

2011

## The influence of humanism on English social structures through the actions of Thomas Linacre and John Colet

Erin Michelle Halloran

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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THE INFLUENCE OF HUMANISM ON ENGLISH SOCIAL STRUCTURES  
THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF THOMAS LINACRE AND JOHN COLET

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

By

Erin Michelle Halloran  
B.S., University of Minnesota-Morris, 2005  
May 2011

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since starting graduate school I have learned to rely on the people in my life and have grown to fully appreciate everything they have done for me. While at school I have experienced many new ideas and people who have expanded my own concept of history and how I can contribute to it. Over the past few years there have been numerous people that I have needed, bothered, annoyed, turned to for support, and tried to forget my troubles with; it is those people (victims) to whom I would like to express my sincerest thanks.

My graduate advisor, Victor Stater, not only guided and encouraged me but also dealt with my endless streams of edits, grammatical problems, and inherent procrastination. Dr. Stater is one of the major reasons I came to LSU as well as being one of the reasons my sanity has remained (relatively) intact. Suzanne Marchand and Christine Kooi aided me as members of my thesis committee but have also influenced the direction of my studies through their examples and have make me want to be a better historian.

Moving to Southern Louisiana from Minnesota was quite a change for me and the friends I found have made all the difference. My colleagues in the History Department have been a source of friendship and encouragement that kept me grounded and inspired by their examples. Ansley Sharp has not only given me genuine support and advice, but also her sincere friendship. Lauren Doughty, Eric Poché, Scott Berg, Jered Lambiotte, and numerous others have all emboldened me to not only succeed in school and but in life through their friendship, and have seen me through the rough patches inherent in this program of study. There have been several

people- Katherine Sawyer, Marc Patenaude, and Brian Morrow, that I should have been paying for the amount of guidance and advice they freely gave. I was lucky enough to have been befriended by a very interesting group of people in Baton Rouge, the people of Coffee Call. This coffee shop has given me the energy to continue and has allowed me to cover their good tables with my books, notes, computer, and frustration on an almost daily basis. The camaraderie that I have found through these Coffee Call people has been immeasurable; they have balanced me all the while making me laugh and enjoy my life.

My closest friends: Michelle Didier, Katherine Haugen, Shannon Olsen, and Jackie Smalley have been my confidants, partners in crime, intellectual equals and sounding boards. We have been through ten very interesting years together and I could never ask for better steadfast friends and I look forward to our intertwined and surely entertaining futures.

My family has played such an invaluable role in my life it is impossible to separate them from anything I have or will accomplish. They are my biggest champions and are daily reminders of the truly important things in life. My grandparents have been such important influences on my life. My grandfather John Halloran's interest in family and Irish history was one of the reasons I became fascinated with history. My cousins have been my life long friends and will always be there for me to turn to for laughs or tears. My siblings, Brian and Camille, and my nephew Xander are everything to me and I count myself remarkably lucky to have them.

My parents, Tim and Sue Halloran are incredible for the amount of love, strength, and inspiration they have given me. They have shown me what it means to be a good person and aspire to achieve. If not for them being my moral compass and instilling in me from childhood a sense of humor and a commitment to family and friends I would be lost. I would like to dedicate this work to them, the most important people in my life- my parents.

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## ABSTRACT

When the Renaissance was in its full bloom in Italy, England was just beginning to show awareness of this ‘new learning’- humanism. In the mid- 1400s English scholars traveled abroad to Italy and collected books, knowledge, and learned the Greek language. Thomas Linacre and John Colet were part of a younger generation that benefited from this previous experience and both men travelled to Italy to continue their scholarly pursuits. Linacre arrived in Florence during the height of humanist scholarship. While there he came under the influence of medical humanists, devoted to the translation of ancient medical texts from Greek into Latin with the hopes that this purified knowledge would improve medical practice and education. John Colet travelled to Italy only six years after Linacre, but during those six years the political, religious, and scholarly atmosphere of Italy had changed a great deal. This affected the type of humanism that Colet experienced. He was a devout Christian and was deeply influenced by the Christian humanism that was being expounded in Florence; this was concerned with returning to the purity of the original church fathers and spreading their message of true faith.

In this thesis I examine the different humanist influences that these men came under and how they affected their later efforts to reform England. Linacre and Colet found a way to take the examples and lessons they had experienced in Italy to facilitate a practical application of humanist values onto the English framework through enacting changes to education, medical regulations, translations, and Latin grammars.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Giorgio Vasari, a Medici propagandist, first used the term ‘the Renaissance’ in 1550. He was looking for a word to describe the amazing changes that had occurred in the past century and beyond, changes so extraordinary that the man had to create a new phrase to describe what had passed. This rebirth of culture prompted scholarship into areas previously unexplored, forgotten, and inconceivable. The stimulus for this burst in creativity and thought came from many possible sources. Older scholarship had pointed to the fall of Constantinople and the displacement of native Greeks into the Italian peninsula as a possible cause. Others argue that the presence of these Greek scholars in Italy and their subsequent impact on classical scholarship had occurred long before 1453. Others argue that there was no real division between the twelfth-century Renaissance and the fifteenth. Regardless of these debates, the Italian Renaissance was the forerunner to the humanist movement and the ripples that this new and rediscovered learning unleashed could be felt all the way to the shores of England. English scholars left their island and traveled to the continent in search of this new academic outlook, and invariably they settled in Italy for a substantial time. It was here that some of the future leading men of the English court developed and cultivated their humanistic values. Their absorption of the Italian humanism around them enabled these men to return to England saturated in these many varied values and form them into ideas that could be applied to England.

A German scholar first used the term ‘Humanism’ in 1808 in reference to an actual movement in the fifteenth century to describe an ideal program of classical education. What this scholar saw was a unique occurrence that needed to be separately recognized within the Renaissance; it also needs to be given due credit for its impact upon Tudor England. Two men in particular took their very different experiences of Italian Renaissance humanism and yet chose similar paths to implement their humanist ideas into the English system. Dr. Thomas Linacre and Dean John Colet sought to improve the lives of the English people through the practical application of humanist principles to the structures of English society. For Linacre and Colet, humanism was not a philosophy or a lofty ideal but a way of life, but a tool to improve themselves and the world around them.

In this study I will show that although Thomas Linacre and John Colet came from different backgrounds, had vastly different experiences while in Italy, and worked in different fields, but they took the lessons and ideas they absorbed and similarly sought to put them to use for the improvement of their countrymen. Colet did this through the foundation of St. Paul’s School in London, the Latin Grammar he had a hand in creating, and his role in the 1511 Medical Act. Linacre used his knowledge of Greek to translate important medical texts into a perfected and readily available Latin, created his own Latin Grammar, founded the College of Physicians of London, and endowed several medical lectures at Cambridge and Oxford. As devoted life-long humanists both men saw that England needed to change and advance, and they separately sought to enable that change through their own actions, motivated by the humanist values they each held. What made these two stand out amongst other English humanists of their day was the singular drive each showed continuously until their deaths. The things they did were by no means the first attempts at reform, but the way they used their humanist background,



courtly connections, and the network of fellow humanists around them was unique and ultimately successful. Linacre and Colet found a way to take the examples and lessons they had experienced in Italy to facilitate a practical application of humanist ideals onto the English framework, forever altering it for the benefit of all who followed.

Trying to define exactly what humanism encompassed is like trying to pinpoint the reasons behind the Renaissance itself, difficult and full of contrasting opinions. One of the reasons behind this confusion is that there were many forms of humanism and they are still to this day being identified. For example Linacre was not only a medical humanist but also a civic humanist. Sir Thomas More was a civic humanist and a Christian humanist. John Colet was a Christian humanist as well as a Neo-Platonist humanist. Author Fritz Caspari explains humanism as:

An intellectual movement that sprang from a longing for the revival of classical antiquity. The humanists advocated a rational and largely secular education based on the study of the Greek and Roman classics, and from it they expected great benefits to the individual and to society.<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Woolfson describes medical humanism as:

Primarily an attempt to reconstruct the original words of the ancient Greek medical sources, especially of Hippocrates and his interpreter Galen, and of the chief source of ancient natural philosophy, Aristotle; to make their writings available, in Greek and in the new Latin translations, to medical students, as the essential first step towards a reformed and academically moderated medical practice.<sup>2</sup>

Hugh Trevor-Roper states that “The civic humanists believed that antiquity, which they studied, offered an ideal of public spirit and that the highest duty of a scholar was to serve his city or his

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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Woolfson, Padua and the Tudors, English Students in Italy, 1485-1603 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 73-74.

prince.”<sup>3</sup> English Christian humanism stood against the old scholastic systems and the antiquated barbaric forms of theological learning but not against religion itself, seeking to bring to light new sources and interpretations to understand the purity of Christianity better.<sup>4</sup>

Platonism “is idealism, the determination to identify the universal spirit which informs matter and having identified it, to disengage it from the bewildering variety, the inert machinery, the practical compromises in which it is so often trapped and buried.”<sup>5</sup> These various forms of humanism came about because the people engaged in humanist studies valued many different aspects of life and had their own particular scholarly interests, which melded together to create a new facet within humanism as a general encompassing concept. Linacre and Colet were exposed to different humanist forms but they each chose to apply those ideologies practically in similar ways.

Before the impact of humanism had altered the landscape of education and medicine, England was far behind its continental neighbors. A possible reason for the failure of the English academic community to stay abreast with Europe could be the locations of its universities. Both Oxford and Cambridge were located about sixty miles outside of London, the cultural and political center of England. In Europe the universities were situated in the capital cities and therefore immersed in the daily affairs of the political powers. A large city location for a university with a successful medical school was particularly important since most of the professors at these schools were also practicing physicians, and a large population was needed to support an affluent medical faculty. A favorable location enabled these universities to attract

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<sup>3</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Intellectual World of Sir Thomas More.” The American Scholar, Vol 48, no. 1 (Winter 1978-79): p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James P. Pettegrove (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD., 1953), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Trevor-Roper, p. 27.

scholars of renown for teaching positions, creating an even greater reason for students and teachers alike to flock to the university. The medical schools of Oxford and Cambridge were practically nonexistent and certainly ineffective in comparison to those of Padua, Bologna, Montpellier, or even Paris. Even if Oxford or Cambridge had been able to attract a decent medical faculty they did not offer large enough salaries to make up for their small populations or the lack of facilities for teaching purposes.

When medical schools in Europe were flourishing it appeared that “Oxford and Cambridge at this time provided very little systematic and no practical medical teaching.”<sup>6</sup> Linacre was able to view first hand how medical practitioners were organized in the Italian cities he traveled through. In cities with universities, such as Florence and Padua, the medical faculty oversaw the practice of medicine within the city and surrounding areas. These faculties were regarded with respect and had a sense of dignity that was almost entirely missing from the English medical field:

The principal medical faculties occupied positions of importance in the public sphere as well as within the academic community. They were used by public authorities – royal, noble, ecclesiastical, or municipal – as guarantors of medical standards, sources of medical information, and a reservoir of reliable practitioners.<sup>7</sup>

The cities without a university had an overseeing board, a chartered corporation, sometimes referred to as a college that controlled medical licensing. This overseeing board was made up of local physicians who controlled the practice of medicine in their region. There was nothing like this to be found in England, not even in the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Exposure to the advanced state of medical regulation in the European countries no doubt played

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<sup>6</sup> W. S. C. Copeman, “Medical Education in the Tudor period” Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine 52, (1959): 653.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Siraisi, Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine, An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 61.

a role in Linacre's and Colet's later actions once back in England.

Although Oxford and Cambridge held lectures on similar topics as other medical schools they lacked instruction beyond the theoretical levels. The typical English physician was “a learned scholastic whose M.D. was the product of fourteen years of deep and largely sterile study; he had very little practical acquaintance with the diseases he purported to treat.”<sup>8</sup> Oxford and Cambridge both had statutes that limited the number of medical students there could be at one time - Oxford could have two or three, Cambridge only two.<sup>9</sup> At Oxford's All Souls College, Linacre's Alma Mater, provisions were set in place for the housing of all students, except the medical students. There was also a regulation set forth by the founder of All Souls that all those who took a Masters of Arts had to take Holy Orders within two years of completing their studies, “The restrictions imposed by the statutes of his college may have been one of the first obstacles encountered by Linacre in his efforts to obtain a medical qualification.”<sup>10</sup> Not only did the housing and future obligations make difficulties for medical studies at Oxford, but there were also no fellowships available solely for medical students. While students could apply for general stipends open to all, unlike other programs there were none specifically set aside.<sup>11</sup> These statutes alone were a sufficient deterrent against medical students staying in England. The difficulties inherent for studying medicine is clearly reflected in the graduate records of each university. Those who did stay had to “spend seven years in taking his MA before being allowed to proceed to study in the Faculty of Medicine, [they were] being trained through the seven

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<sup>8</sup>Copeman, p. 652.

<sup>9</sup> Woolfson, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> John Fletcher, “Linacre's Lands and Lectureships” in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, ed. Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Fletcher, p. 119.

liberal arts in the power of orderly thought and its expression in terms of general principles.”<sup>12</sup>

Some of the works that a doctoral student needed to know in order to be considered for a degree were Galen’s *De Methodo Medendi*, Aretaeus, and various works by Hippocrates; in fact Copeman points out that the examiners at Cambridge

Only required candidates to read and expound certain of the works of Hippocrates, Galen and the Arabist Aretaeus. They considered only the basic intellectual needs of the physician, and were actively hostile to any form of practical teaching, which had to be sought elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

Oxford and Cambridge can not be singled out as having the only inferior practical teaching program because until the end of the fifteenth century there had been a law in effect since Roman times which originally forbade the ‘mutilation of a corpse’ along with a Canon issued by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) “to dissociate the clergy from the shedding of blood in judicial and military affairs, and also forbidding all sub-deacons, deacons, and priests to exercise that part of surgery which required cautery or incision.”<sup>14</sup> This Canon and its implications were behind much of the animosity between physicians and surgeons, and the low standing of surgery as a technical profession. This ban against drawing blood from the living or dead had relegated surgery to a low standing in the medical faculties: “the universities were prevented from introducing courses of surgery into the medical curriculum, and surgery could only be studied elsewhere by laymen or clerics in the lower orders.”<sup>15</sup> However, thanks to Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), a former student of the universities of Bologna and Padua, a new Papal Bull was

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<sup>12</sup> W. S. C. Copeman, Doctors and Disease in Tudor Times (London: Dawson’s of Pall Mall, 1960), p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> Copeman, Medical Education, p. 653.

<sup>14</sup> Sir George Clark, A History of The Royal College of Physicians of London, Volume One, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Hilde Ridder-Symoens, Universities in the Middle Ages, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 452-453.

issued authorizing the study of anatomy on the body of a cadaver.<sup>16</sup> This development allowed for more regular dissections and opened up the field of medicine to the higher orders within the church. However, after looking into the curriculum of several other Italian universities it seems that the laws forbidding dissections were only followed to a certain extent, dissections were held once yearly and the students were required to observe from a distance while hearing a professor describe the examination. Oxford and Cambridge were both ecclesiastical institutions and as such were slower than other continental secular universities to change their policy and curriculum to reflect this new opportunity.

The curriculums of Oxford and Cambridge were also slow to recognize the need for actual hands-on learning for their students. At Padua, where Thomas Linacre later chose to study medicine, they were quite advanced and the leaders in the field medical training. At the turn of the sixteenth century Padua had a three-part university, Law, Theology, and Arts. Medicine was included as part of the Arts University but was a separate faculty within the whole. The main subjects taught were moral philosophy, Greek, Latin, mathematics, logic, and natural philosophy. The system was separated into two tiers of study; the first focused on logic and natural philosophy and the second tier focused on medical studies. A student would first complete the arts part of his study, receive an arts degree, and then move on to the more intensive medical studies.<sup>17</sup> The actual medical study was based on Theory and *Practia*, “The prescribed public lectures and other exercises were supplemented by ‘extraordinary’ lectures on

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<sup>16</sup> Arturo Castiglioni, A History of Medicine, trans. and ed. E.B. Krumbhaar (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), p. 368.

<sup>17</sup> Charles B. Schmitt, “Thomas Linacre and Italy” in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, ed. Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 49.

works chosen by the master and by private teaching and study.”<sup>18</sup> Theory and *Practia* were each to be learned in three-year cycles. Theory consisted of a study on the philosophy of medicine and the principles of physiology and pathology,

The First Book of Avicenna’s *Canon medicinae*; Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* with Galen’s commentary and, if time permitted, Hippocrates’ *Liber prognosticorum*; Galen’s *Ars parva* and, again time permitting, something from the Fourth Book of Avicenna’s *Canon*.<sup>19</sup>

*Practia* studied the specifics of diagnosis and treatment and the analysis of texts dealing with practical topics,<sup>20</sup> the Third and Fourth Books of Avicenna’s *Canon* and Rhazes’s *Liber nonus ad Almansorem*.<sup>21</sup> The diseases lectured on in the practical courses were divided up into threes: head to thorax, abdomen to toe, and diseases of the whole body (fevers). In addition to the courses “it was expected that all students would be exposed to fairly extensive bedside perception, carried out by the professors of both theory and practice as well as other prominent but non-lecturing physicians.”<sup>22</sup> This standard for visiting patients with a practicing physician was offered long before it became a normal part of the curriculum in other universities across Europe.<sup>23</sup> An important part of practical medicine was watching anatomical demonstrations that would occur once a year during the Christmas break.

The central place that *Disputations* held at the universities shows the important role scholasticism, rhetoric and logic held. Not only was participation in these *Disputations* mandatory for receiving a degree, but they occurred weekly with several students and professors becoming involved in them on the public sphere. Commentaries from a text were debated, or an

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<sup>18</sup> Sirinasi, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> Schmitt, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Sirinasi, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> Schmitt, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> Jerome Bylebyl, “The School of Padua: Humanistic Medicine in the Sixteenth Century” in *Health, Medicine, and Morality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 339.

<sup>23</sup> Sirinasi, p. 72.

individual's thesis was discussed. The *Dubia* was a way of making written responses to the *Disputations*. Later after passing several examinations a Doctorate degree would make a student a full member of the medical faculty.<sup>24</sup> At Paris the students needed to have disputed twice publically and had at least thirty-two months of study behind them before they could apply for a doctorate.<sup>25</sup> Paris was an ecclesiastical university, and as such there was less emphasis on practical training and more on the seven liberal arts: the *Trivium*, logic, grammar, and rhetoric, the *Quadrivium*, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and music. After the student passed all the courses that were needed the Bishop's chancellor examined the student and determined whether a license should be issued to them to practice medicine.<sup>26</sup>

Oxford and Cambridge were clearly deficient as medical schools both in providing for the needs of medical students and in the ability to attract and keep professors of any worth. They were both loosely based on the Paris medical school and as such generally had similar course work and practice, considering that all three were ecclesiastical universities. The University of Paris of course had the added benefit of being located in the capital of France and had close connections to the royal court.

English medical education was not the only type of educational institution in England that needed improvement. Grammar school education lacked any systematic regulation and standards. There were two types of school systems in England at this time, public schools and secular schools. The public schools were open to all and run by the monastic communities. Secular priests, clerks, or laymen ran the secular schools. There were four subgroups in the

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<sup>24</sup> Castiglioni, p. 328.

<sup>25</sup> Lowrie J. Daly, *The Medieval University* (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1961), p. 138.

<sup>26</sup> Roger French, *Medicine before Science, The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 78.



secular system based loosely around age: song, grammar, business, and higher studies.<sup>27</sup> There was no agreement on how these schools should be taught or run. There were many out-of-date Latin grammars being used and taught from at different speeds. Some schools only taught the basic Alphabet and a few devotional prayers, where others were more advanced, making it difficult for a student to adjust if they needed to move to a new school.

Grammar schools in general were in disarray with no standards or a unifying cohesiveness. For the most part parents who wanted their children to attain any education at all would send them to the grammar school in the local religious house. The religious community of the local monastery or nunnery usually ran these schools. Chantry priests who had been originally commissioned to say masses for a benefactor and family were at times charged with teaching the children at the chantry schools. Nuns accepted students but usually fewer than the chantry schools took in. These teachers had not been trained or educated for the roles thrust upon them, especially the chantry priests, and as such were highly unqualified. Author Michael Van Cleave Alexander estimates that there were about ninety nunneries and about eighty monastic schools towards the end of the fourteenth century. Each year around twenty-five hundred students attended these schools.<sup>28</sup>

There was no form of licensing for those wishing to be or forced to be schoolmasters. Normally such authority would have fallen to the church, but due to absent priests or even illiterate ones the diocese simply did not have a local authority who could take on the responsibility. This inevitably led to the teaching duties passing onto those simply not qualified. The supposed requirements for being a grammar school teacher was the degree of a Masters of

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<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1973), p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Van Cleave Alexander, The Growth of English Education 1348-1648, A Social and Cultural History (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 57.

Arts, or a Masters in Grammar, or a Bachelors of Arts. These were rarely enforced in the secular schools, much less the chantry schools.<sup>29</sup>

This desolate situation did not go unnoticed; efforts were being made for the improvement of schoolmasters through a church monopoly on authorized schools. In 1446 the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London petitioned the King for a monopoly on schools in order to prevent unqualified masters from opening up unregulated schools. They hoped to limit the number of secular schools to only five.<sup>30</sup> Only a year later four rectors from different schools in London petitioned the House of Commons asking for more schools because of many young Londoners in need of education. These rectors were from the schools not included in the church's list of the five approved schools and although this petition was accepted the King proclaimed that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London were to advise on the situation in order to come to a better settlement. No record of anything ever coming of these petitions exists, so it appears that although there had been attempts to improve the situation they had little backing.

It was not until John Colet personally attempted to create a new standard in grammar school education that this situation improved. Thomas Linacre had the same desire to enact change and sought to improve the conditions of English medical education and practice. These men experienced the problems first hand in the English system and found in Italy a means to improve the situation at home for themselves and others. The background of both men is sketchy and incomplete but worth knowing for a better understanding of their motivations later. Their individual experiences while in Italy are key to deciphering the actions they took once back in England and making sense of the choices they made. A better familiarity with the people

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<sup>29</sup> Orme, p. 153.

<sup>30</sup> Orme, p. 212.

with whom they interacted in their humanist circle and at court helps to create a more complete understanding of the opportunities they had and the support given to them. Finally a discussion of the foundations created by each man shows how they put their past experiences and knowledge into a practical working entity. Together these examinations will give a complete understanding of why the actions of these two men forever changed the outlook of English education and medicine.

In chapter one I will first explore Thomas Linacre's life before he travelled to Italy, including a discussion about the mid fifteenth century humanist patrons in England. These early humanists brought an interest in humanism and Greek scholars to England, which directly led to Linacre's knowledge of Greek while still in England. I go on to analysis Linacre's experiences in Italy with scholars and medical humanism. His time in Florence, Rome, Padua, and Venice are addressed as well as the influences he encountered at each location.

The next chapter addresses John Colet's life, education, and clerical career before his travels in Europe. Also the changes that had occurred in Italy between Linacre's arrival and that of Colet's are discussed because the alteration in humanist scholarship afterwards was drastic and affected the way that Colet and Linacre developed their values while there. Colet's movements and experiences abroad are then discussed.

Chapter three is an analysis of the humanist culture in England surrounding Linacre, Colet, and their like-minded friends. Trends at Oxford, London, and court are discussed in relation their interactions with humanists.

Colet's humanist reforms are analyzed in Chapter four. This section contains a thorough analysis of the founding of St. Paul's School and the Latin grammar that was created for its use. Colet's statutes, his contribution to the grammar, and Linacre's attempts are considered.

The practical application of Linacre's medical humanism is studied in Chapter five. First, previous attempts at medical regulation are discussed as well as the more successful Medical Act of 1511, which Colet was involved. Linacre's Galen translations and the establishment of the College of Physicians are considered, as well as the medical lectureships he arranged to have given at Oxford and Cambridge. I then concluded with a discussion of the lasting implications of the humanistic actions of Colet and Linacre.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LINACRE'S HUMANIST EXPERIENCE

Even though the extraordinary actions taken by Thomas Linacre and John Colet occurred later in their lives, knowledge of their youth is important to understanding the steps they took later. Unfortunately the childhoods of Linacre and Colet are poorly documented. Neither of them wrote about their youths and statements by contemporaries pertaining to their younger years are rare. However, from the scant records available and the better-documented lives of their contemporaries the early experiences of both men can be pieced together. Linacre's visit to Italy is the first time he began making his own footprints fully distinguishable from those of his colleagues. It was during this time abroad in Italy that Linacre was able to formulate his own type of humanism which he later used to provide the inspiration and impetus for the College of Physicians, his Latin grammars, and to endow medical lectures at both English universities.

