Reformation* (New York: Century Co., 1920), pp. 281 f.

² D. Martin *Luthers Werke* LI, (Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1914), 449, 23.

³ E. g., by Samuel Knight, *The Life of John Colet* (London: J. Downing, 1724), *passim*.

⁴ Ernest W. Hunt, *Dean Colet and His Theology* (London: SPCK, 1956), p. 19.

⁵ Frederic Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers* (No. 665 of *Everyman's Library*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1929). This work was first published in 1867.

⁶ E. g., Henry Elson, *Modern Times and the Living Past* (New York: American Book Co., 1936), p. 336.

⁷ William A. Clebsch, "John Colet and the Reformation," *Anglican Theological Review*, XXXVII (July 1955), 167-77.

claimed him,⁸ and O'Kelly has questioned even the designation "Christian humanist" as a correct label for Colet.⁹

Miles brings "pro-Catholic evidence," e. g., that Colet never attacked the position of the pope.¹⁰ Gleason finds it "rather doubtful" that Colet would have favored the doctrinal accents of Martin Luther.¹¹ But Miles also cites "Counter-Evidence for Colet's Protestantism," e. g., that Colet was tried for heresy, that his vocabulary had a Protestant flavor, that he exalted Scripture as the ultimate authority, that "there are many passages in Colet which are definitely expressive of Calvinistic predestination," or that in many points he diverts from the later Tridentine doctrine of justification.¹²

⁸ Leland Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1961), p. 170: "Unfortunately, the subject of Dean Colet's precise place in the English Reformation has been marred by considerable partisan spirit."

⁹ Patrick Bernard O'Kelly, Introduction, "John Colet's Commentary on 1 Corinthians: An Edition of the Latin Text, with Translation, Notes, and Introduction" (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1960), pp. 34, 35. Cited hereafter as O'Kelly, Introduction.

See O'Kelly observations also in a lengthy footnote to Colet's *Commentary*, pp. 163 f.

Denys Hay, "Introduction," *The New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), I, 18, rejects the designation "humanist" for Colet.

¹⁰ Miles, pp. 173, 174.

Peter M. Dunne, "Jean Colet Potential Protestant?" *The Historical Bulletin*, XV (March 1937), 45, 46, makes a rapid but rather complete survey of opinion regarding Colet and comes up with the opinion that Colet "probably would have died for the [Roman Catholic] truth." (P. 54)

¹¹ Gleason, p. 245.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 175—216.

Knox also says that Colet's "thought and teaching . . . was contributory to English Reformation doctrine." David B. Knox, *The Doctrine*

Colet's theological formulations, however, cannot be judged simply on the basis of decisions reached at the Council of Trent. Nor can thereby his significance for the English Reformation be established. Much less can the criterion for determining that significance be the one adopted by Lupton, whose "instinctive feeling" led him to say "that in Colet we have a strong connecting link between the old and the new."¹³ To emphasize the "spiritual succession" of holiness, as Jenks does, is equally nebulous.¹⁴

Colet does not belong, as Van Gelder correctly points out, in the group of the Erasmian Evangelicals;¹⁵ his placement of Colet, in agreement with Eugene Rice, among those who opposed "natural reason" in contrast to "grace" is sound.¹⁶ Yet Colet

of Faith in the Reign of Henry VIII (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 101.

Knox claims that Colet taught justification by grace, the total depravity of man, and double predestination. He states that later in life Colet altered his views on *sola fide*. *Ibid.*, pp. 101 to 105.

¹³ J. H. Lupton, *A Life of John Colet, D. D., Dean of St. Paul's and Founder of St. Paul's School* (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1961 [reprint of 2nd ed. of 1909; 1st ed. appeared in 1887]), p. 265.

"It would be difficult to find a more typical link between the Middle Ages and the Reformation than John Colet, the great dean of Saint Paul's." G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), IV, 6.

¹⁴ Arthur W. Jenks, "John Colet," *Anglican Theological Review*, I (March 1919), 370.