Thomas Linacre was probably born in 1460 in the diocese of Canterbury. At his death in 1524 he still had two sisters, Alice and Joane, and a brother also named Thomas. Nothing is known of his parents, their home or occupations, or of his extended family. There is quite a bit of conjecture trying to link Linacre to a landed family with a hall named Linacre Hall but this is based solely on the name similarity. Linacre's biographer John Noble Johnson believes that Linacre attended the local chantry school of Christ Church Monastery in Canterbury.<sup>31</sup> This is based on the fact that when Linacre was admitted to Oxford he was staying at the hall connected

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<sup>31</sup> John Noble Johnson, The Life of Thomas Linacre, ed. Robert Graves (London: Edward Lumley, Chancery Lane, 1835), p. 4-5.

to this particular monastery and he had personal dealings later in life with the men who would have been his grammar school teachers. William Selling and John Morer were working in the grammar school attached to the monastery there<sup>32</sup> and Selling acted as the Master of the school.<sup>33</sup> Selling took Linacre with him to Italy in 1487 while acting as envoy to the Pope in Rome from the new Tudor King Henry VII. In 1480 Linacre was attending Oxford, a little late in life for he would have been twenty years old already. Four years later he was elected a Fellow of All Souls College. Johnson suggests that William Selling may have been a family relation to Linacre because Selling was also a Fellow at All Souls College. The Statutes of All Souls state that a qualification for fellows was a familial relation to the founder, Henry Chichele.<sup>34</sup> This could explain more clearly why Selling, the prior of the Canterbury Cathedral priory and “perhaps the foremost classical scholar in England,”<sup>35</sup> chose Linacre to accompany him to Italy, but there is no hard evidence either for or against such an idea and by no means has every Fellow at All Souls been related to the founder.

Selling had been to Italy before this mission, in 1464-1467 and again in 1469-1472.<sup>36</sup> During these visits he cultivated many friendships that proved helpful for himself and later for Linacre during his own travels. Selling had befriended Angelo Politiano while at Bologna and later Politiano became Linacre’s teacher while both were in Florence studying with the Medici.<sup>37</sup> Either at Oxford from Emmanuel of Constantinople or during these previous travels Selling

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<sup>32</sup> Cecil H. Clough, “Thomas Linacre, Conelio Vitelli, and Humanistic Studies at Oxford,” in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, p. 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> Albert Hyma, “The Continental Origins of English Humanism” in Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol. 4, no. 1 (October, 1940), p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson, p. 7.

picked up his knowledge of Greek and he later shared this with his pupils, probably Linacre among them, “The pupil, guided either by a similarity of taste, or by the example of his master, had imbibed the same opinions, and sedulously cultivated the more neglected elements of ancient learning.”<sup>38</sup> Without Selling’s guidance, Linacre might never have felt the desire to study the ancients or to travel to Italy, where he acquired the skills needed to revive the medical field in England.

Understanding how Selling and older English scholars and patrons became familiar with Greek and the literary classics is important to comprehending the role that Greek was to play in English humanism, particularly for Linacre, whose medical interest in humanism was based on translating from Greek. Humanists felt the importance of the Greek language was unquestionable; most would have agreed with Erasmus’s elegant tribute to the language:

Still while I linger within the garden of the Greeks I am gathering by the way many flowers that will be useful for the future, even in sacred studies; for experience teaches me this, at any rate, that we can do nothing in any field of literature without a knowledge of Greek, since it is one thing to guess, another to judge; one thing to trust your own eyes, and another again to trust those of others.<sup>39</sup>

The Greek language was to become an official language of study at Oxford and Cambridge through the efforts of later humanists; however, that generation was not the first to try and introduce Greek into the curriculum of the English universities. How and when the knowledge and teaching of Greek first came to England is unclear. Most scholars, including Linacre’s biographer, Johnson, believe that Cornelio Vitelli was the first person in England to teach Greek,

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 88-89. [Letter 181]

and that he directly taught Selling, Grocyn, and Linacre while at Oxford in the 1480s.<sup>40</sup> Cecil Clough agrees with Johnson:

All in all, while one may be unable to prove that neither Selling nor Grocyn gave Linacre any basic instruction in Greek, from strong circumstantial evidence it was Cornelio Vitelli who, as praelector at New College, gave him the sound knowledge of that language which he clearly had prior to 1487 and his studies in Florence.<sup>41</sup>

Clough points out that Vitelli was at Oxford from 1482-1487, the entire time that Linacre pursued his studies there.<sup>42</sup> Vitelli, however, was not the only person in England at this time who knew Greek or had a background in teaching. No evidence exists that Vitelli taught anyone Greek while he was at Oxford; he was, after all, an Italian who had over time acquired a knowledge of Greek and may not have felt enough confidence in his skills to teach Greek. There is no definitive proof that any one scholar deserves the credit for the introduction of Greek into English humanist circles. It is more than likely that continued contact between scholars both in England and Italy initiated a dialogue, which fostered and encouraged the knowledge of Greek in England.

Throughout the fifteenth century Englishmen had been traveling to Italy and establishing contacts with Greek-speaking Italians and native Greeks. These men, like Linacre and his circle of friends in their day, were connected to the court and church. Humphrey duke of Gloucester, brother to Henry V and uncle to the young Henry VI, was a patron to many scholars and he supported their decisions to leave England either to further their studies or in service to the crown or church. He also specifically sought out learned Italian humanists to work in his household as his secretaries. Those people under his patronage were always looking out for and seeking unique books for the Duke's library while they were abroad, and if they could not be

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<sup>40</sup> Johnson, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Clough, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Clough, p. 18.



obtained they were to have them translated anew from Greek into Latin or simply copied and sent back to England.<sup>43</sup> As a result, Gloucester's impact on humanism in England during the mid-fifteenth century was central; lines of influence can be drawn back to him in almost every intellectual avenue at this time. He encouraged men to seek out greater things, he freely dispensed his knowledge, and he donated his massive library to Oxford in hopes that it would enable other men to improve and learn.

One of the men to benefit from the intellectual environment fostered by Gloucester was William Grey, later the Bishop of Ely. Grey was born around 1408, and from 1440 to 1442 he was the Chancellor of Oxford.<sup>44</sup> While at Oxford he studied Divinity and was made Archdeacon of Northampton in 1434. In 1442 after resigning his Chancellorship at Oxford, Grey left England to be a Reader at the University of Cologne. After two years or so he left for Florence and then went to Padua where he received a degree in Divinity in 1445.<sup>45</sup> While in Padua, Grey became familiar with a school in Ferrara run by the great teacher Guarino Da Verona.

Guarino's influence on the humanist outlook of fifteenth-century Italy came from many different angles; his pupils went on to great things in various fields. His school was a famous destination for any scholar serious about studying the classics, in Latin or Greek. He had lived in Constantinople and traveled throughout Greece before settling in Ferrara and starting his school in 1429. Grey naturally sought out this man and was able to spend a year studying under him until he was called away when appointed to be Henry VI's Proctor in the court of Rome. Grey spent the next eight years at the papal court in the company of many great humanist scholars and

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<sup>43</sup> R. Weiss, Humanism in England During the Fifteenth Century, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941), p. 61-62.

<sup>44</sup> Howard Gray, "Greek Visitors to England in 1455-1456," in Haskins Anniversary Essays in Medieval History, ed. Charles H. Taylor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> Weiss, p. 87-88.

patrons. Although Grey himself was no great contributor to the world of letters he was a patron on the same level as Gloucester. Once Grey returned to England he had been appointed to the Bishopric of Ely and was made a member of the Regency council in 1454.

The contacts made by Grey and the reputation he acquired while he was in Italy made him a beacon which scholars could follow back to England with hopes of patronage and possible advancement. As Howard Gray put it,

One of the pope's closest associates, an Englishman of noble birth, king's proctor for years at Rome, of considerable repute for philosophical and classical learning, interested in Greek scholarship and perhaps intimate with Bessarion, had recently returned to his native land to fill high posts in church and state.<sup>46</sup>

Grey's position on the Regency council and then a year later on the King's council sheds light on an odd occurrence of the English exchequer in 1455 to 1456. The accounts show four separate money gifts to four Greeks then residing in England--the first occurrence of its kind in the English exchequer. Demetrios Palaeologos, Manuel Chrysoloras, John Argyropulos of Constantinople, and Emmanuel of Constantinople were the four Greeks gifted with money from state funds on the urging of the Regency council.

John Tiptoff, the Earl of Worcester, was a member of this Regency council along with Grey. In, 1455 at the same time two of the money gifts were distributed, Tiptoff was removed from his position as Treasurer and replaced by the Earl of Wiltshire after the Yorkist coup.<sup>47</sup> This enabled the wealthy nobleman to pursue his studies and in 1458 he was on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Upon his return he stayed in Italy and studied law at Padua and was a student of

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<sup>46</sup> Gray, p. 99. Bessarion was a Greek Cardinal high up in the humanist circles at Rome and very well respected. One of William Grey's fellow students at Guarino Da Verona's school traveled with him for years only to leave his service for the opportunity to study and work in Bessarion's household. Being regarded as an associate of his or even an intimate was considered extremely high praise.

<sup>47</sup> Gray, p. 83-84.

Guarino's for a time.<sup>48</sup> While traveling in Florence he sought out John Argyropulos, the first Greek to receive the gift of money from the council that Tiptoff served on. Here Tiptoff listened to the lectures that were to make Argyropulos famous among the students of that highly educated city.<sup>49</sup>

Argyropulos was not the only Greek visitor to receive particular attention from a wealthy patron. Emmanuel of Constantinople was arguably the most successful of these Greeks while in England. His close relationship to William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester is attested to by the fact that Emmanuel's gift of money was entrusted to Waynflete to hand over to him personally. Howard Gray argues that Waynflete, who had founded St. Mary Magdalen College at Oxford in 1448, was the patron to Emmanuel and had hopes to employ him at his college to teach Greek.<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Humphrey, the President of Magdalen College from 1561 to 1589 stated that Waynflete founded Magdalen with the intention of having Greek taught there.<sup>51</sup> Gray reports the findings of Dr. M. R. James who identified Emmanuel as the author of several Greek texts in England, the Leicester Codex of the New Testament, three Psalters, three manuscripts on Aristotle and Plato, and two Suidas Lexicons.<sup>52</sup> Gray connects Emmanuel to Oxford through at least six of these manuscripts and various patrons. Waynflete probably acted as a patron of Emmanuel with a post at Magdalen College in mind. Emmanuel's later relationship with George Neville Archbishop of York, opened up the field for many other patrons as well. Neville, the brother of the Earl of Warwick, the King Maker, and cousin to the Duke of York, was made the Chancellor of Oxford after William Grey left the post, in June of 1453. He held this position for

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<sup>48</sup> Weiss, p. 114-115.

<sup>49</sup> Gray, p. 87.

<sup>50</sup> Gray, p. 110-111.

<sup>51</sup> Gray, p. 110.

<sup>52</sup> Gray, p. 105-106. The Suidas Lexicons were actually an early type of a Greek to Latin dictionary.

four years and then again from 1461 to 1472. Neville employed Emmanuel as a scribe in his household while he was the Chancellor of Oxford and Chancellor to the King of England, Edward IV, his second cousin. Emmanuel dedicated the Leicester Codex to Neville in 1468. During this time Emmanuel not only worked as a scribe but he taught Greek to Neville and his close friend, John Shirwood.<sup>53</sup> Shirwood was later chosen to go to Rome as part of Henry VII's embassy along with William Selling and Thomas Linacre.<sup>54</sup> Despite the scarcity of evidence, Gray appears to be correct: it was Emmanuel who first taught Greek in England through the patronage both of Waynflete and the new Magdalen College and of Chancellor Archbishop Neville, "Emmanuel of Constantinople, thus recreated from fragments of information about him, stands forth as the first Greek scribe and possibly as the first teacher of Greek in fifteenth-century England."<sup>55</sup>

Of the books that Emmanuel wrote, two were in William Grocyn's possession when he died. Linacre was made the executor of his will and inventoried his library. There were notations next to certain books in short hand that indicated a familiarity with the text:<sup>56</sup> one of those was the Lexicon of Suidas, Emmanuel's work, the other was one of his psalters.<sup>57</sup> The Lexicon was an early version of a Greek to Latin dictionary and as such "No more appropriate text could have been passed from teacher to pupil."<sup>58</sup> Emmanuel was probably still at Oxford in 1468;<sup>59</sup> born in 1446, Grocyn would have likely been studying for two years at Oxford at this point. It is likely, then, that he established a relationship with the renowned Greek scholar. This

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<sup>53</sup> Weiss, p. 145.

<sup>54</sup> Weiss, p. 150.

<sup>55</sup> Gray, p. 114.

<sup>56</sup> Montagu Burrows, "Memoir of William Grocyn," in *Collectanea*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Montagu Burrows (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), p. 334.

<sup>57</sup> Gray, p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> Gray, p. 112.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, p. 108.

connection between Emmanuel and Grocyn, and Grocyn's strong connection to Linacre and his patron Selling presents strong evidence against the accepted convention that Cornelio Vitelli was the first Greek professor in England and Linacre's first Greek teacher. This also gives a peek into what Linacre must have been doing during his thoroughly undocumented years at Oxford. Grocyn was his elder by fourteen years and known to have taught Greek once he returned to England in 1490. He, along with Selling and possibly even John Shirwood, were probably Linacre's first Greek teachers.

The presence of a scholarly Greek either publically or privately teaching at Oxford helps to explain how some of these later humanists such as Selling, Grocyn and Linacre first received their Greek education and possibly first gathered kernels of interest in humanism and the idea of studying abroad. Erasmus wrote to William Latimer in February 1517, explaining "Grocyn himself whose example you cite, did he not start by learning the elements of Greek in England? Afterwards he set off for Italy and was taught by the best people; but all the time he profited by what he had learnt earlier...."<sup>60</sup> If not for the initial impetus to travel Linacre and Colet would never have imbibed the humanistic spirit that was brewing out of Italy.

Linacre was twenty-seven years old when William Selling invited him along on the embassy to Rome in May 1487. Linacre's movements while in Italy can be pieced together for the most part from statements made by his contemporaries and by the records he left behind him in Italy. During Selling's previous travels to Italy he studied with Poliziano while in Florence or possibly when he was getting his Doctorate in Divinity from Bologna.<sup>61</sup> Considering that Linacre did not go on to Rome with Selling and the envoy but instead stayed in Florence to study

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<sup>60</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 259-260. [Letter 540]

<sup>61</sup> Alexander, p. 46.

with Poliziano in the Medici schoolrooms it seems that Selling must have introduced the two while passing through Florence on the way to Rome. We do not know if Linacre's intention originally had been to study in Florence and the envoy was simply a means to get there, but it was certainly fortuitous for the young scholar.

William Grocyn may have traveled to Florence with Linacre or he might have happened to be traveling there at the same time for both were acquainted with Lorenzo de' Medici and studied in his home with his sons under the tutorship of Chalcondyles and Poliziano. Linacre and Latimer would have been twenty-eight years old in 1488 and Grocyn would have been forty, but even with the age differences there seemed to be no issue with sharing the same lectures with the teenage Medici brothers. The relationship between Linacre and Lorenzo's son Giovanni, later Pope Leo X, began during this time and culminated in 1521 when Linacre dedicated his translation of *De temperamentis et de inaequal intemperie* to him. William Latimer, who was a friend to Linacre and Grocyn and studied alongside them in Florence wrote to Erasmus on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1517,

I remember how Grocyn, a man (as you know) of very wide learning, with great and well-exercised powers of mind, devoted continuous labour to this same language [Greek] for two years on end, even after he had learnt the rudiments, and that under outstanding teachers, Demetrius Chalcondyles and Angelo Poliziano; how Linacre too, a man of great quickness of mind, spent the same number of years or even more under the same masters.<sup>62</sup>

This firsthand account attests to Linacre's presence in Florence for possibly longer than two years explaining why he was not noted in Rome until the end of 1490.

The Medici palace was not simply a school for his children and visiting scholars; Lorenzo welcomed the constant presence of eminent humanists of the day from the Platonic Academy

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<sup>62</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517, 201-202. [Letter 520]

founded by his family. This Academy will be discussed in greater detail concerning the impact it had upon John Colet's Christian humanist outlook. The Academy no doubt influenced Linacre, but not in the same way that Medical Humanism did. The largely Neo-Platonic Christian humanists of the academy did not move Linacre in the same way they did Colet—even though Linacre lived among them for several years and Colet probably never met any of them in person.

Linacre must have left Florence for Rome in 1490 because on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1490 he is registered as a member of the English Hospice of Saint Thomas of Canterbury in Rome.<sup>63</sup> These dates have been confirmed by research done in the *Venerabile Collegio Inglese* archives in Rome. The register at the Hospice has Linacre entering on the same day as William Lily. They did not, however, necessarily arrive together on the same day. William Lily was an Englishman and the godson of William Grocyn. Lily was born in 1468 and most likely started school at Magdalen College in 1486, receiving his Bachelor of Arts in the spring of 1490.<sup>64</sup> According to Lily's son George, William left England because of a liking for travel and religious devotion.<sup>65</sup> Lily headed on pilgrimage to Jerusalem after he received his degree in the spring of 1490. He travelled overland through the Netherlands and Germany and sailed out of Venice to the Holy Land, a trip that usually took a month to complete one way. From what George describes it does not appear that Lily spent much time in the Holy Land but left within a month and headed to the island of Rhodes.<sup>66</sup> It was here that Lily is assumed to have learned Greek, although, like Linacre, he was probably already familiar with the rudiments of Greek before he traveled. Having Grocyn as a godfather and attending the same college at which Grocyn was a Reader,

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<sup>63</sup> Schmitt, p. 40.

<sup>64</sup> Vincent Joseph Flynn, "The Life and Works of William Lily, The Grammarian" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> Flynn, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Flynn, p. 24.

Lily most likely received some Greek instruction from Grocyn. Although George Lily states that his father “thoroughly learned the rudiments of Latin and Greek at Rhodes,”<sup>67</sup> what he meant surely was that his father ‘perfected his knowledge of Latin and Greek at Rhodes’, for what Oxford scholar and godson to Grocyn did not already know the rudiments of Latin from a grammar school age?

On Rhodes the Holy Military Order of St. John the Baptist of Jerusalem (the legendary Knights of Rhodes) was active. It was at the hospice run by the Benedictines that Lily probably stayed during his sojourn there. At this time the Knights of Rhodes were experiencing an upswing in power because their main enemy Mahomet II had died after a failed siege in 1481. They had one of the princes to the Sultan’s throne under their protection until handing him over to the pope in 1488. Rhodes was never hailed as a great learning center. However, if Lily wanted to study Latin and Greek, as his son claims, then Rhodes would have been a wonderful place for immersing himself in the culture and language of both because Rhodes was home to both a native Greek population and an established and influential Latin settlement as well.<sup>68</sup> It is entirely possible that Rhodes was home to not only native Greeks but also those who were displaced by the recent fall of Constantinople, and that while in Jerusalem Lily was enticed to go to Rhodes with the hopes of studying with now unknown scholars living on the island. Lily spent at most five months at Rhodes before he was registered as a member of the Roman Hospice in November 1491.

What Linacre did while he was in Rome is quite unknown besides a few anecdotes and facts written down by friends. George Lily says that while in Rome his father William attended the lectures of Pomponius Sabinus and Joannes Sulpitus. The latter was an author of

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<sup>67</sup> Flynn, p. 44.

<sup>68</sup> Flynn, p. 24.



grammatical tracts and considering the future endeavors of Lily and Linacre, it is likely that Linacre also attended these lectures with Lily. Sabinus was the founder of the *Accademia Romana*,<sup>69</sup> one of the three great academies in Italy, besides the Florentine and Venetian ones, all of which Linacre was involved with at some point. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1491 Linacre was made *custos* of the Hospice.<sup>70</sup> Another prominent person Linacre befriended, according to a regularly repeated story, was the eminent scholar Hermolaus Barbarus, they supposedly met in the Vatican libraries.<sup>71</sup> It seems improbable that Linacre had not already met Barbarus by this time considering that Barbarus and Poliziano were not only friends, but both were interested in translating medical texts and Pliny the Younger, and part of the humanist circle at the Papal court: “Poliziano himself, while not mentioning Grocyn and Linacre by name, referred to the fact that he taught Pliny to several British students present for seven months during 1490.”<sup>72</sup> At the time Barbarus was working on a translation of Dioscorides, a Greek medical text and on Pliny the Younger.<sup>73</sup> Regardless of how they met it appears that Barbarus may have guided Linacre towards an interest in medical matters. If Linacre’s mind had not already been turned towards the medical field it is a small wonder considering the interests of the people around him.

In Florence Linacre’s tutor Poliziano was “searching for and working on manuscripts of Galen, and ... translating Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* with Galen’s accompanying commentary....”<sup>74</sup> This he was working on continuously, but definitely in June 1490 at the same

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<sup>69</sup> Michael, F. J. McDonnell, A History of St. Paul’s School (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1909), p. 70.

<sup>70</sup> Flynn, p. 48.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, p. 130.

<sup>72</sup> Schmitt, p. 38.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Frank Payne, “Introduction” in GALENI PERGAMENSIS, DE TEMPERAMENTIS, ET DE INAEQUALI INTEMPERIE, LIBRI TRES, trans. Thomas Linacre (Cambridge: C. J. Clay, 1881), p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Woolfson, p. 77.

time as lecturing on Pliny to his students. Chalcondylas was working on *De anatomicis administrationibus* by Galen and lecturing on Homer.<sup>75</sup> This shows that the very influential tutors in Linacre's life were working on translating Greek medical texts into Latin, otherwise known as medical humanism. Author Albert Hyma claims that Barbarus had urged Linacre along with Latimer and Grocyn to work on a translation of Aristotle together.<sup>76</sup> No source is given to explain where the author might have gotten this idea from, however it is an interesting proposition. Barbarus would have only encountered all three of the Englishmen together while they were in Florence studying with Poliziano. Considering the friendship between Poliziano and Barbarus, and their mutual interest currently in Pliny the Younger it is entirely likely that Linacre first made Barbarus's acquaintance in Florence and not in the Vatican Libraries.

Through Poliziano and Barbarus another medical humanist may have come to Linacre's attention, namely Niccolo Leonico. Leonico was one of the first medical humanists and the first person to write on syphilis, the new disease currently ravaging Europe. He and other medical humanists sought "to recover the original perfect Greek texts of the Fathers of Medicine from Hippocrates onwards. These they believed would be found to contain all knowledge necessary for the cure of disease and preservation of health."<sup>77</sup> According to John Fulton, Leonico's "first published book (1492) dealt with the 'Errors of Pliny', but it was looked upon with much alarm by his conservative contemporaries and brought him into active conflict with

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<sup>75</sup> Richard J. Durling, "Linacre and Medical Humanism," in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 78. Durling states that Chalcondylas was working on translations and Hyma explains that he was currently lecturing on Homer, p. 23.

<sup>76</sup> Hyma, p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> Arthur Rook, ed. Cambridge and its Contribution to Medicine (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1991), p. 28.

Politian, Barbarus and other scholars of Italy.”<sup>78</sup> Before this time and eventually afterwards

Polizano and Leoniceno had been friends:

A correspondence which has been preserved between Leonicenus and Angelus Politianus is full of mutual compliments; and shows that the two scholars regarded themselves as allies in the common warfare against ‘barbarism’ a foe that had to be expelled from the fields of philosophy and medicine as well as from that of letters.<sup>79</sup>

It is clear that Leonicenus and Poliziano were able to reconcile their friendship, but this situation must have made Linacre aware, if not for the first time, of the famous medical humanist. Leoniceno lived in Vicenza, which even by sixteenth-century standards was close to Padua. In a letter written by Richard Croke to Henry VIII he referred to Linacre as a pupil of Leoniceno<sup>80</sup>; this makes sense considering the similarities in their chosen studies, their common friends and the nearness of their locations while Linacre was at Padua and Venice. Croke can be taken as a reliable source for this information because he was one of the students learning Greek from Grocyn when he returned to Oxford, and no doubt this information came from Grocyn himself.<sup>81</sup> In fact Leoniceno had asked Linacre to see that several of his translation works were published. In the preface to Leoniceno’s *De Motu Musculorum* Linacre states:

There is nothing I desire more than to make the works of Galen—after Hippocrates the greatest benefactor of human health—available to all who use the Roman tongue... As for this excellent little work of his on muscular motion which the learned Nicolaus Leonicenus has turned into Latin, and which my Florianus has sent to me from the city, I could not let students be deprived of it for long, or refrain from having it printed in many copies and as soon as possible....<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> John F. Fulton, “Early Medical Humanists: Leonicenus, Linacre and Thomas Elyot,” New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 205, no. 3 (July 1931): p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Payne, p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> Payne, p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Clough, p. 22, n. 5.

<sup>82</sup> Fulton, p. 9.

Fulton also states that Linacre referred to his master Leoniceno in warm terms and that Leoniceno on more than one occasion spoke affectionately of Linacre as his pupil.<sup>83</sup>

After Linacre was made *custos* of the English Hospice of Saint Thomas of Canterbury in Rome in May 1491 nothing more is heard of him until he received his Medical Doctorate from Padua in 1496.<sup>84</sup> There is no record left besides his graduation date and degree type and “One of the three documents concerning his degree commends Linacre specifically for the excellence of his examination performance.”<sup>85</sup> The statutes at Padua University stipulated at the time that to earn a degree in medicine “it was necessary to study at least three years, during the course of which the student was required to have heard all of the *lectiones ordinariae*, as well as having practiced a year with a well known doctor.”<sup>86</sup> If Linacre left Rome for Padua in 1491 sometime after receiving the post of *custos* he would have had the requisite amount of time to devote to the medical degree. It is possible that Linacre shared his time in Padua between that and Leoniceno’s home, or that he spent time there before moving on to study at Padua. Either way Richard Pacey’s glowing description of Linacre’s performance during his examination shows that Linacre was above and beyond the normal medical student, both in his rhetoric and grammatical skills.<sup>87</sup> This is perhaps due to his extra study with the foremost medical humanist of his day.

Once Linacre had finished his degree he travelled to Venice and lived and worked with Aldus Manutius owner and founder of the Aldine Press, who had a “literary and humanistic

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<sup>83</sup> Fulton, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> C. D. O’Malley, English Medical Humanists, Thomas Linacre and John Caius, (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1965), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Schmitt, p. 67.

<sup>86</sup> Schmitt, p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> Johnson, p. 144.

circle around”<sup>88</sup> him at all times, in his home, in the social circles he kept, and the academies of which he was a member. While there Linacre became a member of the “Aldine Academy, an organization dedicated primarily to the study and propagation of Greek language and literature.”<sup>89</sup> Aldus’s print shop was one of a kind: “Venice became the most productive centre of printing in Italy, and the most active centre of Greek and Latin printing in the world.”<sup>90</sup> The work Linacre did for Aldus appears to have required the skill of a talented Grecian and Latinist, possessing both grammatical skill and attention to detail because Aldus was publishing Greek texts and also those translated into Latin for the first time ever.

Aldus was currently working on an ambitious project when Linacre joined his household in 1496. Aldus “first gave his attention to issuing a complete edition of the Greek text of Aristotle’s works, his earliest substantial venture as a printer.”<sup>91</sup> He had already printed the first edition in 1495, but in the preface to the third edition, Aldus discussed the pains he took in securing a correct text and mentioned that Linacre had a hand in the editing and correcting of the present edition. Further proof of Linacre’s role in the publishing of the third edition is his actual ownership of the edition, which he had with him in England.<sup>92</sup>

Aldus published Linacre’s translation of the Greek text by Proclus, *De Sphaera*, in 1499.<sup>93</sup> It was not published until after Linacre returned to England, long enough for a letter written by William Grocyn to Aldus upon Linacre’s return to be included as the preface to the work. *De Sphaera* was his first published work and it made him “the first Englishman to publish

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<sup>88</sup> Schmitt, p. 68.

<sup>89</sup> Schmitt, p. 69.

<sup>90</sup> Clark, p. 41.

<sup>91</sup> Fulton, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> Payne, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> William Munk, The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1878), p. 21.

a work of the new classical scholarship.”<sup>94</sup> Grocyn’s letter to Aldus thanked him for the kindness shown to Linacre and also thanked him from all English scholars for his contribution to the literary field by publishing the Greek classics. Linacre left such an impression on Aldus that almost twenty years later Erasmus wrote, “In Britain there is such a man of all-round erudition, Thomas Linacre, who will have been known to you long ago from the glowing reports of Aldus....”<sup>95</sup>

Linacre’s experience in Italy was nothing if not enlightening. He befriended some of the foremost leaders in scholarship, not only learning at their side, but actually knowing them and participating in their lives. Linacre probably sat at the Medici table with Lorenzo de Medici and his family, and Polizano, Chalcondylas, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Barbarus, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and other members of the Florentine Platonic Academy. In Rome he was connected to the humanist circle surrounding the papacy. At Padua he received the best medical education available in all of Europe and he clearly excelled while there. He earned the admiration of the first medical humanist and had participated in the cutting edge publishing of classical Greek texts for the first time. Through his personal connections to people like William Selling he was introduced to the highest circles of scholarship and humanism occurring in Italy and this continued to open doors for him throughout his twelve-year stay in Italy. The experiences he had and the examples of humanism at work he saw there forever marked the way he lived his life, his goals and aspirations. The humanist principles and ideals he acquired while immersed in the Italian culture helped to shape the actions he took once back in England.

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<sup>94</sup> Clark, p. 41

<sup>95</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 842 to 992, 1518-1519, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.), p. 128. [Letter 868]

## CHAPTER THREE

### COLET'S HUMANIST EXPERIENCE

John Colet was born in 1466 to Henry and Christian Colet. He was the eldest of twenty children and the sole survivor of the entire family. His maternal cousin Sir William Knevet married Joan, Humphrey Stafford the Duke of Buckingham's daughter, thus connecting the Colets, through Dame Christian, to this noble family. Henry was a powerful merchant in London and rose to the position Mayor of London twice. It is unknown where exactly his eldest son was educated in his youth but it was probably either at St. Thomas of Acons or St. Anthony's Hospital, both of which at the time were considered good schools.<sup>96</sup> St. Thomas of Acons was later associated with the Mercer's Company, who were Colet's choice for secular overseers of his school. Thomas More, also a son of an affluent Londoner, was a student at St. Anthony's Hospital, and as a son of a prominent Londoner it is possible that Colet was also a student at the same school, and this could explain their strong friendship.<sup>97</sup>

Colet entered Oxford in 1483; which college he attended is unknown, but probably either Magdalen or Exeter College. There is a new theory that Colet actually went to Cambridge for his undergraduate schooling before he left to travel in Europe.<sup>98</sup> Both universities had similar requirements for their students so regardless of the possibility that he may have attended Cambridge, he received his Bachelors of Arts by 1487 and his Masters in July of 1490. Part of

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander, p. 62.

<sup>97</sup> McDonnell, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> John Gleason, John Colet. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 39.

the Master's program required two years of lecturing at the university before moving on. Colet's plans at this point are not clear but his future actions indicate that he was preparing to earn a Bachelor of Divinity degree as well. This required four years of reading and listening to lectures, followed by another three years of opposing, responding, and preaching.<sup>99</sup>

In 1493 after finishing the two years of lecturing required for his Master's degree, Colet set out to travel and learn throughout Europe. It was the norm for a student who had the means and the inclination to travel while doing the reading required for their degree and to attend supplemental lectures while abroad. The path taken by many young English students was through Calais to Paris and Orleans and over the Alps to Bologna and Florence, finishing in Rome. Colet's own path is not known, but unless he specifically chose to detour from tradition he most likely followed this same route too.<sup>100</sup> The only definite destinations we have for Colet during his European travels are that he was registered at the English Hospice of Saint Thomas of Canterbury in Rome in March of 1493, and in Paris during December of 1495, and he was back in England in the spring of 1496.<sup>101</sup> According to Francis Deloynes in a letter written to Erasmus, Colet spent time in Orleans studying- this had to have been during his travels abroad because he never left England after he returned:

Again I am bound to love your friend Colet, distinguished as he is alike for learning and for holiness of life, since it was he who, in your own words, recalled to you the old-established friendship and familiarity which he and I once enjoyed to no common degree when we were living and studying at Orleans.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Jayne, p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> J. H. Lupton, A Life of John Colet, D.D. Dean of St. Paul's and Founder of St. Paul's School. (Hamden: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1961), p. 54.

<sup>101</sup> Jayne, p. 18.

<sup>102</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517, p. 154. [Letter 493]



What happened between these destinations is only conjecture, but solidly based on statements made by Colet and his contemporaries later in life and the events that were occurring in Italy while he was there.

The little information about Colet's early life and the few glimpses of his personality that have survived present him as a rather serious young man. He could have gone into his father's successful business in London, or used his mother's familial connection to a powerful noble family for personal advancement. Colet could have done practically anything considering his intelligence and family wealth, but he chose the church instead, not as an absent career churchman who sought advancement and many benefices, but as a very active Dean at an institution that needed his guidance. He rose to be Dean of St. Paul's, which at the time was the top position in the diocese of London- he was second only to the Bishop of London.

He began his official clerical career in 1485 at the age of nineteen when his maternal cousin Sir William Knevet, son-in-law to the Duke of Buckingham, appointed Colet to the rectory of St. Mary, in Dennington, Suffolk. In 1490 Colet's father presented him the benefice of the rectory of St. Nicholas, Thurning in the Lincoln diocese. A new rector was appointed in January of 1494, which means Colet must have resigned this post before then, perhaps in preparation for his upcoming journey to Italy. Colet received his final benefice of the vicarage of St. Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney at an unknown date, but he resigned the post before September 21<sup>st</sup> 1505.<sup>103</sup> The details of Colet's activities while at these posts is scarce, but like everything in his life that he devoted himself to he seems to have fully committed to these posts while he held them. In fact he was so devoted to Stepney that his friends in London despaired of

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<sup>103</sup> Lupton, p. 116-118.

ever seeing him again. Thomas More wrote to Colet after running into a trusted servant of his in London towards the end of October 1504:

I really cannot blame you if you are not yet tired of the country where you live among simple people, unversed in the deceits of the city; wherever you cast your eyes, the smiling face of the earth greets you, the sweet fresh air invigorates you, the very sight of the heavens charm you. There you can see nothing but the generous gifts of nature and the traces of our primeval innocence. But yet I do not wish you to be so captivated by these delights as to be unwilling to fly back to us as soon as possible. For if the inconveniences of the city so displease you, your country parish of Stepney (of which you should have no less care) will afford you hardly less advantages than where you now dwell...<sup>104</sup>

More goes on to tell Colet that although the people of the Stepney parish surely need him and benefit from his godly teaching, his expertise is more earnestly needed in London. More compares godly preachers to physicians stating that:

In the city because of the great numbers that congregate there, and because of their long-standing habits of vice, any physician will have come in vain unless he be the most skillful. Certainly there come from time to time into the pulpit at St. Paul's preachers who promise health, but although they seem to have spoken very eloquently, their life is in such sharp contrast to their words that they irritate rather than soothe. For they cannot bring men to believe that though they are themselves obviously in direst need of the physician's help, they are yet fit to be entrusted with the cure of other men's ailments... But if (as observers of human nature assert), he is the best physician in whom the patient has the greatest confidence, who can doubt that you are the one who can do most for the cure of all in the city?<sup>105</sup>

Thomas More's mention of St. Paul's in this letter to Colet is perhaps not as random as it seems. Colet, besides the three benefices mentioned above was also the holder of several cathedral preferments including the prebend of Goodeaster in St. Martin le Grand, one in York Cathedral, another at Salisbury, and the chapel of Hilberworth in Norwich, and finally the

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<sup>104</sup> Elizabeth Frances Rogers, ed., St. Thomas More: Selected Letters (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Rogers, p. 5.

prebend of Mora in St. Paul's in London.<sup>106</sup> The distinction between Colet's appointment to the Mora prebend and his appointment as Dean of St. Paul's is unclear, whether they were granted at the same time or if there was a difference in their timing. I believe that Colet was separately appointed to the prebend of Mora and when the Dean of St. Paul's- Dr. Robert Sherborne was given the bishopric of St. David's in 1504, Colet was then considered for the position of Dean at St. Paul's. Frederic Seebohm, author of The Oxford Reformers, states:

Colet is said to have owed this appointment to the patronage of King Henry VII. The title of Doctor was at length conferred upon him, preparatory to his acceptance of this preferment, and it would appear as an honorary mark of distinction.<sup>107</sup>

It appears that Seebohm believes that Colet received his Doctorate by grace of Henry VII, however author Sears Jayne argues that Colet did in fact earn his Doctor of Divinity at Oxford and this was confirmed in March of 1504.<sup>108</sup> This date is close to the time he was appointed to the Mora prebend, so it is understandable that with less information available to him Seebohm was mistaken. If it was true that Henry VII had a hand in Colet's appointment to the Deanery then perhaps More's letter was a coded way for him, who at this time was known to be currently out of favor with Henry VII<sup>109</sup>, to tell Colet that taking the post at St. Paul's would be the best possible thing for him to do, even though it was through the good graces of the monarch that had imprisoned More's father on a vengeful whim.

Colet's list of benefices and prebend posts is very small in comparison to many of his colleagues at this time. The only benefice he held onto throughout his life was the one given to him by his mother's family and as such he may have felt a familial obligation not to resign from

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<sup>106</sup> Lupton, p. 119-120.

<sup>107</sup> Seebohm, Fredric, The Oxford Reformers (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1867), p. 84.

<sup>108</sup> Jayne, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> A further discussion of the tension between Thomas More and Henry VII is on page 57.

that post. Otherwise he had a consistent pattern of retiring from his previous post upon being conferred another.

Colet was consistently described as serious-minded. Perhaps having been raised in a family that witnessed the deaths of nineteen children turned Colet's mind from a very young age onto a somber and serious path. Even early in life Colet sought grave conversation, a pattern that continued through his life and can be seen in his letters to friends and in conversations later recalled by them. Colet was a man totally devoted to his faith in God and his desire to not only attain a better understanding of God for himself through the study of the original church fathers but to then share the knowledge he had with those around him through his preaching and educational reforms so that they too could experience the purity of the original church. It was this desire to use the revival of Greek to unearth pure church texts that had not been altered by scholastics or copyists, and use them to counter the corruption of the current church, that places Colet solidly in the Christian humanist camp.

It is possible that Colet and Linacre knew each other while at Oxford; their times of study overlapped by four years, 1483-1487. William Grocyn, a close friend of Linacre's who studied with him in Florence, was most likely familiar with Colet during their time at Oxford. Grocyn was a Reader in Divinity at Magdalen College from 1481-1487, and after his travels in Italy he returned to Oxford in 1491.<sup>110</sup> This was at the same time that Colet was starting his own lectures in order to complete the requirements for his Masters before moving on to the Bachelor of Divinity. It is inconceivable that Colet who was planning on traveling to Italy would not have at least sought out Grocyn, a man in the same field having just returned from Italy.

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<sup>110</sup> Jayne, p. 16.

Italy had changed a great deal between the time Linacre first travelled there and when Colet set out on his excursion. The intellectual and humanist movements had been altered unimaginably by political events. The death of Lorenzo de Medici was such an event and all of Italy felt the consequences. It was in his home where many of the most influential intellectuals of the day were nurtured, patronized, discovered, and allowed the freedom to question ideas that at another court would not have been considered. The Platonic Academy, founded by his grandfather Cosimo, not only was the hot bed of humanistic culture in Florence but also a place of great religious faith, reform, astrological, and prophetic investigation. Without Lorenzo to balance out the many varied aspects of the Academy a sense of religious fervor took over the group and turned them on a decidedly different path than the ones that had dominated their lives during Lorenzo's life and Linacre's stay in Florence. The profound influence that Christian humanism had on Colet makes it important to understand the events that shaped the factors involved. A direct line of inspiration can be drawn from the Florentine Academy's Neo-Platonic, Christian, and humanist ideas down to many of Colet's humanist practices and as such the basis of those initial ideas needs to be analyzed.

The papacy changed hands in 1492 with the election of the Alexander VI, the first Borgia pope. The previous Pope Innocent VIII surrounded himself with an exciting group of scholars, clerics, and humanists in the continuing tradition of Pope Nicholas V, the venerated patron of many influential humanists in the middle of the fifteenth century. Innocent VIII may not have been revered for holiness but he definitely did not throw all appearances of decorum out the window the way the next pope did. Alexander VI was neither known for his piety nor his moral uprightness, but rather for a total lack of both. He was a wonderful patron though and continued to support artists and intellectuals, but his open debauchery turned the minds of many clerics and

humanists alike. He housed his young mistress in the papal residence with him and he openly acknowledged his bastard children from a previous affair, and favored them with gifts from the papal coffers. His eldest son Cesare Borgia was the leader of the Papal armies. His daughter Lucrezia was well known in Rome, as well as a patron to Niccolo Leonicensi, the famous medical humanist.<sup>111</sup>

Needless to say the religious climate of Rome during Alexander VI's reign was less than purely devout. Colet was definitely in Rome while the Borgias dominated the culture there, and as a sincere man with high religious aspirations he must have been rudely shocked by the state in which he found the holiest of the holies. If the church should have been upholding the Christian ideal anywhere it should have been in Rome upon St. Peter's throne, but instead there sat a man with his teenaged mistress on his lap, defiling the sanctity of everything Colet hoped his church to stand for. This situation alone must have deeply affected Colet's attitude to the established church hierarchy. His interactions later with difficult and not necessarily worthy church leaders when back in England have a twinge of sad bitterness to them.

Lorenzo de Medici died in 1492, leaving his twenty-year-old son Piero as the heir to the Medici dynasty. Piero was not prepared for the role he was now expected to fulfill, and he faced dire circumstances that even a seasoned politician would have struggled through. King Charles VIII of France sought to press his tenuous claim to the Neapolitan throne and invaded the Italian peninsula in 1494. Piero's attempts to negotiate with Charles to prevent his 30,000 troops from ravaging Florence were failing. In the eyes of the new political power in Florence, a Dominican monk named Savonarola, this was all due to Medici corruption and tyranny. He and his followers drove the Medici family from Florence on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1494 and he assumed the

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<sup>111</sup> Durling, p. 79.

mantle of power in the vacuum created by their sudden absence. Savonarola, with the support of the Florentines, negotiated with Charles and instead of the city being sacked, it hosted the French troops while they were in the area. Citizens were forced to take soldiers into their homes and feed and house them. Not until Charles decided to move on to Naples in his ultimately unsuccessful attempt to take the throne were the people of Florence free of the fear his occupying troops incited. The Florentines, however, were not free of the domination from the man they had raised by popular demand to the heights of power. It was Savonarola, a former guest at the Medici house and a friend to the Platonic Academy who within a few years altered the cultural landscape of Florence. His dominance saw Florence change from a place where the arts thrived and ideas blossomed to a somber fearful city. This was the Florence that Colet would have visited while in Italy. Savonarola's fire and brimstone religious agenda was being felt even in the days of Lorenzo himself, but it was his death that removed the final impediment to Savonarola's ability to truly dominate the minds of the frightened Florentines.

The Florentine Platonic Academy had always been devoted to the Christian faith, but in a way where members felt the freedom to ask questions of that faith and to build a greater understanding of man's relationship to God based on their answers. It was their belief that a better understanding of God could be reached through the classical authors' writings:

The interest of Ficino and some of the other humanists of his time in prophecy, the occult, and in an esoteric, universal tradition of philosophy was at bottom due to their new attempt to harmonize humanist and religious values, to unite once more the two poles of reason and faith, to bring Christianity and the classical heritage together.<sup>112</sup>

The occult held an intense interest for them and had for humanists in the past; Humphrey Duke of Gloucester had several humanists in his circle who were also deeply involved in occult

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<sup>112</sup> Donald Weinstein, "Prophecy and Humanism in the Late Fifteenth Century Florence" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1957), p. 96.

studies- a study of prophecy and astrology and the impact of these on the human experience. Ficino believed that prophesy was divine inspiration granted to an elevated mind, and that a person had to work to be granted this gift through intellect and will. This idea was in opposition to Savonarola and Pico's belief that prophecy was divinely given and not based on ethical or intellectual characteristics.<sup>113</sup> They often debated the place of man in God's world- where man stood in relation to the lower orders and in the hierarchy of the universe. They questioned whether man could through the application of his intellect and will transcend and achieve through an internal experience an understanding of God which had not yet been experienced by any outside of mystics. This, Ficino believed, could make man more God-like and less animalistic, thus enhancing and embracing the idea of the dignity of man. It was through the study of Plato that many of these ideas were born [later labeled as Neo-Platonism], and Platonism was used to found a system meant to restore the unity of the natural and the supernatural worlds while making a place for humanistic values.<sup>114</sup>

Pico was another pivotal member of the Florentine Academy and also the Count of Mirandola, and as such independently wealthy. He was far more religiously minded than Ficino but still a great advocate of the ancients' wisdom. Even though he was a follower of Savonarola he still stood by his conviction that the ancients were helpers to and not hindrances of religion. A student of Poliziano recounted a debate between Savonarola and Pico over this matter: "Pico's defense was based on his theory of the agreement between Christianity and the ancient philosophies, and when he finished the friar embraced him, declaring him to be the expert in such matters."<sup>115</sup> Pico believed that knowledge of God was best achieved through grace rather

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<sup>113</sup> Weinstein, p. 206.

<sup>114</sup> Weinstein, p. 74.

<sup>115</sup> Weinstein, p. 150.



than the study of Cicero or Aristotle, but that learning had a role to play, though one that was subordinate to God's divine grace.

Pico first came under the influence of Savonarola when they met in Ferrara around 1480; they immediately became fast friends. It was probably Pico who asked Lorenzo to request that Savonarola be returned to Florence in 1490 after his monastery had sent him away to Bologna in 1487.<sup>116</sup> Savonarola was a guest at the Medici table on several occasions and although he preached against the Medici in part, there seemed to be a level of mutual respect between him and Lorenzo. In fact for a while Savonarola's prophetic preaching aided Lorenzo's foreign policy, and the two men agreed that a knowledge of the eastern languages was worthwhile. Savonarola believed this because once the conversion of the infidels was underway they would need preachers fluent in their languages.<sup>117</sup>

Savonarola originally preached at a small convent church of San Marco to poor and artisan groups. As his message grew more sensational his congregation increased beyond the capacity of his church. He preached the Lenten Sermons at the much larger Duomo in 1491 and continued to preach to huge crowds there until his death. He claimed to have been graced with the gift of prophecy, and that he had predicted Lorenzo's death. He had three major predictions: the renovation of the church, the scourge of all Italy before this reform, and that these things would happen quickly.<sup>118</sup> Things did start to happen quickly:

From 1492, when Lorenzo died, to November 1494, when the French came and Piero his son left the city ignominiously after disastrous concessions to Charles VIII, the succession of events seemed to confirm Savonarola's predictions, and rich and poor, scholar and lowly citizen alike joined in the general enthusiasm for this prophet of God.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Weinstein, p. 127.

<sup>117</sup> Weinstein, p. 148.

<sup>118</sup> Weinstein, p. 115.

<sup>119</sup> Weinstein, p. 188.

Once Savonarola was the undisputed authority in Florence he started to implement new laws concerning morality, decency, the practice of religious ceremonies, and curfews. Carnival was changed from a festive holiday into the Burning of the Vanities where even famous artists burned their precious creations. Savonarola sought to force Florence and her citizens into the perfect Christian community through the application of practical programs but his methods of fear-based behavior modification kept in check through violence prevented his dream from materializing.

Outspoken preaching against the papacy was ultimately Savonarola's downfall. Alexander VI summoned him to Rome in the summer of 1495, but believing Rome to be the belly of the beast at present and Alexander the Anti-Christ, Savonarola declined to go. This stalemate continued until Alexander excommunicated Savonarola in June 1497. In complete defiance of the excommunication Savonarola continued to preach until Rome threatened to place all of Florence under interdict unless Savonarola was turned over to authorities or silenced. This action seemed to snap Florence out from under the spell of Savonarola's prophecies. The hotly anticipated Trial by Fire on April 7<sup>th</sup> failed to happen because the disputes between the Dominicans and the Franciscans lasted so long that the whole thing was rained out. Denied a conclusion the people rose up and a mob attacked the San Marco monastery the next day and captured Savonarola. He was questioned under torture by civic and ecclesiastical examiners, and executed by hanging and also burning on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1495.

Ficino had outwardly been an avid follower of Savonarola while he lived, but after Savonarola's execution he publically spoke out against the priest and in defense of his and Florence's actions. In a statement addressed to the College of Cardinals he explains that Florence had

Been seduced by Savonarola at the time when they were beset with many misfortunes, when the state was passing through its crisis, and the French were threatening. With demonic power Savonarola had disguised himself in virtues and, by threats of violence more than anything else, he had stupefied and deceived the people.<sup>120</sup>

The Medici returned but Florence was never to be the place it was before, the torch of humanistic adventure and thought had been snuffed and would never burn as brightly again. Poliziano died aged 41 in September 1494, and Pico died in November 1495 on the very day that Charles VIII entered Florence.<sup>121</sup>

This is not to say that Florence's scholars were not still writing humanist tracts, translating ancient works, and debating the role of man, but since the early 1490s these had taken on a religious fervor that was muted when Lorenzo was alive. The purity of the revived Greek texts and the philosophies contained within contrasted greatly with the corruption of the current impure state of Christianity. This created a new wave of interest in the early Church Fathers, those viewed as untainted sources of Christian wisdom and insight. Ficino fully embraced this turn of events and was lecturing on St. Paul and publishing his translation of the Dionysion writings in 1492 and in 1496.<sup>122</sup> Dionysion was believed to have been an Athenian philosopher who was converted to Christianity by St. Paul himself. His writings appealed to those who were appalled by the ecclesiastical scandals of the day because these writings were severely critical of these types of failings in the church.<sup>123</sup> William Grocyn delivered a series of lectures at St.