¹⁵ H. A. Enno Van Gelder, *The Two Reformations in the 16th Century: A Study of the Religious Aspects and Consequences of Renaissance and Humanism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. 132.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129, n. 3: Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "John Colet and the Annihilation of the Natural," *Harvard Theological Review*, XLV (July 1952), 141—163. See Chapter VIII of Gleason's thesis also.

must be numbered in the company of those who early in the 16th century advanced both learning and reform, who, while remaining within the bosom of mother church, were oftentimes rebellious spirits, critical and unafraid to voice independent opinions.¹⁷ Colet's main aim was to further wisdom and piety, personal morality, and the reform of the church.¹⁸ Divine wisdom, he taught, was the knowledge of Christ, revealed by God in a direct action of grace. But Colet would not divorce this *sapientia* from *pietas*, according to the Augustinian formula which he knew so well.¹⁹ Colet is recognized as one of those who furthered the essential aims of the movement that was welling up within the church and later became known as the Counter-Reformation. The influence of the *devotio moderna* on Colet was not lost in the Reformation.²⁰

One fact, however, must be noted specifically in trying to reach some answer to the question of Colet's significance for the English Reformation, namely, that in the years which saw in England the break with Rome, the currents of Lutheranism and Calvinism, the adiaphoristic compromise of the Elizabethan *via media*, and the be-

ginnings of Puritanism, from 1534 to 1564 (if precise dates can be given), there was no one who called himself a disciple of John Colet.²¹ This can hardly be the reason for the surprising omission of Colet's name by Philip Hughes in his 3-volume work on the 16th-century religious change in England.²² Does Father Hughes imply that Colet had no meaning for the Reformation in England?

The English reformers did not forget or simply ignore John Colet. There was Thomas Lupset, a favorite of Colet's at St. Paul's School. He carried the influence of Colet to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge.²³ William Tyndale in his polemic against More reminded Thomas More of Colet. In spite of the fact, he said, that the bishop of London, Fitzjames, was wise, virtuous, and learned (so, at least, More had contended), "yet he would have made the old dean Colet of Paul's an heretic, for translating the Paternoster in English, had not the bishop of Canterbury helped the dean."²⁴ Hugh Latimer made an offhand reference to Colet in one of his sermons, dating an event "about the time when Colet was in trouble," as if everyone knew when that was, and what is more impor-

¹⁷ Douglas Bush, "Tudor Humanists," *The Thought and Culture of the English Renaissance: An Anthology of Tudor Prose, 1481 to 1555*, ed. Elizabeth M. Nugent (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), pp. 3—11.

¹⁸ Gleason, pp. 183, 186, 187, 253.

¹⁹ Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 130, 131, 146, 213.

New Cambridge Modern History, I, 18.

²⁰ Gleason has investigated the influence of the *Devotio moderna* on Colet in chapter V of his study. Albert Hyma's appraisal of Colet can most readily be found in his chapter on "Erasmus and the Oxford Reformers," *Renaissance to Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1951), pp. 209—249.

²¹ Van Gelder, p. 185, makes this point: "There are, however, before the middle of the century, no adherents of More and Colet in England to be mentioned whose views have come down to us in their writings."

²² Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954), I.

²³ H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1958), pp. 31, 32; Nugent (ed.), pp. 36, 78, 79. John A. Gee, *The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), pp. 176—178.

²⁴ William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, ed. for the Parker Society by Henry Walter (Cambridge: University Press, 1850), p. 168.

tant, as if everyone knew Colet and his stand.²⁵

Lupset and Latimer were at Cambridge. To this day the manuscripts of Colet's lectures are at Cambridge, not at Oxford.²⁶ A possible connection between the fact that Cambridge houses the manuscripts of Colet's lectures and that it was the seat of the early English reformers ought not be ignored. The manuscripts on the lectures on Paul's Letter to the Romans are in the Parker collection of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,²⁷ with which Matthew Parker had close connections. Parker was a student there, it seems, and received a Bible clerkship in that college in March 1521.²⁸ On 4 Dec. 1544 he was elected master of Corpus Christi, a position he held until December 1553.²⁹

When did Parker acquire these manuscripts? It would be difficult to believe that they came into his possession while he was an undergraduate. More likely he acquired them while he was master of Corpus Christi during the reign of Edward VI, to provide source materials for his *De antiquitate Britannicae ecclesiae*. He wrote this volume to trace Christianity in England from Augustine of Canterbury (597), "until the days of King Henry VIII, when religion began to grow better, and

more agreeable to the Gospel."³⁰ Cuthbert Tunstall, so Matthew Parker himself asserted, supplied the title to one manuscript.³¹ And to this manuscript Parker himself penned a memorandum: "Supersunt multa ab eodem Ioanne Colet scripta in Divum Paulum, sed puerorum eius incuria perierunt."³² The manuscript of the commentary on 1 Corinthians, O'Kelly believes, is a Colet holograph. If later evidence can be trusted, it was in Parker's possession.³³ Colet, if one judges by these external circumstances, influenced Matthew Parker, Elizabeth I's first archbishop of Canterbury.