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<sup>120</sup> Weinstein, p. 216.

<sup>121</sup> Lupton, p. 50-51.

<sup>122</sup> Seebohm, p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> Seebohm, p. 36.

Paul's cathedral in London that challenged the date of Dionysius writings, later it was discovered that Dionysius was actually a sixth-century Greek Christian.<sup>124</sup>

A different humanist climate resulted in Florence and Italy as a whole because of these events. Colet was truly and profoundly affected by the Christian humanism that was flowing from the wound left by Lorenzo's death and the resulting changes in Florence. Had Colet travelled with Linacre in 1487 there is no telling the type of humanist he would have become; he may have learned Greek in the Medici garden, but instead he learned a serious lesson about the purity of his faith and the corruption of the church. In a search for a purity to match the purity of the Platonic philosophies, Colet fastened upon the early church fathers, and based on their combined teachings he formulated his devout humanist ideals. Without the religious climate in Italy Colet may never have started treading down the paths of Christian humanism; instead he may have been content as a successful clergyman climbing the church ladder of advancement.

The letters exchanged between Colet and Ficino reveal that they never met; many scholars have taken this to mean that Colet never visited Florence while he was in Italy. That conclusion is unfounded. During the time Colet was in Italy the only thing he had to recommend himself was that he was a graduate of Oxford and the son of a former Mayor of London, there is no evidence that he had a introduction into society like Linacre had from William Selling in Florence. While in Paris during the later part of his journey, Colet heard of Erasmus. In a letter Colet wrote to Erasmus he explains how much he was impressed by the scholars reputation and that he wanted to meet him, yet he made no attempt to meet with him. Erasmus at this time was just beginning his career whereas Ficino was considered the leader of the highly regarded

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<sup>124</sup> Charles G. Nauert, Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), p. 122.

Florentine Platonic Academy. Colet may have dismissed the idea of trying to meet those people whom he admired, for it was Erasmus who later sought him out in Oxford and not the other way around. Colet may have regarded his background in England and his studies as not being the type of credentials that open doors to the Florentine Platonic Academy or other influential houses. Colet could have easily visited Florence and studied there under less auspicious teachers and still have been affected by those Neo-Platonic Christian humanistic philosophies:

Though he never quotes or distinctly refers to Savonarola, there are such points of resemblance between their character and teaching, as to make it natural to think that Colet must have come under the influence of the great Florentine reformer, either as a listener or as a reader of his works.<sup>125</sup>

Ficino's writings were widely available in Florence around the time that Colet would have visited and "The chief attraction for Colet in Ficino must have been the Florentine's discovery of the connection between the Platonic tradition and the Pauline Epistles..."<sup>126</sup>

The first philosopher to try and fuse Greek philosophy and Christianity was Clement of Alexandria (150-213). He believed that pagan philosophy was useful as an aid to Christianity in two particular ways: as a way for leading philosophically minded men to Christ and then as an aid for inquiring into the meaning of Christian doctrine after accepting it.<sup>127</sup> He spread the idea that philosophy was the handmaiden of religion. Ficino was in complete agreement with Clement's theories except that he saw philosophy and religion as sisters.<sup>128</sup> Colet, like Clement and Ficino, hoped to use this Greek philosophy as an aid to present day Christians, to help bring

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<sup>125</sup> Lupton, p. 52.

<sup>126</sup> Leland Miles, John Colet and the Platonic Tradition (LaSalle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1961), p. 21.

<sup>127</sup> Miles, p. 8.

<sup>128</sup> Seebohm, p. 66-67.

the purity of the early Church fathers back through study of the New Testament and their writings.

Colet's time in Italy, although poorly documented, had a profound impact upon his outlook in life and deed. Colet may not have personally made waves in the way that Linacre did, but that does not mean that he was not deeply affected by the wakes of others. He did not have the personal and written recommendations of well-known scholars like William Selling and Grocyn to introduce him to the courts and schoolrooms of Italy. Nor did he have the pleasure of seeing the Italian Renaissance at its height; instead he caught the dwindling tail end. He saw all of the corruption and none of the elegance. He absorbed the feelings of resentment held toward the corrupt Church, and the need to bring about a renewal of the early Church fathers and the purity that was attached to them. The lessons he learned while abroad were unique to him:

In his case the years spent abroad, not so much in learning Greek as in more general culture, and especially of theology, produced the result of a profoundly religious character, all on fire to instruct and reform, - a character which exercised an influence not only by a noble simplicity of life, by eloquence, and by ability, but also by the social position of the rich Lord Mayor's son and heir.<sup>129</sup>

This was Colet's Italian experience, a thorough introduction to Christian Platonic humanism, and a desire to improve life through the practical application of the ideas he developed while abroad.

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<sup>129</sup> Burrows, p. 348.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ENGLISH HUMANISM IN DEVELOPMENT

When Colet was returning from his Italian travels he passed through Paris and here he first heard of the man who would become his life long friend, Desiderius Erasmus. In the first letter that Colet wrote to Erasmus he says: “You have already been recommended to me by your reputation and by the evidence afforded by certain of your writings. At the time when I was in Paris the name of Erasmus on the lips of scholars was one to conjure with.”<sup>130</sup> Along with Erasmus, Colet was to befriend a close group of humanists who were in positions that allowed them access to the English court. This group was consistently supportive of each other’s endeavors and encouraged one another to produce more and do better. Most of these men were educated at Oxford at some point, which is why they are occasionally referred to as the Oxford Reformers, but their close association with the school has been accidentally misrepresented by dates being mixed up and confused. Frederic Seebohm, an often quoted and respected author, has his date for Linacre’s return from Italy as 1491 instead of 1499. Seebohm claims that between 1491 and 1500 Linacre was residing at Oxford teaching Greek to Thomas More with Grocyn, when in reality he was still in Italy. Authors continue to give Oxford credit for playing a role in this humanist group that it did not really play. Oxford was simply a common starting point between them and certainly not a place where their later achievements would have been

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<sup>130</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1 to 141, 1484-1500. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 198. [Letter 106]

possible. These men were able to achieve great things despite the limitations of the university. Colet, however, was required to go back to Oxford to finish his Bachelor of Divinity and his Doctor of Divinity degrees. His letters show that he felt alone while at Oxford after his return from Italy, and after Erasmus's departure, devoid of equal intellectual stimulation.

After returning from his travels Colet stayed a while with his parents but then proceeded on to Oxford in the fall of 1496. There is a bit of confusion surrounding Colet's actions once he returned to Oxford. Erasmus stated in October of 1499: "who has not listened with the greatest attention to the lectures you have given on the Pauline epistles for the past three years,"<sup>131</sup> this implies that immediately upon returning in 1496 Colet started lecturing on the Bible, but this does not conform to the University statutes. Colet had completed the four years of reading required for the B.D. but he had not yet done the three years of opposing before he continued on to responding and then lecturing. According to the University statutes Colet should not have been allowed to lecture on the Bible without holding a B.D. degree. Author Sears Jayne surmises that after having seen how the University of Paris handled its B.D. degree, Colet may have requested permission from the University to proceed out of order. This Jayne supports by showing Oxford actually changed its statutes to reflect this in 1565. Another theory proposed by Jayne is that Colet's hostility towards the scholasticism of the opposition and response portion of the degree may have prompted Colet to seek a way around the tradition he held in contempt.<sup>132</sup> Colet may have spent the 1496-1497 school period in opponency and then started his lecture series since the dates work out that he was on his third year of lectures in 1499-1500.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 1 to 141, 1484-1500, p. 204. [Letter 108]

<sup>132</sup> Jayne, p. 21-22.

<sup>133</sup> Jayne, p. 23.



Readers normally rented out the rooms in which they lectured and then charged their listeners a fee for attending the lecture. Colet chose to make his lectures free, and this action ensured that anyone could hear his exposition on the Bible. He sought to bring the original message of Christianity to people and it was through the purity of St. Paul's Epistles that he felt he was able to do this. Colet felt that St. Paul's message was direct and practical, and he hoped to express that same clarity in his own lectures: "Thus Colet came to see the necessity of a new method of textual examination, and he adapted some Neo-Platonic ideas, the methods of the Church Fathers and the Italian humanists to suit his purpose..."<sup>134</sup> Colet harbored an intense dislike for the Schoolmen and Thomas Aquinas in particular. Erasmus wrote in response to a letter written to him by Colet: "When you tell me that you dislike the modern class of theologians, who spend their lives in sheer hair-splitting and sophistical quibbling, you have my emphatic agreement, dear Colet."<sup>135</sup> He felt theologians and the Schoolmen had a habit of filling in the blanks of theology and this had corrupted Christianity. Their fill-in-the-gap writings were later incorporated into Christian theology falsely. Like Ficino, Colet combined Plato's philosophy of Love with Christian theology, however Colet believed it was through an unadulterated love of God that man could achieve knowledge of God, not the other way around. It was this goal that occupied Colet while he was alone at Oxford, the enlightenment of God through loving him.

Colet was not altogether alone at Oxford, for Grocyn had returned there after his travels in Italy in the summer of 1491. He rented out rooms at Exeter College and although he did not have an official teaching post, he very likely "taught privately, with Greek included among the

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<sup>134</sup> Albert P. Duhamel, "The Oxford Lectures of John Colet: An Essay in Defining the English Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 14, no. 4 (October 1953): p. 499.

<sup>135</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 1 to 141, 1484-1500*, p. 203. [Letter 108].

subjects taught.”<sup>136</sup> He is regarded as “one of the first to teach Greek”<sup>137</sup> at Oxford in an official, or at least a better-documented manner. Thomas Wolsey was the schoolmaster at St. Mary Magdalen College for six months in 1498<sup>138</sup> and probably attended some of Colet’s lectures. Even though their personal characters were very different Wolsey and Colet shared many friends in common and both had a zest for religion that manifested itself in different ways. Colet’s passionate manner of lecturing attracted many listeners, students and fellow scholars alike:

Whilst investing the epistles with so personal an interest, by thus bringing out their connection with St. Paul’s character and history, Colet sought also to throw a sense of reality and life into their teaching, by showing how specially adapted they were to the circumstances of those to whom they were addressed.<sup>139</sup>

In 1498 William Blount, Lord Mountjoy convinced his tutor Erasmus to finally visit England. It was on this trip that Erasmus met Colet, More, Linacre, and Grocyn. Mountjoy brought Erasmus to one of Colet’s lectures, where he heard him preach for the first time, in a letter to Colet Erasmus described the passion with which Colet spoke:

You say what you mean, and mean what you say. Your words have birth in your heart, nor [sic] on your lips. They follow your thoughts, instead of your thoughts being shaped by them. You have the happy art of expressing with ease what others can hardly express with the greatest labor.<sup>140</sup>

Erasmus was in England until the early part of 1500. In that short span of time he made fast friends with Colet, More, Grocyn, and Linacre, and may have met Lily too. Colet’s influence on Erasmus’s perspective on certain religious matters can be seen throughout his writings and the

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<sup>136</sup> Clough, p. 22.

<sup>137</sup> Pearl Hogrefe, The Sir Thomas More Circle, A program of ideas and their impact on secular drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 74.

<sup>138</sup> Lupton, p. 94.

<sup>139</sup> Seebohm, p. 20.

<sup>140</sup> Seebohm, p. 19.

extensive correspondence between the two. Erasmus was so taken with his new friends that on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1499 he wrote to his former student Robert Fisher who was in Italy studying Law:

When I listen to Colet it seems to me that I am listening to Plato himself. Who could fail to be astonished at the universal scope of Grocyn's accomplishments? Could anything be more clever or profound or sophisticated than Linacre's mind? Did Nature ever create anything kinder, sweeter, or more harmonious than the character of Thomas More?<sup>141</sup>

According to Erasmus he was unknowingly taken by Mountjoy and More to meet the royal children at Eltham in 1499. It was here he made the eight-year-old future Henry VIII's acquaintance for the first time.<sup>142</sup> Not long after this meeting, much to Colet's obvious dismay, Erasmus left England. In a letter written to Colet from Erasmus it is clear that Colet had dearly wanted Erasmus to stay in England as his friend and to work with him at Oxford lecturing on the New Testament. Erasmus states:

So far am I, however, from wishing to thwart your noble and unworldly efforts, that, since I am not yet a suitable helper, I promise to be an assiduous encourager and seconder of them. For the rest, whenever I am conscience of possessing the requisite firmness and strength, I will myself join your side, and will lend assiduous, of not prominent, help in vindicating true theology. In the mean time, nothing can be more agreeable to me, than to go on as we began, discussing daily about Holy Scripture, either in conversation or by letter.<sup>143</sup>

Upon being offered the Rectorship of St. Lawrence Jewry's sometime before 1500, Grocyn left Oxford for London. Thomas More had already left Oxford to pursue Law in 1494 and by 1496 he was just starting his studies at Lincoln's Inn in London. Grocyn was acting as More's confessor and professor in 1501, in a letter written by More to a friend he states that

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<sup>141</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 1 to 141, 1484-1500, p. 236. [Letter 118]

<sup>142</sup> Theodore Maynard, Humanist as Hero, The Life of Sir Thomas More (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1947), p. 20-21.

<sup>143</sup> Lupton, p. 112-113.

Grocyn was teaching him Greek.<sup>144</sup> Among other tools, Grocyn was no doubt using his personal copy of the *Lexicon of Suidas* written by Emmanuel of Constantinople to teach Greek to More and his other students. Grocyn invited More to lecture at his church in 1501 while he was away lecturing at St. Paul's on Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchies*. More lectured on St. Augustine's *City of God* to large crowds at St. Lawrence to loud acclaim.<sup>145</sup>

Linacre returned to London in the fall of 1499. At some point he must have taken up teaching More Greek where Grocyn left off. In a letter written to Colet on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1504 More describes the situation in London to his absent friend:

Meanwhile, I shall pass my time with Grocyn, Linacre, and our dear friend Lily, the first as you know the sole guide of my life (in your absence), the second my master in learning, the third the dearest partner of my endeavors. Farewell, and love me ever as now. London, 23 October.<sup>146</sup>

What Linacre did between his return and when he became a royal physician to Henry VIII in 1509 is not especially clear. From what More and others have said, it seems clear that Linacre was working on his translations, teaching Greek, and developing his medical practice. Erasmus was one of Linacre's patients. On June 12<sup>th</sup> 1506 Erasmus wrote Linacre from Paris "The glands under my ears on both sides are swollen, my temples throb, and I have ringing in both ears: and no Linacre here either, to give me relief with his skill!"<sup>147</sup> Erasmus's praise of his skill and the ever-increasing list of royal and influential patients, such as King Henry VIII, Princess Mary Tudor the Queen of France, Cardinal Wolsey, Colet, and Bishop Fisher, show that Linacre was a practicing physician, and considered an expert in his field.

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<sup>144</sup> William Nelson, "Thomas More, Grammarian and Orator," *PMLA*, 58, no. 2 (June, 1943): p. 339.

<sup>145</sup> Maynard, p. 23.

<sup>146</sup> More, p. 6. [Letter 2]

<sup>147</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514*, p. 117. [Letter 194]

Lily returned to England by at least 1501, and Linacre began teaching him Greek alongside More. This must mean that Lily did not feel the knowledge he gained of the language abroad was sufficient, or that he felt Linacre's tutorship could benefit him that much more. In 1501 he and More competed in a friendly contest of translating the *Greek Anthology* into English, the published version inviting the reader to decide who they thought did a better job.<sup>148</sup> This can be seen as a reflection of Linacre's dedication to ensuring a proper knowledge of the Greek language and a wide dispersal of it in England.

Besides his medical practice and teaching Greek, Linacre was probably working to translate Galen from Greek manuscripts into Latin. Like many humanists Linacre sought to acquire the oldest and most original versions of Greek texts from which to translate. This desire was based on the correct belief that many of the texts from the classical periods were corrupted and filled with errors. Before the invention of the printing press the only way to duplicate a book was by hand. This meant that every single text was hand copied by a scribe, who, as a man, was prone to err. With every copyist repeating the errors from the previous version and then adding his own into the mix, it is no small wonder that humanists were concerned about the integrity of the texts they were reading. To fix this problem they scoured libraries all over Europe, the former Byzantine Empire, and beyond. Hidden within these dusty shelves were new discoveries and also very old manuscripts still in the original Greek. Probably through his connections at the Aldine Press and Leonicensis, Linacre was able to receive some of these texts from which to base his translations.

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<sup>148</sup> Flynn, p. 68.

What the printing press did for humanists is akin to what the steam engine did for manufactures. The printing press changed the way that knowledge was preserved. Here was a way to remove continuous human err:

Printing produced a standardized frame of reference, the hundreds of identical copies having exactly the same words on exactly the same lines and pages...[it] stabilized the text of a classical work... The advent of printing made textual improvements by humanist editors permanent and cumulative in a way impossible for manuscript books.<sup>149</sup>

The relative affordability of these printed texts enabled them to spread and be purchased by people who had previously been unable to afford the price of a scribe and the materials involved in duplicating a text. Having just returned from the premier humanist press in Venice, Linacre was beset with the desire to continue down the path of medical humanism through translation work. Teaching Greek to More and refreshing Lily must have been a constant aid in keeping his language and editing skills sharp.

By expanding his medical practice Linacre was able to ensure he financially could support his humanist habit. Another avenue of profit for Linacre was through various church benefices. The majority of Linacre's appointments to church positions was through the graces of William Warham the Archbishop of Canterbury. Linacre did not leave written evidence that indicates he was overly religious. Erasmus's correspondence with other humanists is filled to the brim with biblical references, theological debates, and a general Christian air; Linacre either did not feel the need to express his religious convictions in writing or he was moderate in his beliefs. Unlike the more religiously inclined More and Erasmus, Linacre found the life of a cleric suitable to his secular needs, plus the income from these posts combined with the revenue from

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<sup>149</sup> Nauert, p. 61.

his many influential patients' medical bills kept Linacre in a comfortable living throughout his life.

While Linacre continued to expand his career in London and in the hierarchy of the church, More grew his law practice to the point where he was successful enough to be asked to lecture on law at Furnival's Inn in 1503 at the young age of twenty-five. He was soon elected to be one of London's members of Parliament where he vocally objected to several of Henry VII's fiscal policies. It seems that he earned Henry's ire through these actions and that his father, John More was actually put into the Tower as a result.<sup>150</sup>

More withdrew from public life for a while after his confrontation with the King and focused on personal matters. He had been living at the Carthusian's London Charterhouse. Whether or not Lily also lived at the Charterhouse while More was staying there is debatable, but both men did choose to leave and marry around the same time. Neither found the single church life conducive to their needs the way that Colet and Linacre did. In 1505 both married and immediately started families. More's first wife produced four children before she died in 1510<sup>151</sup> and Lily and his wife had fifteen children.

It was around the same time as Colet's appointment to the Deanery of St. Paul's that Erasmus returned to England for what was meant to be an extended stay in the fall of 1505. Staying with More and his new wife, Erasmus joined More in his efforts to translate Lucian's Dialogues into Latin. This visit was cut short by an opportunity that Erasmus was unable to pass up. He had long dreamed of visiting Italy, and the chief physician to Henry VII, the Italian Dr. Baptista, wanted to send his two sons there for study. Dr. Baptista, may have chosen Erasmus to oversee his children on this journey because he had a working relationship with Linacre who

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<sup>150</sup> Maynard, p. 46.

<sup>151</sup> Maynard, p. 36.

could have easily urged Baptista to consider his friend Erasmus for the post. The young Archbishop of St. Andrews, a Scottish nobleman, was also placed under Erasmus's care, and through these arrangements he worked his way through Italy.<sup>152</sup>

According to John Johnson, Linacre's biographer, Linacre was not only a royal physician to Henry VII along with Dr. Baptista, but Linacre was also appointed to be a tutor to his son, Arthur the Prince of Wales.<sup>153</sup> George Lily said:

For some time he was placed as tutor to Prince Arthur, son of Henry the Seventh; however, he devoted all his studies to knowledge of medicine, hitherto scarcely successfully attempted by anyone born in Britain. In this, he so exclusively applied himself that, that care of the King's health having been entrusted to him, he might be seen striding among the nobles of the royal court, wearing a crimson gown reaching to his ankles, and a full cloak of black velvet thrown across his shoulders.<sup>154</sup>

Beyond this description and a letter written by Erasmus mentioning a situation involving Bernard Andre, one of the official tutors to the Prince, we have no other evidence pertaining to Linacre's time in the employ of Henry VII. Johnson says that Bernard Andre had been working on a translation of Proclus while working as a tutor to Arthur and when Linacre's version, which was dedicated to the Prince, was presented to the King, Andre claimed that it was plagiarized from his own work, thus attempting to lower Linacre in Henry VII's esteem.<sup>155</sup> This anecdote of Johnson's is not necessarily believable because Johnson's timeline is confused. He thought Linacre returned from his Italian travels as early as 1491 and had written his translation of Proclus while tutoring Arthur side by side with Andre. If Johnson had realized that Linacre translated and submitted his version of Proclus by 1499 in Venice the impossibility of this

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<sup>152</sup> Seebohm, p. 114-115.

<sup>153</sup> Johnson, p. 170.

<sup>154</sup> Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster, Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, ed. Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. xvi-xvii.

<sup>155</sup> Johnson, p. 170-172.



account would have been obvious. There is some truth in Johnson's account because Erasmus and George Lily also mention a similar situation. George Lily said that his father "nobly defends the physician against a charge of plagiarism"<sup>156</sup>, at no other time was Linacre slandered in such a way so presumably this statement is about the Andre outrage. Either way More was not the only humanist to grace Henry VII's blacklist, again though there is no way to know how this testimony affected Henry VII's opinion of Linacre because Arthur's untimely death eliminated the need for further tutors.

Not everyone favored Henry VII's policies. However, Henry did create a new governing tradition that his son continued with great success even though it was greatly disliked by the nobility at court. Henry VII worked to keep the wealthy and powerful nobility in a condition that prevented them from rising up again. By not elevating them into higher positions of power than their rank ensured he kept them at bay. Henry VII began promoting from the gentry and the rising merchant social groups out of London. Dudley and Empson were examples of this, people he could use for his agenda and not worry about their loyalty because he had raised them and he had the power to put them back down again. Henry VII had scrimped and saved and stuffed his coffers full of money. He was known as a frugal king, but he knew when display was important and on those times he spared no expense. His was not a jolly court, after the death of his son Arthur and his wife Elizabeth, and in his continuing illness his mercurial temper dominated the last years of his reign.

The death of Henry VII on April 21<sup>st</sup> 1509 and the coming to the throne of the seventeen-year-old Henry VIII was a jump start for the new learning that humanists wanted. Henry VIII, like his brother, had a rather humanistic education. From a young age he had known people like

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<sup>156</sup> Flynn, p. 83.

More, Mountjoy, Erasmus, and possibly Linacre and Colet as well. With Arthur's death many forward thinkers started to look to Henry with new hopes for the future. After being crowned he sought ways to distance himself from his father's unpopular policies, and he had Dudley and Empson executed. He did choose to continue his father's policy towards favoring new men at court over the nobility, and he supported the new learning. Mountjoy wrote a letter to Erasmus who was currently still in Italy telling him of the good news:

Heaven laughs and the earth rejoices; everything is full of milk and honey and nector. Avarice has fled the country. Our King is not after gold, or gems, or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality.... Just lately he was saying that he wished he were more learned. 'That is not what we want from you,' I said, 'but that you should foster and encourage learned men.' 'Why, of course,' he said, 'for without them life would be hardly life.'<sup>157</sup>

The early part of Henry VIII's reign was indeed a golden age for humanists in England. He was receptive to new ideas and programs, he desired innovation, and he carried on his father's tradition of raising new men into positions at court. These men earned their posts not through their birth but by their education, ideas, and usefulness. One man who made himself indispensable to the new king was Thomas Wolsey. Henry desired pleasure and as such was content to leave Thomas Wolsey in charge of the many day-to-day affairs of the kingdom. Wolsey was himself a scholar and a friend to humanists alike; he was a personal friend of Linacre and Colet.

Thomas Wolsey started his career from humble roots and through his ability to make himself indispensable he managed to become the second most powerful man in England. Wolsey, much like Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, William Waynflete, and William Grey, was a patron to scholars:

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<sup>157</sup> Maynard, p. 49.

Wolsey's patronage of Meghen, as well as of Thomas Lupset and Linacre, Richard Pace, Thomas Clement and Vives, no less than his personal involvement in the compilations of the Ipswich grammar book, stresses that he was committed to the new learning.<sup>158</sup>

Wolsey endowed Greek lectures at Oxford in 1518 and 1522, planning to later transfer these to the college he was about to found, Cardinal's College at Oxford. In the spirit of Waynflete, Wolsey "invited to England a native Greek, named Matthew Calphurnius, who in the office of lecturer taught the orthoepy [pronunciation] of his language...."<sup>159</sup> Cardinal College was opened in 1526, but the planning for it had begun well beforehand. He arranged for six public lectures on theology, humanity, canon law, civil law, philosophy, and medicine to be funded.<sup>160</sup> Wolsey even founded two grammar schools to serve as feeders into the college.<sup>161</sup>

Wolsey's support of Linacre and his circle at court was another manifestation of the humanist patrimony. The access the humanists were now afforded at court gave them the opportunities they needed to ensure the promotion and success of the humanist agendas they each had. The network of social connections they had made over the years was in a place where everyone was succeeding in personal and professional ways. This enabled them to work towards the goals they had long been harboring, the practical application of their humanist values.

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<sup>158</sup> Gunn, S. J., P.G. Lindley. Cardinal Wolsey, Church, State and Art. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 41.

<sup>159</sup> Johnson, p. 203.

<sup>160</sup> Gunn, p. 108.

<sup>161</sup> Gunn, p. 32.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF COLET'S HUMANISM

John Colet's appointment as Dean of St. Paul's in 1505 was an opportunity that allowed him to spread his message of the pure early Christian Church that he personally found so fulfilling, "probably, there was not a pulpit in England which offered so wide a sphere of influence to the preacher as that of St. Paul's."<sup>162</sup> Henry VII nominated him to the post against the wishes of the Bishop of London and the religious community at St. Paul's. He was known as a churchman devoted to his faith and the purity of the primitive church, quite the opposite of the worldly clergy at St. Paul's. It is certainly not a surprise that Colet butted heads with the Bishop of London and the current leaders of St. Paul's upon his arrival. His failure to enact any reforms at St. Paul's goes a long way to explain why Colet sought to create a new pure school unattached to the tainted church and out of its clergy's influence.

The church leadership at St. Paul's must have viewed Colet's appointment with dread for up until this point they had been allowed a freedom to work loosely within the confines of their vows and profit from their posts. There was a great deal of corruption due to the large amount of money flowing through St. Paul's, and the religious community did not see itself above profiting from the advantages of their posts. In 1505 there were four archdeacons, a treasurer, a precentor, a chancellor, forty or so minor canons, and a fluctuating number of chantry priests, vicars,

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<sup>162</sup> Seebohm, p. 138.

deputies, and sub-ordinate officers.<sup>163</sup> The chantry priests were particularly hard to deal with. Their numbers were ridiculously high, upwards of fifty- and as Dean Milman stated in 1869 in his Annals of St. Paul's:

The truth probably was that these rude and illiterate priests, more especially those without cure of souls, after the morning mass had much idle time on their hands, and no resort but the taverns or less reputable houses which they are said in many accounts to have haunted, and thus brought discredit on their better brethren, if such there were.<sup>164</sup>

The Bishop of London and St. Paul's clergy were so resistant to reform that after Colet revised the statutes for the church he had to go to Wolsey for help in enforcing them because the Bishop and chapter rejected them out of hand. Even Wolsey's authority as papal legate could not force the statutes on the church; they were so carelessly disregarded that years later these reforms were not even considered part of the statutes of the church. There seemed to be no organization to the church nor anyone who wanted change before 1505: "when Colet was appointed to the deanery, there was no systematic preaching, or lecturing in divinity, either to the people at large, or to the cathedral clergy themselves."<sup>165</sup>

Part of the revised statutes pertained to the cathedral school of St. Paul's and the grammar master. This school as yet was seemingly no better run than the rest of the lazily managed chantry schools throughout the country. Colet stated in his statutes that the master should be upright and honorable. The man should not only teach the boys grammar but also morals and virtue. This decree like all of Colet's revised statutes was ignored. The school was under the authority of the chancellor of St. Paul's and therefore under the direct control of the corrupt church. This chancellor, Dr. William Lichfield, was considered the 'Master of the Schools' for the entire diocese and he was a notoriously difficult man who refused to do even the basic

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<sup>163</sup> Lupton, p. 129.

<sup>164</sup> Lupton, p. 132.

<sup>165</sup> Lupton, p. 139.

aspects of his job. Colet confronted him on this point and Lichfield simply applied to the Bishop of London for support and was protected against further censure. It is a small wonder that Colet sought to work outside of this man's purview.

After Henry VIII became king in April of 1509 it did not take Colet long to move forward in his plans for a school. Colet's father died on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1505, leaving only his widow, Dame Christian, and John as his survivors. His father's death left Colet a very wealthy man; the upkeep of his mother was the only outside expense on this inheritance. Coupled with his living as the Dean of St. Paul's, Colet could have chosen to live luxuriously, however, this had never been his mode of life. Perhaps after realizing the resistance he was always going to encounter at St. Paul's because of the Bishop of London and the Chancellor, Colet decided to use his wealth to create his ideal grammar school based upon Christian humanist principles. In his book, Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe, Charles Nauert states:

Humanistic education claimed to provide rhetorical skills that would help such young men participate effectively in political life. It also claimed to provide an emphasis on moral training and moral obligation that seemed directly relevant to a ruling elite... humanists who addressed such matters [education] usually declared that the purpose of human life is to make sound moral decisions in the course of daily living.<sup>166</sup>

Colet's decision to form a school based on such ideals, and then providing that education for free was a truly the Christian humanist thing to do. Erasmus wrote about the sacrifices made by Colet in order to ensure his school's autonomy and independent finances when they were under attack by the Bishop of London:

What is this, I ask, but to act as a father to all your children and fellow-citizens? You rob yourself to make them rich; you strip yourself to clothe them. You wear yourself out with toil, that they may be quickened into life in Christ. In a word, you spend yourself away that you may gain them for Christ! He must be envious, indeed, who does not back with all his might the man who engaged in a work like this. He must be wicked, indeed,

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<sup>166</sup> Nauert, p. 15.

who can gainsay or interrupt him. That man is an enemy to England who does not care to give a helping hand where he can.<sup>167</sup>

The first documented financial action taken by Colet to ensure autonomy for his new school was dated on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1509. Colet and the Mercers' Company created an indenture that granted William Gerge a manor in Hertford under the condition that he and his heirs pay the Mercers' Company eight pounds a year for the use of the school.<sup>168</sup> Why Colet chose the Mercer's Company to back and support his school is rooted in several possible reasons. His father had been a Mercer, and his friend More had recently, in March 1509, been freely elected into the company.<sup>169</sup> The Mercer's were the longest thriving group of its kind in London, having existed since the early 1400s. In a letter Erasmus explained Colet's decision:

Over the revenues and entire management, he set neither priests, nor the Bishop nor the chapter (as they call it), but some married citizens of established reputation; and when asked the reason, he said that though there was nothing certain in human affairs, he yet found the least corruption in them.<sup>170</sup>

According to McDonnell the author of A History of St. Paul's School, there is a document that claims that "Colet obtained from 'the most holy father the Pope' a Bull confirming the exemption of his school from the jurisdiction of the Chancellor of St. Paul's... at his own proper cost, he had caused to be built a certain school in the city of London..."<sup>171</sup> These actions made St. Paul's School the first of its kind in England- instead of being a clerically managed school it was overseen by secular authorities, the Mercers. If Colet did in fact go to the effort to get a Bull

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<sup>167</sup> Seebohm, p. 156-157.

<sup>168</sup> McDonnell, p. 14.

<sup>169</sup> Nelson, p. 348.

<sup>170</sup> McDonnell, p. 42.

<sup>171</sup> McDonnell, p. 15.

ensuring the autonomy of his school from the control of the church, this is an amazing step and an indictment of St. Paul's clergy by their own dean.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1510 the King issued Letters Patent giving permission to the Mercer's Company to acquire lands in mortmain worth up to fifty-three pounds yearly for the support of one master, an under-master, and one to two ushers for Colet's school. These Letters Patent can be considered the first official charter for the school given in response to a petition submitted by Colet to the King. This petition laid out that 'for the pleasure of God' and the 'increase of cunning and virtuous living within the realm' Colet established a schoolhouse at St. Paul's where children 'shall not only in continuance be substantially taught and learned in Latin tongue, but also instructed and informed in virtuous conditions'.<sup>172</sup> According to the records of the Mercer's Company on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1510 Colet came to them with what had been done so far in obtaining the mortmain license. The minutes record the following:

The said Master Dean showed unto the company that for such labors and business as they and their successors should have in the ordering of the said school that they should have in this city of London upon the payment of forty-four marks by year in rents.<sup>173</sup>

There is a record of lands in Buckinghamshire being directly transferred to the company in July 1511 in fulfillment of this mortmain.<sup>174</sup> Also Colet as Dean of St. Paul's granted to the company a parcel of land twenty-one feet by nine feet long at the east end of the chapel of St. Dunstan within St. Paul's cathedral for the low rate of a single red rose renewable forever every ninety-nine years. Later a lodge and a house was built on this site for a porter and an under usher.

Once the King had approved the Mercer's role in St. Paul's Colet continued to make financial arrangements and saw to the building of the new schoolhouse. In a letter to Erasmus

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<sup>172</sup> McDonnell, p. 14.

<sup>173</sup> McDonnell, p. 16.

<sup>174</sup> Gleason, p. 221.



dated from September 1511, Colet discussed a few of the problems he was encountering with setting up the school:

I have often wished the boys at my school could be trained by your method, as you have prescribed should be done; also I have often wished that they could be taught by just such men as you in your great wisdom have depicted... how I longed to have you, Erasmus, as a teacher in my school! ... About our friend Linacre, I shall do as you so kindly and shrewdly advise. Please do not give up your efforts to find a second master for me, if there should be anyone in your neighborhood who is devoid of arrogance and who is not too proud to be subordinate to the high master.<sup>175</sup>

This plea to Erasmus makes it clear that by July 1510 Colet had already made William Lily his headmaster<sup>176</sup>; and it also reveals the difficulty he was encountering finding a Latin grammar suitable for his students. The reference to Linacre concerns an issue over a Latin grammar that he had written for the school; this situation is fully discussed later in this chapter. This process must have begun well before 1511 because Linacre was not known to produce written work quickly, and this grammar was already written, reviewed, and rejected by September 1511.

Colet was creating a school like nothing that had ever been seen in England before. He sought out the best headmaster, William Lily, and when a suitable grammar could not be found Colet had a new Latin grammar made. There was no school in existence which he could use as a model, so he created a new set of statutes that were the first of their kind. These statutes expressed Colet's desire for a truly new type of school, one that strove to teach children not just the rudiments of Latin, but the meaning and context behind the words - a true knowledge of the language. His school was the first to specify teaching Greek in the statutes. Besides a normal academic curriculum Colet wanted the boys to learn life lessons like virtue, pure living, Christian values, and general common sense lessons like sanitation and the importance of respect. These

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<sup>175</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514, p. 174. [Letter 230]

<sup>176</sup> McDonnell, p. 14.

statutes encompassed all aspects of school life, from the basic requirements for admission, standards for the masters including their pay and retirement, to what activities the boys could participate in, and how the school day should proceed. Here is just a sample from the Statutes of St. Paul's School:

#### Prologus.

John Colet, the son of Henry Colet, Dean of St. Paul's desiring nothing more than education and bringing up children in good manners and literature, in the year of our Lord 1512 built a school in the east end of Paul's Church for children to be taught free in the same. And ordained there a Master and a Sur-master and a chaplain with sufficient and perpetual stipends ever to endure. And set as patrons and defenders the most honest and faithful fellowship of the Mercers of London to be governors and rulers of the school. And because nothing can continue long and endure in good order with out laws and statutes, I—John Colet have expressed and shown what I think should be truly and diligently observed in this book in regards to the Master, Sur-master, and Chaplain, to the Mercers as governors of the school, and to what intent I founded this school.

There shall first be a High Master in this school. This High Master shall direct all the school in doctrine learning and teaching. This Master shall be chosen by the wardens and with the assistance of the Mercers. Let this be a man whole in body, honest, virtuous, and learned in the good and clean Latin literature and also in Greek if such may be gotten. Have him be a married man, a single man, or a priest that has no benefice so that his due business is the school.

We have now chosen a High Master and teacher for this school who can teach the children not only good literature but also good manners ... upon your duty to the school.

If the Master has taught in the school for a long laudable time and is sick with an incurable sickness, or has become too old to conveniently teach, then let another High Master be chosen. By the discreet charity of the Mercers let there be assigned to the old Master a reasonable living or what otherwise seems proper so that the old Master after his long labor is in no way left destitute.

If the Sur-Master is qualified in literature and in honest living, let him be chosen before another when the high Masters post is vacant.

#### THE CHILDREN

In the school there shall be taught 153 children of all nations and countries according to the number of the seats in the school.

The children shall come to school in the morning at seven o'clock in the winter and summer. They shall stay until eleven and return again at one o'clock, departing again at five o'clock. Three times a day, morning, noon, and evening, they shall say their prayers with due respect and pausing.

At no time during the year shall they use tallow candles, but only wax candles purchased at their own cost.

It is my will that they do not participate in cockfighting or riding about in victory or fighting, which is but a foolish babbling and a waste of time.

#### WHAT SHALL BE TAUGHT.

Concerning the curriculum of this school, it occurs to me that I should state what I would have taught in particular and in general. I would have the students taught using good literature, both from Latin and Greek sources, from good authors who have a very Roman eloquence joined with wisdom, especially those Christian authors that wrote their wisdom with clean and chaste Latin either in verse or in prose. It is my intent for this school to especially increase knowledge and worship of God and our lord Christ Jesus and for the children to learn a good Christian life and manners. For that intent I will the children first learn, above all, the Catechism in English and afterwards the *accidence* that I made, or from some other book if it is found to be better at inducing children to learn Latin more speedily. Then the *Institutum Christiani hominess*, which the learned Erasmus made at my request, and the book called *Copia*, also by Erasmus shall be taught. Christian authors to be taught from include: Lactantius, Prudentius, Proba, Sedulius, Juvenius, and Baptista Mantuanus and others, if they are thought convenient and to the purpose of the true Latin speech. I utterly abolish and exclude out of this school all barbarity, all corruption, all adulterators of Latin which ignorant blind fools brought into this world and distained and poisoned the old Latin speech and the very Roman tongue which was used in the time of Tully, Sallust, Vergil, and Terence, and which also St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Austen, and many holy doctors learned in their times. I say that filthiness and all such abuses that were brought in should be called 'blotterature' rather than literature. I charge the Masters to always teach what is the best and most instructive to the children in spoken and written Greek and in spoken and written Latin through the teachings of such authors that have joined wisdom with a pure chaste eloquence.<sup>177</sup>

One of the most important things that Colet included in his Statutes was admitting that over time things change and that he may not have thought of everything and as such he left it open for the Mercers to make changes if need be to the Statutes. This forward thinking is one of the reasons

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<sup>177</sup> Lupton, p. 271 Appendix A. The modernization solely for the purpose of clarity is the work of the present author.

Colet's school thrived and came to be a model for other progressive schools. Joan Simon, author of Education and Society in Tudor England, stated:

Thus Colet set out to place learning at the service of living, to present it as a means of preparing the individual to live well himself and do good in society. In maintaining that it was the function of the school to impart learning in this way he set an essentially new educational aim; embodying this approach in textbooks, statutes, the actual organization of his foundation, Colet provided a model humanist school.<sup>178</sup>

Colet specified that there should be a total number of 153 students at his school; it is speculated that this number refers to the Bible verse John 21:10 where Jesus tells Peter, Thomas, and Simon Peter to drag up their fish net and miraculously they caught in this net 153 large fish. This could be true, but no sources prove this. The type of students Colet intended for his school is also unclear. Many authors have assumed that Colet intended his school to be for the sons of the wealthy gentry, and that he wanted his school to be a preliminary to working at the court, which since Henry VIII was favoring new men:

The founder contemplated the highest possible education for those classes especially which would supply the learned professions, and fill the most important offices in the State; in a word, for the well-to-do gentry, on whom the Tudors relied as a counterpoise to the old nobility.<sup>179</sup>

Whether this is true or not is impossible to ascertain but many of St. Paul's students went on to serve at court. Perhaps his reference to the use of wax candles over tallow and his mention of students becoming clerks is significant. Wax candles were about eight times more expensive than tallow, but tallow burned poorly and gave off a terrible smell. The Cathedral received candle offerings constantly and it is known that the clergy at St. Paul's Cathedral made money by melting down the used candles from the chapels and reforming them (the only type of reforming they were willing to do). Colet's preference for wax candles over tallow may simply

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<sup>178</sup> Joan Simon, Education and Society in Tudor England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 80.

<sup>179</sup> McDonnell, p. 87.

indicate the availability of these ‘second-hand’ candles. Either way St. Paul’s was a free public school open to all who met the requirements until the spots were filled.

Colet designated three teachers, a headmaster, under-master and an usher for his school of 153 students. Normally the ratio of student to teacher was much greater. Colet specified that his headmaster was to be paid thirty-five pounds a year, be given cloth with which to make a livery gown, and provided with free housing for himself and his household. This is well beyond what any other schoolmaster was being paid at this point. Normally a schoolmaster was simply expected to have a degree from a university, either a Masters of Arts in anything or a Bachelor of Arts in grammar. Colet required much more from his schoolmasters and the pay he offered is clearly a reflection of the standard he was demanding.

What Colet made clear in his Statutes is that he wanted his students to be taught from quality sources, not simply the traditional texts. This is why he wanted the best schoolmasters, so that he could trust them to recognize quality texts and teach them with care and understanding only acquired through a thorough grounding in the classics. His great dislike of the ‘Schoolmen’ and the ‘Scholastics’ is evident, as is his desire for the students to learn first from Christian authors, but then for further knowledge they were to read from pagan sources what could not first be learned through the Christian authors. Colet has been accused of excluding pagan sources; this is simply not true. Pagan authors are not excluded- simply the bad translations of them were: it is obvious from Lily’s grammar that pagan sources were used and referred to. Pure unadulterated perfect Latin was foremost on his list of requirements for texts and this is why he insisted on using a completely new grammar: the ones currently available were not up to his standards. This new grammar was the result of a group effort and as such stood the test of time for centuries as the premier royally- backed grammar in England.

Lily's Grammar, as the St. Paul's School grammar texts became known, was the product of Colet's innovative humanistic spirit, Lily's knowledge and experience, Erasmus's literary flair, and Linacre's unsuccessful attempts to create a grammar for young children. By seeing that these young boys learned the most perfect Latin Colet was ensuring that there would be a generation of up and coming men who would have the ability to read and understand the church fathers' writings in their pure form and also understand the lessons being prescribed. He hired William Lily, a man fluent in Greek, as his headmaster and then specified in his Statutes that Greek be taught. Clearly the Greek being taught was of the highest quality because several of Lily's students went on to the Readership in Greek at Oxford. Looking at Colet's Oxford lectures, sermons, and his later actions it is clear that he was preparing the way for more men like himself. He was giving these children the tools they would need to understand the scriptures, through a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Christian values. His statutes coupled with his actions show that he hoped his curriculum, guidelines, and teachers would all combine to create Christian humanists like himself and the people around him that he admired.

There were Latin Grammars available when Colet was setting up his school but these were far below the quality of texts that Colet hoped to promote at his school. The most common ones were Alexander Dolensis's *Doctrinale* written in 1240's, and Aelius Dontatus's *Editio Secunda* from the fourth century.<sup>180</sup> Colet wanted a grammar designed for the use of young children. John Holt, Master of the grammar school attached to the Magdalen College at Oxford from 1486-1496, wrote *Lac Puerorum*, *Mylke for Children* during his time at that school. This was better suited for children than what had previously been available. John Anwykyll was the first Informator at the Magdalen school and he, like Holt, also wrote a grammar. Anwykyll's

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<sup>180</sup> Lupton, p. 21-23.

usher and successor John Stanbridge made a grammar around 1500.<sup>181</sup> His former student and editor, Robert Whittington, was revising this grammar around the same time as St. Paul's was opening. It has been speculated that Lily may have been a young student at the Magdalen grammar school, where he would have been familiar with Stanbridge as a teacher, and Whittington as a fellow student.<sup>182</sup> Lily was engaged in a heated pamphlet war with Whittington shortly before his death in the 1520s over differing points of opinion on grammar.<sup>183</sup> There are no copies of Stanbridge and Whittington's grammar from around 1510, but the differences of opinion between Lily and Whittington are enough to explain why this grammar may not have been considered for use at St. Paul's.

By 1510 Colet had completed his own work on part of a grammar called *Aeditio* on accident. The correspondence between Erasmus and Colet in September 1511 shows the difficulty that arose from Colet's rejection of Linacre's grammar, however, this action also shows how seriously Colet felt about his school. What he found wrong with Linacre's grammar is unfortunately not discussed, but in any event he found it unsuitable for his students. Erasmus wrote to Colet on September 13<sup>th</sup> 1511:

Do not be in a hurry to believe anyone about Linacre. I have solid grounds for my conviction that he holds you in the highest regard, and is not greatly upset by your rejection of his grammar- though it is human nature to be passionately attached to one's own writings, just as parents are to their children. But if in fact this is rather a sore point with him, then you will have to play a skillful part so as to conceal your feelings and avoid reopening that particular wound; and win him back with your looks and your obliging behavior rather than by making excuses, especially excuses made through other people. In this way any injury that rankles in him will gradually pass away with time.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Flynn, p. 114.

<sup>182</sup> Flynn, p. 114.

<sup>183</sup> Orme, p. 112.

<sup>184</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514*, p. 170. [Letter 227]

Colet was concerned that Linacre had taken the rejection of his work to heart and was looking to Erasmus for reassurance. He must have been comforted by these words for he said he would follow the wise advice given.<sup>185</sup> Linacre's biographer Johnson has an interesting view on the situation:

The mortification, which he experienced at finding it [his grammar] rejected by the founder, at whose request it had been undertaken with no small sacrifice of time and labor, excited so much displeasure, that the friendship which had been formed between them in early life at Oxford, and had continued uninterrupted till the occurrence of this event, was dissolved.<sup>186</sup>

This retelling may be over-dramatic but it might capture the feeling of betrayal that Linacre may have felt. Again Johnson has his dates wrong and as such believes that Colet and Linacre were at Oxford together for years when in reality they were not, so he may have been overestimating the depth of the relationship in the first place. However, Colet's work on the 1511 Medical Act, which probably included Linacre shows that they were able to move past any differences that may have arisen; this Medical Act will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

Why exactly Colet declined to use Linacre's grammar is debatable, but a closer look at Linacre's other grammar text written for the Princess Mary I, provides a good explanation. George Buchanan, a Scottish humanist, used Linacre's *Rudimenta*, written in 1523, to teach his own noble pupil Gilbert Kennedy, the third earl of Cassillis. He translated *Rudimenta* from English and Latin into just Latin in 1533. Linacre's work required quite a bit of editing, which Buchanan did graciously and discreetly. It is not known if this grammar is the same one submitted to Colet but it would make sense if Linacre used parts of his previous grammar for this new work. Author D. F. S. Thomson analyzed the telling weaknesses of Linacre's work:

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<sup>185</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514*, p. 174. [Letter 230]

<sup>186</sup> Johnson, p. 237.



Linacre seems to have been remarkably careless about the kinds of accuracy which are so important in a grammar written for boys... [He] adopts the catechetical method, which Lily abandoned for a more straightforward kind of exposition... Linacre will give the example first, then the question, and finally the rule or explanation... it was hardly a helpful approach... [He] has too many illustrations... the illustrations themselves sometimes make hard reading for small boys... Linacre abbreviates too much... He is too terse –considering, again, the needs of small children.<sup>187</sup>

Colet was serious about his school and as such wanted nothing but the best material to teach his children, and that is why he rejected Linacre's well-intentioned, but not well-written, grammar.

Colet may have helped Linacre in the long run by rejecting his grammar. It diverted Linacre from the Grammarian's path, for a time at least, towards his already successful medical practice and translating Greek medical texts into Latin. Linacre was not forever put off of grammar though, as already stated. He had once been the tutor to Prince Arthur and when he was appointed as tutor to Henry VIII and Queen Katherine's daughter Princess Mary in October 1523, he produced a grammar for her use and dedicated it to her as well. This is the grammar that Buchanan corrected, translated, and used for his pupils. At this time Mary was seven and being taught by Juan-Luis Vives. In the dedication Linacre said he had been made the guardian of Mary's health, a duty he could not always perform due to his own failing health. Queen Katherine believed the grammar created by Linacre was too advanced for her daughter and asked Vives to write a new one.<sup>188</sup> Vives was an important humanist at court as well; he believed that Latin should be taught and learned in its most perfect form so that the local language of the region would not corrupt it.<sup>189</sup> Latin was the only universal language in use at the time and Vives, like Colet, recognized the importance of it for education and the spread of knowledge.