Again, Colet's influence on George Stafford can be postulated. Stafford lectured on Romans at Cambridge. Latimer heard him cite Humphrey Monmouth as an example of one who did kindness to an enemy. So Latimer related in a sermon, and in the same connection he also referred to Colet.³⁴ Was it because George Stafford had cited Colet in his lecture, having heard Colet himself lecture on Romans? The conjecture is plausible.

Thomas Cranmer, too, may have come under the influence of John Colet. Bromiley, at least, states that perhaps Cranmer acquired his respect for the Bible from Colet, without citing direct evidence for this assertion.³⁵

Following Hopf, Gleason has pointed up the contact between John Colet and Martin

²⁵ Hugh Latimer, *Sermons*, ed. for the Parker Society by George E. Corrie (Cambridge: University Press, 1844), p. 440.

²⁶ Seebohm, p. 19, n. 1, and p. 46, n. 1; Hunt, pp. 131, 132; O'Kelly, Introduction, pp. 46-49; Lupton, *Life of John Colet*, p. 67, n. 1, and p. 305.

²⁷ MS. No. CCCLV. Seebohm, p. 19, n. 1; Hunt, p. 121.

²⁸ V. J. K. Brook, *A Life of Archbishop Parker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23 for the date of his election; p. 51 for the date of his resignation.

³⁰ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 323, without reference.

³¹ Lupton, *Life of John Colet*, p. 62, n. 1.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 93, n. 1.

³³ O'Kelly, Introduction, p. 46. Gleason cites Lupton.

³⁴ Latimer, *Sermons*, p. 440.

³⁵ G. E. Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer, Theologian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. viii.

Butzer. The record of Butzer's contributions to the English Reformation need not be detailed, but Colet's indirect significance through the influence he had on Butzer may be emphasized.³⁶

John Foxe mentions Colet with evident admiration,³⁷ without, however, noting his Bible lectures. The founding of St. Paul's School is singled out by him from "among the many other memorable acts left behind him."³⁸ He notes that Colet appointed William Lily, a married man, as headmaster of that school.

Lily linked Colet's name with his own in the Latin grammar which he produced. For that grammar Colet supplied the preface and the *Aeditio*. This *Rudimenta grammaticus* was supplemented with a *Libellus de constructione octo partium orationis*. The *Libellus* was written at Colet's request and revised by Erasmus. Almost 200 editions of it were printed between 1513 and 1595. In 1540, it seems, or at least by 1542, a textbook based on the Colet-Lily grammar in English, the Lily-Erasmus syntax in Latin, and the grammatical verses by Lily, made its appearance. It was "authorized" by Henry VIII, who enjoined its exclusive use. Various revisions and editions of this work are extant; the last one, in 1858, called it Colet's *grammar*.³⁹

³⁶ Gleason, pp. 50—53; Constantin Hopf, "Note on Bucer and Colet," *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), pp. 51—53.

³⁷ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, Townsend ed. (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1870), IV, 246—248.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

³⁹ Vincent J. Flynn in his introduction to *William Lily's A Short Introduction of Grammar* (New York: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1945), pp. iv—x. The facsimile reprint of the *Grammar* is of the copy in the Folger

Does this mean that Colet the reformer lived on as Colet the grammarian and thus indirectly is of significance for the English Reformation? Colet contributed to the learning of Latin letters and syntax and desired nothing more, he said, "than the education and bringing up of children in good manners and literature."⁴⁰ He would not count it ignoble to be remembered as a humble writer of a textbook. Nevertheless, his significance must be accounted greater than that.

Lupton's provocative study of Colet's influence on the English Reformation emphasizes his contribution to the English formularies, his efforts to correct abuses in the church, his emphasis on education, and his promotion of Biblical studies.⁴¹ The last-named (which is second in Lupton's list) is the most important. Although the other factors may be discounted, since Colet was not unique in any of these four fields,⁴² the stimulus he gave to the *ad fontes* movement, the return to the Scriptures,⁴³

Shakespeare Library, Washington, the edition printed in London by Berthelet in 1567. The Washington University Library, St. Louis, has a 1669 edition of the "authorized" grammar. On William Lily see Vincent J. Flynn, "Life and Works of William Lily," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1939. *New Cambridge Modern History*, II, 425.

⁴⁰ From the prolog of the "Statutes of Paul's School," Elizabeth M. Nugent, ed., Nugent, p. 37; Lupton, Appendix A, p. 271.