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<sup>187</sup> D. F. S. Thompson, "Linacre's Latin Grammars," in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 28-30.

<sup>188</sup> Johnson, p. 233.

<sup>189</sup> Simon, p. 106.

Despite its flaws Buchanan did not shy away from *Rudimenta*, he wrote to his student Gilbert Kennedy about Linacre's twice rejected grammar:

Last year I went quickly through Linacre's Rudiments, to fix in your memory things you already knew. At this time, I was extraordinarily taken with the author's meticulous treatment (stopping short of mere fuss, however) of the very small details, and the clear way in which he arranges his book ... also a certain freshness of approach which will (I believe) be welcome by discerning readers ... For these and many other reasons I have decided that it would be worth while to translate the little work into Latin out of the English in which it was first published by its author; either in order to draw attention to Linacre's scholarly competence in this additional branch of learning, or else because boys can profit more by acquiring the rudiments of grammar from the very well-springs of purity, as it were... than from the muddled waters of everyday life which are usually thrust under their noses by headmasters in schools... Yes, I am fully aware that there will be some who will suppose, even before they have read this work, that it is a pointless addition to the multitude of older authorities ... Against this kind of arrogant haughtiness on the part of the class I have described, I appeal to all men of learning, and to such as love the humanities. Unless I am mistaken, they will find that their own needs are satisfied by Linacre's longer work (the *De emendata structura Latini sermonis*).<sup>190</sup>

This last book Buchanan speaks of *De emendata structura Latini sermonis* consisted of six books on grammar, and *Rudimenta* was included in these. Johnson, who tends not to see fault in any of Linacre's works, claims: "It was received by the scholars of Europe as a work nearly perfect in its kind, and one in which an erudite judge could not but admire the consummate skill and the multifarious readings of the best authors which were displayed throughout it."<sup>191</sup> Probably because of Buchanan's corrections and definitely due to his translation, Linacre's *Rudimenta* "was adopted as the standard grammar in France, where it remained in use for many years, just as did that of Lily's in England."<sup>192</sup>

Linacre's Latin Grammars were just another aspect of this man's attempt to improve England through the practical application of his humanist values. Ironically his most successful

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<sup>190</sup> Thomson, p. 26-27.

<sup>191</sup> Johnson, p. 237-238.

<sup>192</sup> McDonnell, p. 54.

and beneficial grammar was translated out of English into Latin for the use of French students, but nonetheless his grammar was put to good purposes. Had Colet not asked him to produce a grammar for his school it is hard to know if Linacre would have followed in the footsteps of his former professor in Rome, Joannes Sulpitius the author of a humanist grammar in 1475.<sup>193</sup>

William Lily was also a student in Joannes Sulpitius's lectures alongside Linacre when they were in Rome together. According to his son George, once Lily returned to England around 1501 he began teaching. There is no mention in any source where he may have been employed but George implies that it may have been at St. Paul's cathedral school, the one under the control of the chancellor, Dr. William Lichfield. No doubt Lily's experience teaching at a grammar school for upwards of ten years gave him the insight needed to produce a Latin grammar for children that would stand the test of time. Lily married in 1505 and his wife Agnes bore fifteen children before her death in 1521; this meant she had a child almost every year. By the time Lily began teaching at Colet's school he would have had a family of six or seven children and a wife, not to mention household servants. Small wonder that Colet provided a house large enough for his Headmaster's family that would later be described as a mansion, and was seen fit to house part of the Emperor's retinue in 1522 shortly after Lily's death.<sup>194</sup> Lily's personal and professional experience with children, the disciplining, handling, and teaching of them, worked to his benefit in the new school. It would be foolish to think that Colet produced his Statutes in a vacuum without seeking the professional advice of those around him- who better than the family man he had already appointed to the top position at his school. Colet may have been able to see for himself the difference between the chantry priests teaching methods versus Lily's manner

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<sup>193</sup> Flynn, p. 113.

<sup>194</sup> Flynn, p. 75-78.

with the children, this is probably why he dictated that his schoolmasters preferably be married men rather than churchmen or unmarried.

Lily wrote two separate grammars for Colet, the first *Rudimenta Grammatices*, was meant to be coupled with Colet's *Aeditio*; and the second, *De octo orationis partium constructione libellus*, was edited by Erasmus to a degree that neither man wanted to take credit for the work. On July 30<sup>th</sup> 1515 Erasmus wrote the preface to a revised edition of *De octo orationis partium constructione libellus*:

John Colet, a leading theologian in England, was looking for a new book on syntax for his new school, which must be both short enough and clear enough to be suitable for his boys. At his request such a book had been written by William Lily, a man unusually well-versed in Latin and Greek and an expert in the education of the young. When he had finished it, Colet handed it to me, or rather forced me to take it for correction. What else could I do, when endlessly assailed with requests by such a close friend that I thought it wrong to deny him anything he might ask, and a man so highly thought of and so generous to me that he has the right not merely to ask his friend Erasmus for anything he pleases, but to give him orders? When however my corrections had taken the form of altering most of it (for that seemed the easier course), Lily, who is modest almost to a fault, would not allow the book to be published under his name, nor did I think I could honorably claim as my own a book in which anything belonged to someone else. And so I told them firmly that they could put on it the name of anyone they pleased as long as it was not mine; and thus, since we both rejected it, the book appeared without an author, recommended only by Colet in a short preface.<sup>195</sup>

The original book created by Colet and Lily cannot be found but there is a copy dating from 1513. In the 1513 copy Colet's contribution is first, essentially a religious rudiments handbook: Colet's Catechism, then followed by his work on accident, *Aeditio*. The Catechism consists of the Articles of Admission: "If the guardian is content with these articles, than let his child be admitted,"<sup>196</sup> the Articles of Faith, and the Seven Sacraments. Colet then discusses charity as the love of God and the love of oneself and neighbors. He addresses the sacraments in

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<sup>195</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514-1516*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 145. [Letter 341]

<sup>196</sup> Lupton, p. 286. Appendix B. These extracts were acquired by Lupton from a 1527 copy of the *Aeditio*. The modernization solely for the purpose of clarity is the work of the present author.

detail and lists the Precepts of Living, including: love God, subdue thy sensual appetites, be conservative of meat and drink, be true in word and deed, be always well occupied, awake quickly, and teach what you have learned lovingly.<sup>197</sup> Colet includes the Apostles Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and two prayers he wrote. At the end of this Colet personally addresses why he had this book written:

Be it as it may, many, namely Donates and Accedens, have written and made certain introductions into Latin in both the English and Latin languages. This has been done in such a number that it should seem to suffice, yet nevertheless, for the love and the zeal that I have for the new school of St. Paul's, and for the children of that school, I have also compiled a book on the eight parts of grammar. Not thinking that I could say one thing better than what has been said before, I nonetheless, took great pleasure in creating this testimony of my mind for the school. In this work I have put eight parts in a clearer order, and have made them a little easier than they were before considering that nothing may be too soft or too familiar for little children, especially when learning a tongue that is strange to them. In this little book I have left many things out on purpose, considering the tenderness and small capacity of little minds, and that I have included only the most common happenings in the Latin tongue. There are many exceptions, and it is generally hard to assure one thing in such a varied speech. I pray God that all may be for his honor, and to the erudition and profit of my fellow countrymen's children, Londoners especially, whom while creating this little work I had in mind, considering more what was best for them rather than simply showing great cunning. I am gladly willing to discuss things often spoken of in such manner so that young beginners and tender wits might better understand. Wherefore I pray you, all little babes, all little children, gladly learn this little book, and commend it diligently unto your memories. Trusting that with this beginning you shall proceed and grow to perfect literature, and come at last to be great clerks. And lift up your little white hands for me, which pray for you to God, to whom be all honor and imperial majesty and glory. Amen.<sup>198</sup>

Following this is Lily's elementary work, *Rudimenta Grammatices* on the eight parts of the Latin language. Lily's portion, the *Rudimenta Grammatices* is about syntax and the eight parts of speech, in a similar fashion to Colet's list of the Precepts of Living, Lily weaves Latin lessons with helpful life lessons. He explains how best to take notes and study and also why this process is important. He stresses that asking questions is expected and that one should give aid to others

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<sup>197</sup> Lupton, p. 289.

<sup>198</sup> Lupton, p. 290-291. (The modernization solely for the purpose of clarity is the work of the present author)

humbly if asked, not to upstage the other student or make them feel lesser for finding difficulty in something. He says that it is foolish to try to learn Latin from ignorant grammarians but instead the example of wise ancients such as Terence, Virgil, and Cicero should be used. He expects his students to speak in a clear tone using perfect Latin when reciting his lessons from memory, not barbarous Latin read from a book in jolting tones. Lily hopes that his lessons will help the students and keep them out of harm and away from bad habits.<sup>199</sup> He tended to use examples from everyday life made up himself; this was effective for keeping the language grounded and accessible. Linacre used examples pulled from classical works; this aided in understanding both sources but did not make understanding the Latin any easier. Lily would first give the Latin rule then he would explain the context and give several clear examples of the rule in action to enable easier understanding. This second portion by Lily was intended to be for beginners, and used along with Colet's work.

The follow up, written for a more advanced student but still a child, was the *Libellus*, which Erasmus and Lily refused to take or share credit for. These books together were arguably the most successful Latin grammar ever published. This success was based on the fact that students actually learned from these books. They were created with young children in mind and took into account the limitations children had when learning languages. Linacre's problem was that he was unable to cater accurately to young minds; he was constantly writing with an advanced student in mind. Buchanan illustrates this point: when asked to establish a Latin curriculum for St. Andrews University in Scotland he chose Lily's book for beginners and

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<sup>199</sup> Flynn, p. 88-89.

Linacre's for the advanced students.<sup>200</sup> Colet then summed up the end of the grammar with a message to the teachers and readers alike:

These are the eight parts of speech, which I have compiled, created, and written as an introduction to the Latin language for children. Pray to God that it may helpful for the speedy learning of young beginners. To his honor to who all praise and glory are due without end. Amen.

These eight parts of speech will be constructed with reasons, sentences and long orations. But how, and in what manner, and with what construction of words, considering all the varieties and diversities and changes in Latin speech (which are innumerable), will one man learn the knowledge needed to understand Latin books, to speak and to write the clean Latin, will above all let him learn and read the good Latin authors of chosen poets and orators, and to note wisely how they wrote and spoke, and to always study to follow them: desiring no other rules but their examples. For in the beginning men did not speak Latin because such rules were made, but rather, because men spoke such Latin –upon that the rules were made. That is to say, Latin was before the rules, not the rules before Latin. Therefore, well-beloved masters and teachers of grammar, after the parts of speech are sufficiently known in your schools, and good authors can be read and plainly expounded upon by your students, show to them every word, and in every sentence what they shall note and observe, warning them how best to follow, both in speaking and in writing by you yourself always speaking to them in the pure Latin, always observant to the rules. For reading from good books filled with diligent information by learned masters, studious attendance, taking heed of fellow learners, and hearing eloquent men speak-- aids in an easy imitation of a true eloquent speech with tongue and pen more speedily than all the traditions, rules, and precepts of masters.<sup>201</sup>

Colet declared that although there were many Latin grammars, he wanted to create his own specifically for young children, designed in a way that accommodated their limitations for understanding and grasping such concepts. He kept in mind the needs of the children around him, Londoners mostly, hoping that his little book explaining the eight parts of Latin speech would speed them on their way to more advanced studies and hopefully a professional career as a clerk someday. Considering that Latin was a changing language full of many varied aspects, Colet hoped that teachers will strive to teach their students Latin by always speaking proper

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<sup>200</sup> Thomson, p. 30.

<sup>201</sup> Lupton, p. 291-292. (The modernization solely for the purpose of clarity is the work of the present author)

Latin to them, patiently answering any questions they have, and using the example of excellent Latin orators to teach verbally along with visually reading the words. Colet wisely stressed that Latin was spoken first and then rules to govern the language grew up from within it, the rules did not create the language, and as such children should not simply be taught the rules but the eloquence of the spoken language as well. It is through immersing the student in the Latin language through a variety of sources that a student will best learn an easy imitation of the language rather than the traditional way of former masters. Colet wanted Latin and Greek to be studied because they were the tools needed to understand a treasure trove of knowledge on Christian and classical scholarship; the literature discussed therefore should not only be studied for the use of the language in its eloquence but also for the knowledge of what is being said and expressed by the words.

In 1540 several years after the deaths of Colet, Lily, and Linacre, Henry VIII made the Latin grammars produced for, and used at St. Paul's School the mandatory grammar text for the entire country. It was originally printed in two parts, the Introduction written in English which included the Eight Parts of Speech and the Elementary Syntax, and second part in Latin was a discussion of the four branches of grammar meant for more advanced studies.<sup>202</sup> In 1540 the preface to the text read:

Henry the VIII.... To all schoolmasters and teachers of grammar within this his realm greetings.... To the intent that hereafter they (English children) may the more readily and easily attend the rudiments of the Latin tongue, without the great hindrance, which heretofore have been, through the diversity of grammars and teachings: we will and command, and straightly charge all you schoolmasters and teachers of grammar within this our realm, and other our dominions, as you intent to earn our displeasure, and have our favor, to teach and learn your students this English introduction here ensuing, and the Latin grammar annexed to the same, and none other, which we have caused for your ease,

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<sup>202</sup> Orme, p. 257.



and your scholars speedy preferment briefly and plainly to be compiled and sent forth.  
Fail not to apply your scholars in learning and godly education.<sup>203</sup>

The printer then chose to add his own explanation of the text devoted to the parents, scholars, and schoolmasters:

To the reader.... And as his majesty purposed to establish his people in one consent and harmony of pure and true religion: so his tender goodness towards the youth and children of his realm, intended to have it brought up under one absolute and uniform sort of learning... has appointed certain learned men to meet for such a purpose, to compile one brief, plain, and uniform grammar, which only (all other set a part) for the more speediness, and less trouble of young wits... And therefore if anything seem here to want in this English Introduction, you shall understand, it was left out on purpose, and shall be supplied in the Latin rules made for the same intent, which children shall be apt to learn, what time they shall have competent understanding by these former rudiments.<sup>204</sup>

It appears clear from the printer's statements that Henry VIII was seeking uniformity not only in religion, but in the means to learn and understand that religion as well. Even before royal decree made Lily's grammar the standard some of the leading schools were already starting to use the text, Eton in the 1530s and Magdalen grammar school in 1515. The Bishop of London, who was no friend of Colet's, prescribed Lily's grammar for the new school he was endowing at Bruton in 1519 stating that "the aim set being that boys should become after their capacities perfect Latin men."<sup>205</sup> Colet's book was modified to accommodate the new religious leanings of the English Church. The compiled version of what was to become known as Lily's Grammar was now the official Latin textbook in all of England and would continue to dominate the field until the 1860s.

Several of Lily's students went on to be very successful in Henry VIII's reign and those of his children. To name only a few: Thomas Lupset became a Reader at Cambridge, John

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<sup>203</sup> Flynn, p. 137.

<sup>204</sup> Flynn, p. 137-138.

<sup>205</sup> Simon, p. 91.

Clement President of the College of Physicians, Edward North – Anthony Denny – William Paget – all members of the Privy Council, John Leland the English Antiquarian, and Thomas Offley a Master of the Merchant Taylors Company and a Sheriff and Mayor of London. John Dudley was probably also taught at St. Paul's, although how much he morally gained is questionable; the future Duke of Northumberland was placed under Colet's guardianship after his father was executed for treason.<sup>206</sup> Both Dudley and Paget played key roles during the reign of Edward VI, Dudley a far more treasonous role to be sure. Even those who were not taught directly by Lily were still deeply influenced by his and Colet's grammar and standards of teaching. Shakespeare's plays are riddled with references to the grammar; *Twelfth Night* and *Love's Labours Lost* have direct quotations from the grammar's text.<sup>207</sup>

Some scholarship in the past has challenged Colet's humanism:

For his failure to fit into the categories adopted by historians Colet has been the target of some ill-considered abuse. It is true that the writings of English humanists reflect the state of English learning, with its strong scholastic tendency. But attempts to present the founder of St. Paul's as a backward-looking conservative underline limitations not so much in his outlook as in understanding of what it represented in relation to contemporary conditions inside and outside the schools... [his] approach implied important innovations, both in teaching the classics and religious teaching, which evoked much abuse from the conservative in 1510.<sup>208</sup>

Most recently John Gleason has denounced the place attained by Colet as an invention of eighteenth-century authors. In some aspects Gleason's claims about Colet are rational and present an alternative look at this Christian humanist, particularly the relationship between he and Erasmus and the supposed influence the later had upon the famous scholar. However, the tendency of Gleason to slip into a psychological analysis of Colet's childhood and his

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<sup>206</sup> Gleason, p. 218.

<sup>207</sup> McDonnell, p. 56.

<sup>208</sup> Simon, p. 62-63.

motivations does more discredit to his statements than it bolsters. He seems overly concerned with Colet's finances. Gleason's book is littered with loaded sneering comments about how rich Colet was: "a man who was easily rich enough to endow a chantry,"<sup>209</sup> completely disregards the fact that Colet had sunk his inheritance into the school. Gleason claims that Colet's slow payment of a debt to Erasmus for his *Copia* is indicative of Colet's disappointment and "his feelings that Erasmus had let him down by showing too strong humanist sympathies in his textbook."<sup>210</sup> This entire notion is simply unfounded, if the debt is true (Erasmus was constantly asking for money from his friends) Colet's delay in payment may have more to do with a lack of funds rather than a desire to punish. Colet had already dismissed Linacre's grammar as unsuitable, what was to stop him from rejecting Erasmus's contribution too? It certainly wasn't for fear of offence, he faced that issue with Linacre- and he was someone that Colet saw regularly.

Gleason makes the claim repeatedly that Colet was anti-pagan scholarship, however this could be better explained as pro-Christian. Colet wanted his students to be good Christians with a strong grounding in those writings; this does not mean that he did not believe there was merit in pagan scholarship. He specifically states that he wants Greek literature to be taught, which it clearly was- Greek books were purchased, and several former pupils- Lupset and Clement, taught by the Greek speaking headmaster- William Lily, went on to be accomplished Greek Readers at Oxford.<sup>211</sup> Even taking into account these arguments I believe that Colet played a crucial role in modernizing England by founding St. Paul's. His reasons for doing so were numerous but I believe strongly grounded on his Christian humanist outlook.

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<sup>209</sup> Gleason, p. 249.

<sup>210</sup> Gleason, p. 230.

<sup>211</sup> McDonnell, p. 47.

St. Paul's was a school designed from its inception to produce exemplary students. Colet planned it to be placed in the churchyard of the busiest cathedral in the heart of the busiest city in England. The school was open to all, not shut away next to a monastery in the countryside, but part of the city. As we have seen, Colet devoted his entire fortune to this school, putting all of himself as well into ensuring it gave the best education available in all of England. In defense of the school from attacks by the Bishop of London, More wrote knowingly to Colet:

I don't much wonder if *they* are bursting with jealousy of your excellent school. For they see that, just as the Greeks who destroyed barbarian Troy came out of the Trojan horse, so from your school come those who reprove and overthrow *their* ignorance.<sup>212</sup>

He made sure financially and officially by decree and possibly even by Papal Bull that St. Paul's would be able to act independently from any ecclesiastical authority. He chose an experienced guild, the Mercer's Company to oversee and to look out for the interests of the school and the children taught there. He wrote a new set of statutes that would become the model for schools all over England. He compiled a Latin grammar that would succeed in being the standard tool for teaching Latin in England for three centuries after it was created. In the introduction to a facsimile of Lily's Grammar from 1567, Vincent Flynn wrote:

The importance of Lily's Grammar in the intellectual history of England can hardly be overestimated... [it] has never lost its official status. Such a text must have left its mark deep in the nation's soul... Few will maintain that Lily's Grammar is one of the world's 'Great Books,' but fewer still will minimize the influence of the basic schoolbook in England for three hundred years.<sup>213</sup>

All this Colet did because he hoped the curriculum and the lessons taught would help towards creating students who would go on to be worshipful knowledgeable Christians abounding with a

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<sup>212</sup> More, p. 6. [Letter 8]

<sup>213</sup> William Lily, A Shorte Introduction of Grammar, With an Introduction by Vincent J. Flynn, (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1945), p. x.

sense of civic duty. Colet believed that the only way to a pure love of God was through a careful examination of the original Church Fathers and the Bible; he provided the tools needed for such an examination. Erasmus stated it quite eloquently:

I for one am bound to pay warm tribute, dear Colet, to the remarkable and truly Christian goodness that leads you continually to devote all your efforts and all your life's endeavors, not to serving your own advantage, but to benefitting your country and your fellow-citizens as far as you possibly can. Equally do I admire the wisdom you show in having chosen two particular fields for the greatest possible achievement of this aim. First, you observed that the richest rewards of charity lie in bringing Christ into the hearts of one's countrymen by means of continual preaching and by holy instruction... Second, and it was next in importance in your opinion, you founded a school that far excels the rest in beauty and splendor, so that the youth of England, under carefully chosen and highly reputed teachers, might there absorb Christian principles together with an excellent literary education from their earliest years. For you are profoundly aware both that the hope of the country lies in its youth – the crop in the blade, as it were - and also how important it is for one's whole life that one should be initiated into excellence from the very cradle onwards....<sup>214</sup>

True to his Christian humanism Colet sought to blend the lessons he had learned about faith and philosophy into a way to live a meaningful productive life for a new generation of Englishmen.

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<sup>214</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514, p. 226. [Letter 260]

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF LINACRE'S HUMANISM

Thomas Linacre's experience in Italy was very different from Colet's and yet his goals once back in England were very much the same. The medical humanism that Linacre was exposed to in Italy was not simply concerned with the translation of Greek medical texts, but also the actual practice of medicine. Linacre proved himself to be concerned with all facets of the medical field once he returned to England. Not only did he seek to bring medical knowledge that had previously been unavailable, he moved to improve the education doctors received at the local universities. Finally, he created an organization devoted to upholding the standards of medical practitioners throughout England, one based on the examples he had seen while abroad. All of these actions proved Linacre to be a medical humanist not simply in thought but in word and deed.

The complete lack of control and regulation in the medical field must have been acutely obvious to Linacre and Colet when they returned to England. Having received his medical degree from the premier school in Europe, where medical practice in that city and the surrounding area was tightly regulated by men he held in esteem, Linacre must have been mortified by the state of affairs in his own country. From their experiences abroad both Linacre and Colet had the knowledge and the desire to improve medical education, practice, regulation, and standards.

Linacre and Colet were not the first to attempt such a feat; they were simply the only ones to do it successfully. In 1421 during the reign of Henry V an appeal known as The

Physician's Petition was brought before the Lords of the Council. It is not clear that any physicians had a hand in the actual petition, or in fact who was behind it at all. The Commons presented the petition to the King "against unqualified practitioners of physic."<sup>215</sup> The petition asked for all non-university trained medical practitioners to present themselves at a university to be evaluated and to receive a degree. The petition does not specify whether these people were to be enrolled in the university and actually attain a degree or if the evaluation itself was grounds for issuing a degree. Nancy Siraisi argues that the physicians were to be licensed at the universities, but were not required to be educated at them.<sup>216</sup> Even though the Lords of the Council ordered that the recommendations be implemented there is no evidence that they were. No records exist of warrants being issued to local sheriffs to bring practitioners in their areas for evaluation as was decreed.<sup>217</sup> The petition was received favorably, which implies that the problem was common, but the lack of any perceptible action begs the question of how much the Lords of the Council cared.

Two years later in 1423 five men petitioned the city of London "for authority to found a college for the better education and control of physicians and surgeons practicing in the city of London and its Liberties."<sup>218</sup> The mayor and aldermen granted the petitioner's request and issued articles giving them authority. Gilbert Kymer was a priest, physician, and the first of the petitioners and was made Rector; he was also closely connected to the Duke of Gloucester. Master John Somerset was made surveyor and was also part of the Duke of Gloucester's circle. Both Somerset and Kymer were authors who had published medical texts. The third petitioner, Thomas Southwell, was involved in the treasonable magical activities of the Duchess of

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<sup>215</sup> Clark, p. 25.

<sup>216</sup> Siraisi, p. 56.

<sup>217</sup> Clark, p. 25-26.

<sup>218</sup> Clark, p. 27.

Gloucester, so was presumably known to the Duke as well. The final two petitioners were Master Surgeons Thomas Morstede and John Harowe. Together they had asked for the city council to allow them to set up a college with a Rector who would have disciplinary powers and two Surveyors of the faculty of physic in London. These positions would be filled by election each year.