⁴¹ J. H. Lupton, *The Influence of Dean Colet upon the Reformation of the English Church* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1893), p. viii.

⁴² Gleason has examined Lupton's published B. D. thesis (cf. n. 41) in two chapters in his Ph. D. dissertation and comes to the conclusion, p. 255, that "the traditional view of Colet is not in accord with the facts."

⁴³ Here Gleason agrees with the generally accepted view.

links him with Erasmus⁴⁴ as a prime promoter of Bible study. *Illuminatio in fide est revelatio, quae est sapientia nostra*, Colet said.⁴⁵

His exegetical method departed from the fourfold sense advocated by Aquinas (literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical).⁴⁶ His

⁴⁴ "This new emphasis on the Bible as the one book from which Christians should derive nourishment and the insistence upon its being made available to all men and women in their native tongues were concepts made familiar by the teachings of Savanarola and Colet, Saint Jerome and Erasmus, and were those which determined the creation of an English Bible and the attempts to substitute it for the secular and pagan reading then popular." Lily B. Campbell, *Divine Poetry and Drama in Sixteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 24.

⁴⁵ Quoted by Rice, *Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, p. 147.

⁴⁶ O'Kelly, Introduction, pp. 69—96, has an extended treatment of "Colet's Exegesis." He finds Colet's commentaries to be extrascholastic, soteriological in character, treating Paul as a real human being, and pointing to the immediate historical circumstances of the letter. See especially pp. 74, 75.

Gleason, likewise, treats Colet's exegetical method at length, Ch. VII, pp. 166—209. He finds Colet's influence on exegesis negligible, pp. 37—55; he stresses that Colet did not follow the new philological criticism, had no concern for establishing the literal meaning or the historical context, pp. 188—193. His method differed from those of Valla and of Luther, pp. 177 to 182. Gleason emphasizes that Colet looked for the moral meaning in the Scriptures, p. 203.

O'Kelly and Gleason obviously do not agree. The former is a theologian, the latter is not. Gleason has not examined in detail Colet's exegetical writings. He is correct in his statement that Colet did not follow Valla's methodology. This does not mean, however, that Colet adhered to the fourfold method of the medieval exegetes. Gleason was too anxious to refute Seebohm, Lupton, and Humbert.

Hunt, pp. 88—102, likewise, treats Colet as "The Exegete." He finds, as did O'Kelly, that Colet had regard for the historical context but that Colet did not shun the figurative interpretation.

use of the grammatical method of Scripture interpretation, à la the Italian humanists and the later Latin Patristic writers, and in line with the proponents of the *Devotio moderna*,⁴⁷ gives him status not only among the English humanists but *ipso facto* also among the "reformers" in England. True, he used the Vulgate rather than the Greek text of the New Testament. He wanted to ascertain the moral (usually, literal) sense of a passage in its context.⁴⁸ Finding a relation between unity and divine truth in accord with his Neoplatonic ideology,⁴⁹ he emphasized the human element of the Scriptures without thereby denying their divine and revelatory character.⁵⁰ He did not raise the question of the Scriptures or the church, since the question of authority had been resolved for him.⁵¹ Tyndale

⁴⁷ P. Albert Duhamel, "The Oxford Lectures of John Colet: An Essay in Defining the English Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIV (October 1953), 493, 494. Also see Gleason, ch. V.

⁴⁸ Hunt, pp. 89—98; Gleason, pp. 184 to 187.

Colet's knowledge of Greek was not extensive. In 1516 More reported to Erasmus: "Colet is working strenuously on his Greek, with the solicited help of my boy Clement." Thomas More to Erasmus, London, 22 Sept. 1516, *Saint Thomas More: Selected Letters*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 8, 77. See Allen, *Ep. Eras.*, II, 468.

Colet knew no Hebrew and was not impressed with Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica*. Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 202.

⁴⁹ Miles, pp. 182, 183.

⁵⁰ Hunt, p. 101. Gleason, pp. 205—209, asserts that Colet has an esoteric emphasis in his exegesis.

⁵¹ George H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church: The Crisis of the Protestant Reformation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), does not refer to Colet.

pointed to that problem,⁵² as did many of the other reformers and their antagonists of the 16th century,⁵³ but Colet was content to expound the Scriptures and to promote piety and learning. Tyndale, it has been conjectured, heard Colet lecture at Oxford, although Tyndale nowhere to my knowledge made this statement.⁵⁴ Yet the impact of Colet's lectures on the academic community (more than a mere "local influence"),⁵⁵ their freshness, their unsettling, stimulating qualities, their penetrative force on the minds and methods of his hearers,⁵⁶ may be counted among the intangibles of history with which we have to reckon when we speak of the elusive character of Colet's meaning for the English Reformation.