Considering the high connections to the court through the Duke of Gloucester and the careers of the men involved this institution by all indications should have flourished; however the college seemed doomed as the physicians and the surgeons jockeyed for eminence. A debate over the rights of surgeons created such conflict that it appears to have toppled the entire college.<sup>219</sup> After 1426 there is no record of the college in any of the surviving records. Quite clearly “the College was a failure.”<sup>220</sup>

Almost a century passed until the call for medical reform was once again taken up, and this time it was accompanied by panic. Henry VIII’s reign was welcomed by all humanists with delight but along with it came a particularly bad outbreak of disease in England and especially in London. Several epidemics ravaged England throughout the Tudor period, including the Black Death, the Sweating Sickness, and influenza: “From 1511 to 1521 there is not a single year without some reference to the prevalence of plague in the letters of Erasmus and elsewhere.”<sup>221</sup> Erasmus’s correspondence describes in detail the effect that the continual uncertainty of these epidemics created amongst the English: “I was in such a haste to get away from here for fear of the plague that I decided not to enter even my lodgings... Everyone is running away from

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<sup>219</sup> Clark, p. 26-27.

<sup>220</sup> Clark, p. 28.

<sup>221</sup> Sir Arthur Salusbury MacNalty, The Renaissance and its Influence on English Medicine Surgery and Public Health, Thomas Vicary Lecture 1945 at Royal College of Surgeons (London: Christopher Johnson, 1946), p. 6.



Cambridge in all directions; I myself have already withdrawn to the country....”<sup>222</sup> The uncertainty and randomness of the plagues’ victims created no discernable pattern making it especially frightening. Young and old, men and women, rich and poor, prince or peasant, they were all susceptible to the ravages of the sicknesses that seemed to attack England on a yearly basis. From a young age, perhaps due to the death of his elder brother Arthur from tuberculosis, Henry VIII had always held a heightened fear of disease and a fascination with remedies and medicine. It is no coincidence therefore that the major medical acts in his reign occurred after particularly bad outbreaks of plague.

In 1511 parliament again passed an act concerning medical regulations; this time the act was backed by the King himself. The act stated:

Forsomuch as perfect knowledge of the science and cunning of Physic [and Surgery] requires both great learning and ripe experience is daily within this realm exercised by a great multitude of ignorant persons of whom the greater part have no manner of insight nor in any other kind of learning that common artisans take upon them great cures, and things of great difficulty partly through the use of sorcery and witchcraft... to the high displeasure of God, great infamy to the faculty, and the grievous hurt, damage, and destruction of many of the King’s liege people, most especially of them that cannot discern the cunning from the uncunning; be it therefore to the comfort of all manners of people by the authority of this present parliament enacted that no person within the city of London nor within seven miles take upon himself to exercise and work as a Physician or Surgeon before first being examined, approved and admitted by the Bishop of London and or the Dean of St. Paul’s with the aid of four doctors of Physic and or Surgery... And no person outside of the said city shall take upon him to exercise and work as a Physician or Surgeon without first being examined and approved by the Bishop of the same Diocese...calling to them such expert persons in the said faculties.<sup>223</sup>

Medical practitioners in London and the surrounding seven miles were to present themselves for examination of their abilities and qualifications. Although the details surrounding this latest act are unknown, the fact that John Colet, as the Dean of St. Paul’s was identified as one of the chief

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<sup>222</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 142 to 297, 1501-1514, p. 259-260. [Letter 278]

<sup>223</sup> An Act Concerning Physicians and Surgeons. 1511 Henry VIII, cap. 11. The Statutes of the Realm, Volume 3: [1509-1545], p. 31-32.

examiners on the board speaks volumes. That the other examiner was the Bishop of London, Richard Fitz-James, however shows the reliance the English state placed on the organized structure of the church. The less than friendly relations between Colet and Fitz-James was known at court, and the decision to pair these two men together could not have been an unconscious one. Colet's presence begs the question whether it was insisted on by either himself or by the other humanists at court because his authority as Dean of St. Paul's in this situation could help to ensure that Fitz-James actually performed his duties, unlike the ones he had neglected in his own diocese.

The decision to appoint these men is an interesting one, beyond their personal involvement, considering that neither of them had a medical background. The act stated that at least one of the chief examiners with the assistance and advice of four medical doctors was to assess the qualifications of those who were brought to the board, and only after passing this examination was the physician granted a certificate to practice medicine in the London area. As a Royal Physician Linacre would have been the most logical choice for one of these doctors; however there is no surviving evidence to determine the identities of the four consulting doctors. In an article published in 1940, Goldwin Smith claims: "As early as 1511 Linacre probably wrote with his own hand the preamble to an Act of Parliament designed to crumple the quack."<sup>224</sup> Smith gives no evidence as to the origins of this information unfortunately. Although there might be some truth to Smith's claim, it is unsubstantiated. The relationship between Linacre and Colet, and Linacre's dual role as a royal physician and clergyman, would certainly make him a likely candidate. Linacre was at this time very busy with his medical practice and his translations, so it is possible he may not have had the time to spare. Erasmus comments on

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<sup>224</sup> Smith, Goldwin "The Practice of Medicine in Tudor England," The Scientific Monthly 50, no. 1 (Jan., 1940): p. 68.

several occasions that the church benefices Linacre received were welcomed by all of the scholarly community because the financial freedom of these benefices allowed him the leisure time necessary to continue his translations. However, considering the continuity between Linacre's later College of Physicians and the 1511 Medical Act, it seems very likely that Linacre was able to learn from personal involvement with the 1511 Act how best to proceed with his own endeavor.

The city of London, Bishop Fitz-James, and John Colet must have been involved in this act from the beginning because they are specifically mentioned as actors in the execution of the act's provisions. Thomas More was probably acting on London's behalf through his new appointment as an Under-Sheriff of the City of London, which "gave him the opportunity to advise the City Fathers on measures of sanitary reform, in which he was so much interested...."<sup>225</sup> More had held this appointment since September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1510 and had done much good within his role; in fact he was made one of the Commissioners of Sewers along the Thames in 1514. As great as the 1511 Act looked on paper it has left little evidence behind showing whether or not it was effective. In 1514 seventy-two surgeons were examined and given permission to practice their craft, but beyond this snippet there are no further records concerning the act in action.<sup>226</sup>

It wasn't until after Colet's illness and withdrawal from public activities that Linacre took the final steps to establish his own College of Physicians in the fall of 1518. This could imply that the 1511 Medical Act was working well or that Linacre was simply waiting for the most opportune time to formulate his petition for the establishment of an official College of Physicians

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<sup>225</sup> Sir Arthur Salusbury MacNalty, "Sir Thomas More as Public Health Reformer" in Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More, ed. G. P. Marc'hadour, R. S. Sylvester (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), p. 124.

<sup>226</sup> Clark, p. 57.

of London. The previous summer had been particularly bad in terms of plague, More wrote to Erasmus during the summer:

If ever we were in trouble before, our distress and danger are at their greatest now, with many deaths on all sides and almost everyone in Oxford and Cambridge and London taking to their beds within a few days and the loss of many of my best and most honourable friends; among them (which I am sorry to think will bring you sorrow too) our dear Andrea Ammonio, who is a very great loss to learning and to all right-thinking men ... I can assure you: one is safer on the battlefield than in the city ... But what can one do? What one's lot brings must be endured. I have prepared my mind to face any outcome. Mind you at least keep well. In haste, from London, 19 August."<sup>227</sup>

The Royal Proclamation on the Plague, created by Wolsey in January 1518, was the first quarantine decree ever issued in England's history.<sup>228</sup> In the summer of 1518, Thomas More, the Commissioner of the Sewers in London in charge of sanitation, was asked to enforce the measures of the proclamation concerning the quarantine, "Sir Thomas More in a charge he made to the Mayor of Oxford in 1518, ordered inhabitants infected with the plague to keep to their houses ... Officers were required to keep the streets of the town cleansed and burn refuse."<sup>229</sup> Wolsey and More were both committed to the spread of sanitation reforms, which is most likely why Wolsey trusted the application of the quarantine decree into More's hands. Why these measures were being taken now can be explained quite easily; Henry VIII feared illness and fled from it whenever possible. Henry VIII was staying at Woodstock, only seven miles from Oxford. He was understandably worried about the close proximity to a city experiencing such a severe outbreak, and the people surrounding him at court were aware of the advantages of having

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<sup>227</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, trans. The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 594 to 841, 1517-1518. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 67. [Letter 623]

<sup>228</sup> Charles Webster, "Thomas Linacre and the Foundation of the College of Physicians," in Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, Francis Maddison, Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 208.

<sup>229</sup> Sir Arthur Salusbury MacNalty, The Renaissance and its Influence on English Medicine Surgery and Public Health. p. 7.

an organized policy concerning disease and medical care if plague outbreaks were ever to be controlled.

While waiting for the opportune moment to establish the College of Physicians Linacre kept busy by working on another avenue of medical humanism. Based on his rapid publication of six Galen translations, one original work, and a revised copy of previous translations within the space of only seven years, it is safe to say that along with his medical practice he was diligently working on his translation projects from the time he returned to England in 1499 till his death in 1524. The first published translation work done by Linacre was, as previously stated, *De sphaera* by Proclus, in 1499. This work Linacre dedicated to Prince Arthur, and he would carry on dedicating his translations to the royal family and influential people throughout his career as a way of thanking them for their support for him personally or for the cause of humanism.

As previously discussed Linacre composed a Latin grammar that was later rejected by John Colet, founder of St. Paul's School, as being too advanced for his students in 1509. As tutor to the Princess Mary in 1523 Linacre once again published a grammar for use in her schooling but again it was found wanting and the Queen chose not to use it. Linacre's medical translations were far more successful and eagerly awaited by the literary community. Over the period of eighteen years that lapsed between the publication of Linacre's first and second translations he clearly was working on a vast array of material. Linacre's devotion to perfection probably explains why it took him so long to publish his translations. Erasmus had lightheartedly chided him on more than one occasion for delaying over needless details. In fact, it is believed by many historians that Erasmus specifically mocked Linacre, in a good-natured way, and those like him in his book The Praise of Folly, in the section about Grammarians:

I knew an old Sophister that was a Grecian, a Latinist, a mathematician, a philosopher, a musician, and all to the utmost perfection, who after threescore years' experience in the world, had spent the last twenty of them only in drudging to conquer the criticisms of grammar, and made it the chief part of his prayers, that his life might be so long spared till he had learned how rightly to distinguish betwixt the eight parts of speech, which no grammarian, whether Greek or Latin, had yet accurately done.<sup>230</sup>

Regardless of why it took Linacre the time it did, the motivation that drove him to translate and publish is indisputable. He sought out Greek medical texts and painstakingly translated them into Latin so that they would be available for the benefit of all medical students, all for the improvement of the medical landscape in England and abroad.

The reason Linacre chose to translate the Greek medical texts into Latin instead of republishing them in the original Greek goes to the heart of what he was trying to achieve in England. Learning Greek had been a long process for Linacre and he had learned from some of the best tutors anyone could ask for. The expectation that all medical students could learn Greek in order to read and understand the works of Hippocrates and Galen directly was simply asking too much. Linacre understood the difficulties, where others felt that it should be a requirement. In a letter to Henricus Afinius, the chief physician to the city of Lier near Antwerp, Erasmus displayed how he and Linacre differed on the subject of physicians learning Greek:

For the rest, if you have lately begun to add to your earlier studies in astronomy and medicine the study of Greek, which can contribute so much to every branch of learning but particularly medicine, I have the highest praise for your judgment and enterprise, and I congratulate you on your good fortune in starting this in good time while still in the prime of life. The same objective has been attacked by the leading physicians of our time, Guillaume Cop, Ambrogio Leoni of Nola, Niccolo Leonicensi at a more advanced age, yet not without success; for Thomas Linacre and Du Ruel were fortunate enough to learn their Greek earlier... In no art is a mistake more perilous than in medicine. No wonder if the most intelligent of our physicians are adding Greek to their other fields of study; and soon, I believe, it will be thought impudent to call oneself a physician without it. It is at least far from negligible to be able to listen to the founder of the art,

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<sup>230</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, trans from the Latin (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1887), p. 120.

Hippocrates, and next to him Galen, Paulus, Aegineta, Dioscorides speaking in their own language....<sup>231</sup>

Rather than ask the impossible, Linacre provided the materials necessary for medical students to learn from the ancients' wisdom in a language they had been learning from a young age, Latin. Linacre was not the only humanist in his network who felt the knowledge of Greek was a thing not easily obtained, nor an endeavor entered into lightly, Colet was never able to master the Greek language, although he did not attempt learning it until late in his life. In response to a request made of him to teach Greek to John Fisher the Bishop of Rochester, William Latimer wrote to Erasmus stating: "Greek is a complex and many-sided business, as you know, and more than a little involved; and though it is toilsome rather than difficult, yet it needs time, at least until it can be got by heart."<sup>232</sup> Perhaps keeping in mind the obligations and time-consuming study that was required of a medical student, Linacre sought to eliminate the need to learn Greek by providing quality translations in Latin of texts he considered essential for a physician's training.

Linacre's goal to provide Latin translations of Galen's medical texts does not mean that there were not versions of Galen's works already available in Latin throughout Europe. Arabic scholars and 'barbarians' had created translations during the early middle ages. These were considered bad texts, full of errors, and generally unacceptable for study. Galen's standing as the foremost medical authority was reaching new heights as the humanist movement progressed in Italy. This renewed interest in medical texts can be seen in the translation efforts of Niccolo Leonicensio, Giorgio Valla, Wilhelm Kopp, and Lorenzo Lorenzano. According to Richard Durling these four men, in the space of thirty years (1484-1514) managed to translate nearly an

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<sup>231</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517, p. 269-270. [Letter 542]

<sup>232</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517, p. 201. [Letter 520]

eighth of Galen's works. Linacre's total publications of Galen's work practically matched that of the four men's output.<sup>233</sup> According to Thomas More, Linacre had been translating Aristotle's *Meteorologica* when he decided to take up translations of Galen:

He undoubtedly would have completed and published the entire work [*Meteorologica*] by now, if Galen, by reason of his high rank and authority in medical matters, had not prevailed upon Linacre to set aside even Aristotle for the moment and first attend to a Latin version of his own work... and his labors will have this result, that at long last the Latins can understand what, to my surmise, no one, ignorant of Greek, has up to now understood.<sup>234</sup>

More wrote this in a letter to Martin Dorp in October of 1515; this means that Linacre was working on these translations well in advance of publication. In fact the dedication of the first translation mentions the encouragement he had received from both Erasmus and Guillaume Budé to publish his work. Linacre was sent to Paris in 1514 as the Royal Physician to the Princess Mary, sister to Henry VIII, upon her marriage to Louis XII King of France. It was at the French court where Linacre and Budé first became friends; in fact Budé edited Linacre's first translation.

Regardless of his perfectionist tendencies, Linacre saw himself as being a part of a progressive medical movement; in his mind producing quality translations of Galen for all to read and learn from was one of the most important things he could do. Galen wrote on practically every subject that dealt with the human body, ranging from the humors to the arteries, pharmacy and drugs to food intake and digestion. The translations done by Linacre are some of Galen's most important texts and encompass the variety of those works, including his texts on epidemics. As George Clark describes, these men felt that "once Greek medical science was

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<sup>233</sup> Durling, p. 77.

<sup>234</sup> Rogers, p. 52-53.



restored in authentic and unencumbered texts, once the knowledge of it was spread, medical practice could revive as the arts and letters were reviving.”<sup>235</sup>

The first Galen translation published by Linacre was *De sanitate tuenda libri sex* in 1517. Thomas More wrote to Erasmus in 1516 saying: “Linacre will send his Galen-translation to Paris immediately after Christmas to be printed, accompanied by Lupset, who will stand over the printer and correct the proofs.”<sup>236</sup> Why Linacre chose to send someone even as accomplished and learned as Lupset instead of going himself is strange considering his background at the Aldine Press; I believe that he had perfected the text as much as he could, for as long as he could, and did not want to delay the printing further by being there to make more corrections. Linacre never saw any of his translations through the printing process. His work had been anticipated and longed for: “I have written Bade [ the French publisher] to ask you to see that Linacre’s version of Galen is sent me, not as a present; I mean to pay for it myself,”<sup>237</sup> a month after making this request Erasmus still had not been able to get a copy: “I have not yet had a chance to see Thomas Linacre’s pieces, although I have asked Thomas Lupset for a copy more than once.”<sup>238</sup> Apparently the text was well worth the wait for Erasmus as he wrote to Richard Pace: “Linacre’s translation of Galen at last begins to be on sale here, and I like it exceedingly. After this I may even be ready to become a physician... Give my greetings to Linacre and encourage him to publish the rest of his work.”<sup>239</sup>

Linacre dedicated *De sanitate tuenda libri sex* to King Henry VIII and it was received with such acclaim that when he published his second translation in 1519, Henry apparently made

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<sup>235</sup> Clark, p. 46.

<sup>236</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517*, p. 171. [Letter 502]

<sup>237</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 594 to 841, 1517-1518*, p. 161. [Letter 691]

<sup>238</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 594 to 841, 1517-1518*, p. 217. [Letter 726]

<sup>239</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, *Letters 842 to 992, 1586-1519*, p. 163-164. [Letter 887]

it known to Linacre, through Dr. John Chambre, that he would like his new work *Methodus medendi* also dedicated to him.<sup>240</sup> The preface is a letter written by Guillaume Bude to Thomas Lupset praising Linacre's elegant and exquisite style.<sup>241</sup> The dedication to King Henry read:

With the exception of a few misversions of this work as void of elegance as they were abundant in error, and some scanty extracts made by the Arabian writers, rather calculated to increase the reluctance of the reader than to remove his doubts or entice him to a perusal of the portions of which he was deprived, no translation proportioned to the excellence of the work had been attempted for 1000 years. Anxious, therefore to attempt something by which all inconveniences might be obviated to the student, and all opportunity at the same time removed for charging me with a neglect of duty towards your majesty, from a want of the third part of those writings which have already been published under the sanction of your royal name; and as of the many who owe, and will continue to owe, their health to you, some may impute its restoration to the true cause; though reluctant, for the magnitude of the work, to undertake it, I was unwilling to shift from my shoulders a task which zeal and labor might ultimately accomplish. From the approbation with which my first attempts were received by the learned, I the more readily hope that my impartial readers, whilst much has been well written, will not be offended at a few blemishes, which may have occurred from the irksomeness of so extended a work and the difficulty of treading in the steps of others; particularly as the work has been executed amidst other occupations, and at times unfavorable for mental exertion, it was not possible uniformly to provide against them. These blemishes I nevertheless resolve, during the period of life allotted to me, to correct, not only in the present but in every future undertaking, that the reputation of my patron might not share in the disgrace of any thing propounded in them.<sup>242</sup>

Johnson states that Linacre had originally wanted to dedicate *Methodus medendi* to the Archbishop of Canterbury William Warham as a way of thanking him for the benefices which allowed Linacre the leisure time to translate the Galen texts. In the following years Linacre published five more translations: *De temperamentis* and *De inaequali intemperie* dedicated to Pope Leo X in 1521, *De pulsuum usu* dedicated to Cardinal Wolsey in 1522, *De naturalibus facultatibus* dedicated to William Warham Archbishop of Canterbury in 1523, and *De symptomatum differentiis* which had no dedication as it was published after Linacre's death in

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<sup>240</sup> Johnson, p. 221.

<sup>241</sup> Durling, p. 87.

<sup>242</sup> Johnson, p. 214-216

1524. The dedication to Pope Leo X implies that Linacre was using this dedication as a way of thanking Leo for some service, but he is not clear what that may have been. Perhaps it is his belated way of thanking Leo for his and his families' role in Linacre's early life and the benefit they gave to all of humanism.

The dedication to Cardinal Wolsey is not very revealing beyond the usual platitudes, however, the letter that Linacre wrote to him in 1519 attached to a personal copy of *Methodus medendi* is far more telling:

For my present or past labors I desire no greater reward than the accomplishment of what must be an object of importance to all who have the king's welfare at heart, -- the advantage of contributing to the health of the individual, whose endless vigilance and punctual discharge of the various duties of the state leave the sovereign under no anxiety respecting the preservation of his own: whose foreign and domestic policy is conducted with such admirable wisdom, that we are at peace and amity with foreign princes, and enjoy tranquility at home, -- the result of that equal administration of justice by which the interests of rich and poor are mutually secured to their possessors. Nor is your solicitude bestowed in a less degree on the private affairs of the king, which never before shone with equal luster and magnificence. Other reasons too, and those of no ordinary kind, render every honest man solicitous for your safety -- the great examples of your diligence and good management, proclaimed in the discharge of the business of the crown, the visitation and supervision of the church and the clergy delegated to you by their supreme head, with the offices of permanent legate of the holy see in this realm, and *a latere* in his own. Nor has science been forgotten in the consideration of affairs of such importance. Public lectures have been founded at your expense, benefits have been conferred on the learned, and the restoration of the discipline of the schools to its pristine, or at least to a better, condition has been commenced under your auspices; whilst medicine, the most profitable of the sciences, whose reputation and power had been almost annulled by the presumption and importunity of the unskillful and ignorant, has been duly estimated, and a certain hope excited not only of its less abuse in future, but of its re-establishment in its ancient state and dignity. Of so much happiness are you the author, that the writer has an especial reason above others of his countrymen to entertain a care respecting you; since he not only owes to you his appointment to offices of honor, but a recommendation to the most courteous and heroic of princes, proclaiming thereby more in deed than in word how great was your authority with him who conferred them. Watching, therefore, night and day for the opportunity of showing my gratitude for the bounty extended towards me, I offer you the present work, till other means present themselves, in the hope that your health may reap advantage from it, and that your physicians, of whom I profess myself to be one, may have a work at hand containing in it a system of the healing art. In return for

this memorial I solicit only the smiles to which I have been accustomed, a sufficient recompense for the labor which I have expended in its composition.<sup>243</sup>

In this letter Linacre expresses the gratitude he felt towards Wolsey for the role he played in the establishment of the College of Physicians. Not only had Wolsey been personally supporting humanist study and scholarship but he offered up a sincere recommendation to the King on the behalf of Linacre's College and put his name to the petition as well. Wolsey was the Lord Chancellor to King Henry and was currently enjoying the height of his power at court.

The timing of Wolsey's recommendation in the early fall of 1518 was by no means random. I believe that Linacre had been waiting to put forward his petition for a College of Physicians dedicated to regulation and improvement of medical standards until he was in a position to fully realize and implement his creation. Many events in 1518 came together to create an atmosphere that was conducive to the fruition of Linacre's plans. By 1518 Linacre had many of Galen's medical texts prepared and translated into Latin (although not all were published yet) with the aim of using these texts in the education of present and future medical students and physicians in England and abroad. The knowledge contained within these texts became part of the standards the College upheld and considered essential for those who sought a medical license. With Colet's gradual withdrawal from public life - and most likely his duties on the medical review board - due to increasingly bad health, the Medical Act of 1511 was no longer fulfilling the role for which it had been established. Persistent yearly attacks of various epidemics were creating a state a panic and forcing new measures to be taken in efforts to control the spread of disease. King Henry was not only acutely aware of the plague situation but he was personally fearful of infection and fled any infected areas refusing to let anyone into the court

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<sup>243</sup> Johnson, p. 218-220

much less his presence if they may have been exposed. Many highly placed men at court had travelled abroad and experienced first hand how other European cities, particularly those in Italy, had well established and respected corporations overseeing the medical practice in their locations. King Henry, himself educated in the classics, chose, much like his father had, to surround himself with men who had through intelligence and action elevated themselves, rather than relying on titles and lineage. The environment fostered at court by Henry's enthusiasm for the humanist movement was a thing envied by many scholars, Erasmus among them. Writing to a friend at the papal see in July 1518, Erasmus describes the English court:

I cannot tell you how popular he [Richard Pace] is with his own people, especially that very civilized king [Henry VIII], and that remarkable man, the cardinal [Wolsey]. You know, my excellent Bombace, how averse I have always been from the courts of princes; it is a life which I can only regard as gilded misery under a mask of splendour; but I would gladly move to a court like that, if I could grow young again.

The king is the most intelligent of the monarchs of our time and enjoys good literature. The queen is astonishingly well read, far beyond what would be surprising in a woman, and as admirable for piety as she is for learning. The men who have the most influence with them are those who excel in the humanities and in integrity and wisdom. Thomas Linacre is the physician; it would be a waste of time to praise him to you, for he displays his quality in his published works... Thomas More is of the privy council, not only the Muses' darling but the pattern of all charm and of every grace, whose ability you have been able to discern to some extent in what he has written. Pace, almost a brother to him, is secretary. William Mountjoy is head of her majesty's household. John Colet is a select preacher. I have mentioned only the leaders... This is the kind of man of whom his palace is full, more like an academy than a king's court. What Athens or Stoa or Lyceum could one prefer to a court like that?<sup>244</sup>

This was the spirit of the court and England when Linacre chose to present his petition to the king.