Whatever factors are cited in gauging Colet's significance for the English Reformation, his Augustinian emphases must be included, in spite of the fact that his borrowings of the Augustinian interpretation

⁵² William Tyndale, "The Practice of Prelates," *Expositions and Notes on Sundry Portions of the Holy Scriptures, together with the Practice of Prelates*, ed. for the Parker Society by Henry Walter (Cambridge: University Press, 1849), p. 289.

⁵³ Tvard's exposition is helpful in pursuing this topic.

⁵⁴ E. Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 65. Lupton, p. 114: "Tyndale was at Magdalen Hall during part of the time, and it is not likely that he would have failed to be a listener to Colet . . ."

Knox, p. 105, cites the conflicting opinions of Seebohm and Mozby. Unable to establish Colet's direct influence on Tyndale, he attributes, without evidence, the formation of the group with which Tyndale studied the Scriptures at Oxford to Colet.

⁵⁵ Gleason's phrase, p. 200. Gleason seems to neglect the possibility of expanding concentric influences.

⁵⁶ Harbison, pp. 58, 59.

of the creation account in Genesis 1 did not gain acceptance.⁵⁷ Erasmus referred to the fact that Colet was more inclined or more partial to Augustine than to any other of the ancient authors.⁵⁸ The statutes of St. Paul's School called for a curriculum whose core was "the good literature, both Latin and Greek, and good authors such as have the very Roman eloquence joined with wisdom, specially Christian authors that wrote their wisdom with clean and chaste Latin, either in verse or in prose."⁵⁹ Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine were singled out among the Christian authors.⁶⁰ Colet ended his "A Right Fruitful Monition" with a quotation from St. Augustine, the only author he quoted by name in the entire tract.⁶¹ Augustine had been valued in England in the 14th and 15th centuries;⁶² Erasmus did much to make him known in the 16th century. The importance of Augustine for Colet, however, as Miles points out, has not been sufficiently emphasized;⁶³ the importance of the church fathers for the English reformers,

⁵⁷ For discussions of Colet on Genesis 1 see Miles, "Colet on God and Creation," op. cit., pp. 31—65, with an analysis of Colet's "Letters to Radulphus on the Mosaic Account of Creation"; Seebohm, pp. 27—34; Hunt, pp. 94, 95.

⁵⁸ Lupton, p. 57; Gleason, pp. 130—135, gives a satisfactory explanation of seemingly contradictory statements by Erasmus.

⁵⁹ Nugent, pp. 40, 41; Lupton, *Life of John Colet*, p. 279.

⁶⁰ Ibid.; Nugent, p. 41.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 397.

⁶² See, e.g., Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960). In the last half of the 15th century an Augustinian vogue, according to Gleason, was prevalent in England. P. 129.

⁶³ Miles, p. 167; Gleason, pp. 126—135.

it is true, has been emphasized,⁶⁴ but Augustine has not been singled out among them. Augustine was widely quoted by men like Thomas Cranmer, William Tyn-dale, John Hooper, Henry Bradford, and Edwin Sandys.⁶⁵ This does not prove that these men were directly influenced by Colet. It does say that Colet abetted the study of Augustine, and this predilection is present in the later English reformers. A direct causal relation between the two phenomena cannot be proved.

The highlighting of the meaning of Augustine for Colet, and thus indicating that one of the seminal factors for the English Reformation might be traced to a renaissance of Augustinianism, does not mean that the importance of the Platonic tradition in Colet can be set aside. Miles' findings, for one, cannot be ignored, even though he exaggerates Colet's Platonism and does not make clear the distinction between the Platonism of the Renaissance and the thoroughly medieval Platonism which Colet shared.⁶⁶ Augustine, we re-

mind ourselves, belongs to the Platonic tradition. How much of his Platonism did Colet owe to Augustine? How great a force was Colet in the *paradosis* of Neoplatonism? Colet had been influenced by Marsiglio Ficino and Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola,⁶⁷ and he had caused Sir Thomas More to translate the life of the latter, "The Life of John Picus."⁶⁸

In connection with Colet's Platonism we must also mention Colet's mysticism. This mysticism was part of the heritage of the *Devotio moderna*.⁶⁹ It did not, however, carry over to any of the English reformers. As a factor in Colet's significance for the 16th-century religious movement it can be minimized.

However, Colet's affinity to the theology of the late scholastics needs greater emphasis. Parallels between Colet and Gabriel Biel are striking. Both were influenced by the *Devotio moderna*; both sought room within the theological framework of the church to emphasize the fruits of faith. Both were nominalists, although Biel's orientation was much more so than was Colet's.⁷⁰

Books, 1962), p. 16: "It is certainly true that he [Colet] was philosophically a disciple of the Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino and of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola . . ."

P. Albert Duhamel, p. 409: "There is nothing in the Platonism of Colet which is peculiar to the Florentine School. . . . Colet belongs to a Platonic tradition which had always persisted through the works of the Victorines and Saint Bonaventura."

⁶⁷ Nugent, p. 4; Miles, *passim*.

⁶⁸ Nugent, pp. 51—55.

⁶⁹ Hunt, pp. 103—130.

⁷⁰ H. A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Scholasticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), has written the most recent and best account of Biel's theology.

See Gleason, pp. 149—151, for the suggestion of Colet's nominalistic orientation.

⁶⁴ Cp. C. W. Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformers* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1958), pp. 6—18.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6. An examination of the indices of the volumes in the Parker Society edition of the works of these men makes it evident that he is quoted more frequently by them than by any other church father.

P. Albert Duhamel remarks, without adequate proof for his remark, that Colet's successors turned to Jerome rather than Augustine, p. 510.

⁶⁶ The title of Miles' work, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition*, and the title of the series of which this is volume one, *Fishers with Platonic Nets*, show his orientation.

Ivan Pusino, "Ficinos und Picos religiös-philosophische Anschauungen," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XLIV (Viertes Heft 1928), 504—543.

Hardin Craig, *The Literature of the English Renaissance, 1485—1660* (New York: Collier

However, the English Reformation was Aristotelian in its philosophic orientation rather than Platonic or nominalistic. During the days of the Erasmian illumination of Cambridge (1511—1515) John Bryan imbibed his master's love of learning and later diffused it. But this Erasmian scholar became known for his straightforward lectures on Aristotle.⁷¹ This was not Aristotelianism wedded to Thomism, but "a new or at least a renovated Aristotle."⁷² It was a departure from the Neoplatonism of Colet.⁷³

This Cambridge Aristotelianism became wedded to Melancthonism, itself steeped in Aristotle.⁷⁴ In 1535, by the injunctions of Henry VIII, "all students were to be encouraged to read the Scriptures privately, and Melancthon as well as Aristotle was listed as a prescribed author."⁷⁵ In the 1520s William Paget had lectured on Aristotle in Trinity Hall, and this tradition took strong hold. The importance of Melancthonism for the

English *via media* cannot be discussed at this time. His influence is evident, e.g., in the views of the English reformers on predestination and free will.⁷⁶

In the doctrines of free will and justification the views of Melancthon were those of Augustine. Here the two lines of philosophic orientation of Melancthon and Colet come together in a theological nexus that allows for neither Platonism nor Aristotelianism, but Augustinianism.

This Pauline Augustinianism⁷⁷ lends depth to the significance of Colet for the English Reformation, since this Augustinian orientation becomes to a greater or a lesser degree the theological cast of many of the English reformers and reinforced the trend toward Aristotelian Melancthonism in the theology of the English Reformation. Colet's significance for the English Reformation, then, is not in a theological system. Colet furthered the study of the Scriptures, even though he made no significant contributions to scholarly exegesis. He furthered piety and learning in a concern for a reform within the church. His personal influence extended to Parker, Butzer, Tyndale, possibly Cranmer, Lupset, and others. He is a precursor of the Counter-Reformation. His relations to both the *Devotio moderna* and the *via moderna*, particularly the latter, need additional investigation before a complete answer can be given to our problem.

⁷⁶ Porter, pp. 386, 387.

⁷⁷ O'Kelly, Introduction, p. 92, suggests that Colet be called a Pauline philosopher.

St. Louis, Mo.

⁷¹ Porter, p. 31.

⁷² Allen, *Ep. Eras.*, II, 328.

⁷³ O'Kelly, Introduction, p. 41, shows that Aristotle's influence on Colet was not entirely negative. Gleason, pp. 122—126, shows that Colet was acquainted with the major scholastics. Although he disliked both Aquinas and Scotus, he favored the latter.

⁷⁴ On Melancthon's theology see Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Melancthonian Blight," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XVIII (May 1947), 321—338; Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 24—43.

⁷⁵ Porter, p. 50, with reference to Mullinger, p. 630.