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1518 King Henry VIII was presented with a petition for the formation of a College of Physicians; his response was the full incorporation and granting of Letters Patent:

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<sup>244</sup> R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, Letters 842 to 992, 1518-1519, p. 62-63. [Letter 855]

Henry the Eighth, with a view to the improvement and more orderly exercise of the art of physic, and the repression of irregular, unlearned, and incompetent practitioners of that faculty, in the tenth year of his reign founded the Royal College of Physicians of London. To the establishment of this incorporation the King was moved by the example of similar institutions in Italy and elsewhere, by the solicitations of at least one of his own physicians, Thomas Linacre, and by the advice and recommendation of his chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey.

By the terms of the Letters Patent constituting the College, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September (1518), John Chambre, Thomas Linacre, and Ferdinand de Victoria, the King's physicians, Nicholas Halsewell, John Francis, and Robert Yaxely, physicians, and all men of the same faculty, of and in London and within seven miles thereof, are incorporated as one body and perpetual Community or College.

To this was added the power of annually electing a President, that of perpetual succession, and the use of a common seal, with the liberty of holding lands whose annual value did not exceed twelve pounds. They were permitted to hold assemblies and to make statutes and ordinances for the government and correction of the College, and of all who exercised the same faculty in London and within seven miles thereof, with an interdiction from practice to any individual, unless previously license by the President and College. Four persons were to be chosen yearly (censors), to whom was consigned the correction and government of physic and its professors, together with the examination of all medicines and the power of punishing offenders by fine and imprisonment, or by other reasonable ways. And lastly, the members of the college were granted an exemption from summons on all assizes, inquests, and juries in the city and its suburbs.<sup>245</sup>

Listed in this Letters Patent are the reasons why King Henry VIII chose to incorporate a College of Physicians: for the suppression of false practitioners, the example set by medical institutions abroad, and that his own physician, Thomas Linacre and his chancellor, Thomas Wolsey desired that he grant this charter.

Parliament was not in session when this charter was issued to the College in 1518; when it reconvened in 1523 Linacre presented the petition and charter to be modified and ratified formally by Parliamentary Act. I believe that Linacre's desire to have the new Parliament ratify and introduce alterations to the original charter should be seen as one part of Linacre's attempt to wrap up his affairs as he sensed he was nearing the end of his life. As he stated in his dedication

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<sup>245</sup> Monk, p. 1.

of the *Rudimenta grammatices*, published in 1523, he was weakening from illness and was not able to fulfill some of the obligations he had set for himself. The actions taken by Linacre in the last two years of his life should be viewed as the last efforts of a man who had many plans and understood that he would not have time to see them all to fruition or even birth. He did not have time to let the College develop slowly into the governing body he imagined, so he made sure that it had the groundwork set up in Parliamentary statute.

Although there is very limited evidence about what the College did during the early days of its development, it is clear that in the five years between its formation and the ratification in 1523 it was functioning well. This can be supposed because the modifications asked for in the new charter were of a practical nature with an eye to the future of the College. The structure of the College was formalized, dealing with elections, examinations, meeting space, and fines given out to those who practiced medicine without the College's approval. The most interesting part of this 1523 Act was that the powers of the College were extended beyond London and the original surrounding seven miles to include all of England. The College at this time was not established or organized enough to properly regulate all of England; the membership of the College had only increased by six in 1523, making a total of twelve.

I believe that Linacre pushed for this stipulation at this early date because he knew he would not be around to guide the College personally with his vision of its future role. The preface to *De naturalibus facultatibus*, which was published in May of 1523 and therefore completed by Linacre well in advance, mentions the illness from which he was dying. Included with this is a reference to some important business that had forced him to change his plans.<sup>246</sup> Author Giles Barber believes this important business referred to the grammar Linacre was

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<sup>246</sup> Durling, p. 95.

preparing for Princess Mary.<sup>247</sup> I believe that Linacre meant the plans he had to change was the up-coming ratification of the College's Statutes and the expansion of their powers to include all of England. The important business was Linacre's need to enact the remainder of his plans for the medical field, rather than that of his grammar. I base this belief on the inference that Linacre, at age 63, knew the illness he was suffering from was fatal and that the preface had to have been written just before the 1523 Parliament convened.

All the actions he had taken up until this point indicate that Linacre planned to overhaul the medical field in all of England. Linacre's early death is the only thing that prevented him from enacting further changes himself; instead he had to leave the blueprints for his grand plans in the hands of trusted friends. The 1523 Act is a testament to his forward thinking, even if it was far in the future.<sup>248</sup> Linacre donated his residence, Stone House on Knight Rider Street, to the College. He intended it to be used for a library and as a gathering place for meetings. In his will Linacre gave part of the house to Merton College as well, dividing the spaces between the two Colleges. Merton was under the Wardenship of John Chambre, a fellow founder of the College of Physicians, less than a year after this was granted.

The College of Physicians was not an educational institution; it did not provide any teaching, lectures, or degrees; members simply evaluated and set standards for medical practice in England. Having set the limitations of the College of Physicians himself, Linacre knew that if he wanted physicians to live up to the standards he set he would have to first provide the tools necessary to do so. As stated above, Linacre clearly had a plan in mind for an overhaul of the entire medical field in England. The translations of Galen were the beginning; the College of

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<sup>247</sup> Barber, Giles. "Thomas Linacre: A Bibliographical Survey of his Works." In Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524, Francis Maddison, Margret Pelling and Charles Webster, 290-336. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. p. 300.

<sup>248</sup> See Appendix for the 1523 ratification of the College of Physician's charter.



Physicians was another part, and endowing medical lectureships at both Oxford and Cambridge was the link between them. What good were translating medical texts and setting up standards for practice if there was no one in England to use these tools and teach a new generation of physicians? Specifically stated in the charter for the College was the provision that graduates from Oxford and Cambridge were exempt from examinations. As already discussed the medical teaching at these English universities was sub-par to say the least; why would Linacre have made them exempt from evaluation under these circumstances unless he planned to further improve the medical education available from these local institutions? His plans to endow medical lectureships at both universities probably went back further than the foundation of the College of Physicians. Linacre had been purchasing lands as early as 1515, and while there is no direct evidence that these land dealings were done with endowing the lectureships in mind, the players involved in these transactions were also part of the later ventures to pay for the lectures.<sup>249</sup>

Linacre made two separate wills; one dealt with his personal property and his family and the second will focused on the lands and money he acquired with the intention of endowing lectureships and providing property for the College of Physicians. This second will was dated only two days before his death on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1524. Contained within are the arrangements for the transfer of lands to St. John's College, Cambridge for the lectureships and to the Mercer's Company, as trustees, if they accepted the charge, in hopes that they would finish dealings with Oxford for the establishment of the lectures there. Linacre had already in June and again in August of 1524 solidified the arrangements with St. John's College for the endowed medical lectures to be given there. He had personally transferred the lands that would support the lecturer directly to the college without the use of an intermediary. It appears that he hoped to do

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<sup>249</sup> Fletcher, p. 124.

the same with Oxford but simply ran out of time to finalize the concrete details. This is why he left the lands in the hands of the Mercers', for they were trusted by Linacre and his friends.

Possibly he was following Colet's example by placing the funding for his future lectureships in their secular hands. Linacre stated in his will:

And for as much as the faculty of physic is right met and expedient for the inhabitants in every community to the comfort of the people and remedy of many maladies is continually changing, it is necessary for there to be cunning and expert physicians of which there has been great penury for lack of lectures and instructions in that faculty in Oxford and in Cambridge, and as yet there has been none certain substantial nor perpetual lectures of physic founded or ordained in the said universities which were very necessary for the students of the said universities in the said faculty, therefore I, the said Thomas Linacre, will and by these presents ordain that two substantial lectures of physic be founded, erected, and established in the said university of Oxford...<sup>250</sup>

Linacre knew he had to set up endowments to pay for a medical lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge because neither college had been yet able to offer a salary that was enough of an inducement for an experienced physician to move away from London into the country where there would be fewer patients and a narrower society. Even with this salary offered, Linacre arranged the lectures in such a way that a graduate holding a Masters could read the material if a full physician could not be arranged. His translations of Galen made up a large portion of the curriculum he prescribed for the lectures. The Oxford lectures were set up to be larger and included a senior lecturer paid eleven pounds a year and a junior lecturer paid about six pounds a year. At Cambridge, Linacre arranged for only a senior lecturer, who was to be paid twelve pounds a year. Linacre stipulated that the senior lecturer was to read from the following texts: six books of Galen's *De sanitate tuenda*, three books of *De alimentis*, fourteen books of *De methodo medendi*, and the first five books of *De simplicibus medicamentis*. The junior lecturer was to read from: three books of *De temperamentis*, three books of *De naturalibus*, six books of

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<sup>250</sup> Appendix B2. Will of Thomas Linacre. Fletcher, p. 166. Modernized by present author.

*De morbis et simtomatis*, two books of *De differentiis febrium*, six books of *De locis affectis*, and Hippocrates' *Prognostica* with Galen's commentary.<sup>251</sup> These courses were to cover a two and a half to three years of lecturing.

Unfortunately after Linacre's death plans for the Oxford lectures were temporarily set aside as the personal and public lives of the men named as his executors entered uncertain times. Thomas More, Cuthbert Tunstal Bishop of London, John Stokesley a canon and prebendary of St. Stephen's Chapel Westminster, and William Shelley the Recorder of London were all involved in the functions of the court. It was through the determined efforts of Bishop Tunstal that Linacre's wishes were finally brought to fruition and the lectures at Oxford were established. In 1532 the Mercers Company refused to accept the responsibility of handling the endowments, most likely due to the political climate surrounding the universities at the time and not an objection to the medical lectures themselves.<sup>252</sup> Tunstal let the matter rest, but in 1542 he removed all the documents concerning Linacre and the endowments from the care of the Mercers. By 1549, perhaps through the advice and arrangements of John Chambre the former Warden of Merton College, Tunstal finalized plans for the establishment of two endowed medical lectures at Merton College, Oxford.<sup>253</sup>

Thomas Linacre set out to improve the medical field of England. He began this process by translating key medical texts by Galen from generally unknown Greek into the more universal Latin language. Looking further back, Linacre created two Latin grammars with the hopes of improving the knowledge and understanding of the Latin language. Linacre set up a governing

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<sup>251</sup> Fletcher, p. 130-131.

<sup>252</sup> Fletcher, p. 137. At the time Henry VIII was pursuing his 'Great Matter' and was canvassing the opinions of the universities. The Mercers may have simply desired not to involve themselves in the situation at the time but Tunstal was pressing them for action.

<sup>253</sup> Fletcher, p. 144.

body of physicians to regulate and set standards for medical practice in England through the incorporated College of Physicians. Linacre then arranged for three medical lectures following his specifications to be given at both Cambridge and Oxford by financially endowing them. Thomas Linacre systematically created a new environment in which medicine could thrive in England. None of these changes would have happened had Linacre not traveled to Italy and experienced firsthand the bloom of medical humanism that was flourishing there. The spirit of improvement through knowledge was a key factor to the medical humanist movement and Linacre took that to heart in all his dealings.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

Dr. Thomas Linacre and Dean John Colet sought to improve the lives of the English people through the practical application of humanist principles to the structures of English society. Linacre and Colet were adherents of different aspects of humanism, but both used their values as blueprints on which to build better educational and medical systems in England. The impact of their actions is immeasurable. Their desire to make England a better place for themselves as well as all present and future Englishmen altered the course of English medicine and education.

The blending of humanist values: medical, civic, Christian, and Neo-Platonic, coupled with the unique timing of events in their lifetimes, ensured their actions had a significant and long lasting impact. It was not enough that Colet and Linacre had these ideas and wanted to see them enacted; change required the energy of many other people working together for the same cause of advancement. Their ideas did not grow to fruition in a vacuum; they flourished with the help of friends, colleagues, patrons, and teachers. Just as Linacre's work cannot be separated from the growth of medicine and Colet's from that of educational reform, the greater sphere of humanist culture cannot be removed from the results of Linacre and Colet's actions. Everything they did was within a sphere of humanist influence, to which they themselves contributed through their teaching and examples.

The lasting legacies of Linacre and Colet's work are still being felt today. The College of Physicians, now the Royal College of Physicians of London continues to uphold the medical standards and objectives that Linacre set down when he founded it almost 500 years ago. The College used Linacre's donation, Stone House, until 1614. They added a theater for anatomy lectures and a medical garden but by the early seventeenth century they were expanding in size and needed a larger location. The College

In addition to issuing advice on threats such as plague and cholera, the publication of the London *Pharmacopoeia* in 1618 created the first standard list of medicines and their ingredients published in England... The 1869 publication *Nomenclature* of Diseases created the international standard for the classification of diseases which was to last until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>254</sup>

Today their stated mission is:

We will be relentless in our pursuit of improvements in healthcare and the health of the population. We will achieve this by enhancing and harnessing the skills, knowledge and leadership of physicians in setting challenging standards and encouraging positive change based on sound evidence.<sup>255</sup>

They are a powerful force in Britain today, their key objectives being: championing the values of the medical profession, promoting patient-centered care, influencing the healthcare agenda, improving standards in clinical practice, supporting physicians through education and training, supporting international activity, and ensuring college performance.<sup>256</sup>

Without the organizing structure provided by Linacre's College of Physicians and the creation of a more professional field for physicians, later English medical advances may have occurred even later or not at all. The centralized foundation of the College created a place for later physicians to begin their careers under the supervision and guidance of more experienced

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<sup>254</sup> The Royal College of Physicians of London website, <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/>

<sup>255</sup> The Royal College of Physicians of London website, <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/>

<sup>256</sup> The Royal College of Physicians of London website, <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/>

doctors. They had the opportunity to interact with colleagues, discuss cases, network, and police irregular practices. John Caius and William Harvey are perhaps the most well known members of the early College; Harvey's work on the circulation of the blood was groundbreaking. However, the College and the Linacre Lectureships also helped to create and regulate the normal day-to-day practice of medicine in England. The College of Physicians enabled a sense of professionalism – a legitimizing force to the medical field that centuries of abuse and incompetence had eroded. The status of the medical practitioner was raised to a trusted and highly regarded position in English society, which it had never before attained. While English medicine may not have been on par with the medical field in a place such as Padua, it at least was pointed in the right direction with the tools for further advancement at hand.

Galen's medical texts and theories were overturned as the sixteenth-century progressed and medical knowledge advanced. This may seem to discount the efforts undertaken by Linacre and his fellow medical humanists, but in fact without their contributions Galen may never have been contradicted. Had Linacre never provided clear pure versions of Galen's work the errors in his methods and theories may have remained obscured by the errors in the actual texts.

John Colet's school and grammar book influenced an untold amount of young minds that flowed through St. Paul's and other school's doors. St. Paul's, itself an excellent educational institute, proved to be an exemplary example for the structure of other grammar schools. Other Englishmen wanting to found grammar schools looked to St. Paul's statutes for guidance on how to model them. The Merchant Taylor's school was established in 1561 and reproduced St. Paul's statutes practically word for word: "St. Paul's provided a useful model for those formulating statutes at a time [the uncertainty of Elizabeth's early reign] when the direction matters would

take was anything but clear.”<sup>257</sup> Cardinal Wolsey based the grammar school he founded in Ipswich on Colet’s example, but used his own grammar from which to teach, until Lily’s grammar was proclaimed the only Latin grammar to be taught from in 1540 by royal decree. More important than the schools that adopted Colet’s statutes and grammar are the students who benefited from the use of his methods. His approach to teaching was a blend of Christian values, moral life lessons, and the works of ancient and medieval writers- all designed with the needs and limitations of young students in mind. Catering to children’s abilities rather than forcing concepts that were beyond their current understanding was a new development, one not even Linacre could properly grasp.

This grammar influenced many of the students who used it, including Shakespeare, who referred to passages from the grammar in his plays *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry IV*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and in *Much Ado About Nothing*. John Milton was a student at St. Paul’s and when he authored his own grammar in 1669 he borrowed heavily from Lily’s grammar. Thomas Lupset, John Clement, Edward North, Anthony Denny, William Paget, and John Leland were all early students of St. Paul’s during Colet and Lily’s time there. Other influential graduates of St. Paul’s include Samuel Pepys, Lord Chief Justice George Jeffreys, John Churchill Duke of Marlborough, Edmond Halley the scientist who predicted Halley’s Comet, Prime Minister Spencer Compton, the architect George Dance, Lord Bertand Dawson Royal Physician, and numerous other politicians, scientists, historians, artists, and army officers.

St. Paul’s school was destroyed in the London fire of 1666 but was rebuilt four different times and is now located outside of London. The school in its present state is still teaching young students based on the tenets first set down by John Colet almost 500 years ago. They are

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<sup>257</sup> Simon, p. 307.



also still linked with the Mercers' Company. The school states: "It survived the Plague, the Great Fire of London and the Civil War, and in 1870 was one of only two day schools included by the Clarendon Commission as one of the 'nine great public schools' of England."<sup>258</sup> The values that Colet used to found his school are still present in its curriculum and it will continue to provide the best education possible for its students.

It was the personal experiences of John Colet and Thomas Linacre and their own network of influence that prompted them to use their knowledge to create a better England. Thomas Linacre was introduced to a wider world of knowledge through the teachings of his first Greek tutors at Oxford. This teaching brought a yearning to know more, which led to his journey to Italy. In Italy he was embraced and befriended by some of the most brilliant minds of his day. They not only helped to perfect his Greek, but they also conferred their humanist values onto him. This guidance led to an interest in medicine and medical humanism and his studies at the University of Padua. It was here that Linacre earned a medical degree and in Venice he acquired admittance into the Aldine Academy. In Venice they extolled the benefits of ancient Greek texts, how if these texts were made available to people they could improve and enlighten their lives. Linacre learned first hand at the Aldine printing press the benefits of translating Greek texts into Latin for the general welfare. By the time Linacre arrived in Venice in the last years of the fifteenth century he was already a medical humanist. He believed that by providing ancient Greek medical texts for the education of medical students these students would then become better physicians and this would lead to an all around improvement in the medical profession. With these ideas and beliefs Linacre returned to England and was confronted by the shocking state of medicine. Compared to his experiences in Italy, England must have seemed overrun

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<sup>258</sup> St. Paul's School website, <http://www.stpaulsschool.org.uk/>

with uneducated, dangerous people claiming to be doctors. Linacre realized almost immediately that this situation needed to change and at his disposal were the tools necessary to facilitate such change.

It may not have been his intention, but the first step towards improving this situation was through the relationships he developed. His friendship with other humanists who also orbited the court was crucial. His reputation as an accomplished and excellent Royal physician gave him access to the most influential people in England. These patients, and later patrons and friends, gave Linacre the financial freedom to work on translating Galen's medical texts from Greek into Latin. He was also given the opportunity to exercise another interest of his, the improvement of education through a better knowledge of Latin, by creating two Latin grammars.

As a practicing physician in the largest city in England, the lack of medical organization or regulation must have become openly apparent as outbreaks of the plague plunged England into chaos on a yearly basis. Previous unsuccessful attempts at organization, and then the more recent Medical Act of 1511, laid the groundwork, and examples of medical regulation in Italian cities provided the blueprint from which Linacre formulated the College of Physicians. Through his relationship with King Henry VIII and the Lord Chancellor Cardinal Wolsey, Linacre was able to explain the merits of such an organization, have it established through Letters Patent, and see it ratified by Parliament.

Linacre then began the final step in his reform of English medicine by ensuring the proper instruction of medical education at the universities. Through a financial endowment Linacre arranged for three medical lectures to be given based on a curriculum he created including the medical texts he had translated and others of which he approved. In this manner Linacre not only provided the access to medical knowledge but also he secured the teaching of

such information at both universities, and he created a corporation of physicians with responsibility and power to regulate practitioners and the practice of medicine over all of England.

Thomas Linacre was able to accomplish all of this because a number of factors combined at this time, enabling him to succeed. The same thing happened for John Colet. He was a serious young man already holding a position within the church when he travelled to Italy. It was only a matter of a few years, but by the time Colet arrived in Italy, the scholarly humanist culture that had steadily flowed while Linacre was there had changed into an almost solely religiously- focused humanism, floating amid a sea of church corruption. Colet's time in Italy was much shorter than Linacre's had been, but no less influential for his development. He became a devoted Christian humanist, dedicated to bringing the purity of the early church fathers and the clarity of their teachings to his fellow Englishmen. He did this through offering free lectures on these topics while he was at Oxford. Then when given the opportunity to preach as the Dean from the most influential pulpit in all of England, that of St. Paul's in the heart of London, he left his country parish to spread his ideas to his fellow Londoners.

Pleased with his post but shocked by the corruption of St. Paul's clergy and policies, Colet decided to figuratively start from the beginning. He took the money he had received from his inheritance and his church appointments and he created a new grammar school devoted to the education of London's youth. He placed the administration of the school under the authority of the Mercer's Company – a London guild of secular men, and thus completely out of the control of the church authorities. Colet's St. Paul's school was a free grammar school unlike anything else in England. Colet wrote the statutes of the school so that they represented his personal aims for the school, the education of children based on Christian humanist tenets so that they could go

on to spread their knowledge in their future careers. He and headmaster William Lily worked together to create a Latin grammar specifically for this school's students, taking into account their limitations based on age and the best way to teach young children.

Colet also participated in the first successful Medical Act of 1511. This act created an examination board that was to evaluate the medical physicians in London and determine if they were qualified to practice. Colet was one of the two examiners and was aided by four qualified physicians who were to advise on the cases.

Colet saw the corruption of the church and found a purer faith through the study of the early church fathers. He was influenced in his ideas by the Christian humanism of the Florentine Academy; his correspondence shows the progressive flow of ideas between him and the Academy members, Marcillio Ficino in particular. Colet's desire to educate youths in Christian humanist values so that they could then contribute to the creation of a better English society was his ultimate goal in founding St. Paul's. From the beginning of his career Colet only ever wanted to educate people and help them to improve themselves and the world around them; and that is why he never charged for his lectures at Oxford and why he created the free public school of St. Paul's. Colet's relationship with other humanists in England helped him refine and define his religious humanism, and they aided him in his efforts for reform.

Had Linacre and Colet been the only humanists in England they would not have been able to effect much change outside of their personal contact with individuals. As it was, England in the early sixteenth century was home to a rather unique collection of humanists, all of whom were united in their desire to see England improve and prosper. Henry VIII and his court were known for their preference and support of the new learning. A small sampling of Erasmus's correspondence clearly shows the network of ideas and mutual support that was frequently

exchanged between these men. Previous Englishmen had paved the road for the entrenchment of humanism in intellectual circles of England. English patronage of Greek scholars in the mid-fifteenth century created the opportunity to learn Greek and the knowledge and sense of curiosity contained within their texts, encouraging numerous scholars to travel abroad to further their studies.

Humanist centers abroad were destination points for many traveling English scholars. Italy in particular was flush with academies dedicated to humanist studies: the Florentine Platonic Academy, the *Accademia Romana*, and the Venetian Aldine Academy. Linacre was personally influenced by all of these groups and he developed a highly-regarded medical humanism from these sources. Colet was heavily influenced by the Christian humanism of the post-Medici, Savonarola-influenced Florentine Academy and his experience with the corruption of the Roman papal circles drove him to the enlightening study of the early church fathers.

Linacre and Colet implemented the practical application of their humanist ideas in English society, because these events and influences created the environment where they were able to flourish. Both men saw education as the best way to enact change. There is no denying the importance of their legacies or the impact they had, but what I wish to emphasize is the significance of their intentions. Regardless of what later generations did and will do, the humanistic ideals that drove Colet and Linacre to act will remain the same. Without the influence of humanism on their lives, the advancement of education and medicine they stimulated during the first years of Henry VIII's reign would have otherwise taken an incalculable amount of time to occur. Their singular devotion to the humanistic improvement of English medicine and education coupled with the dedication to see it through was what made Dr. Thomas Linacre and Dean John Colet so important to English history.

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## APPENDIX

### AN ACT CONCERNING PHYSICIANS

An Act concerning Physicians.

In the most humble wise show unto Your Highness your true and faithful subjects and liegemen, John Chamber, Thomas Linacre, Fernandus de Victoria your Physicians and Nicholas Halswell, John Fraunces, and Robert Yaxley, and all other men of the same faculty within the city of London and seven miles about; that where Your Highness by your most gracious letters patent, bearing date at Westminster the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of September the tenth year of your most noble reign, for the common wealth of this your realm in due exercising and practicing of the faculty of physic and the good ministration of medicines to be had, have incorporated and made of us and of our company aforesaid one body and perpetual commonality or fellowship of the faculty of physic and to have perpetual succession and common seal and to chose yearly a president of the same fellowship and commonality to oversee rule and govern the said fellowship and commonality and all men of the same faculty, with diverse other liberties and privileges by Your Highness to us granted for the common wealth of this your realm as in your said most gracious letters patent more at large is specified and contained the tenor whereof follows in these words:

And Foresomuch that the making of the said corporation is meritorious and very good for the common wealth of this your realm, it is therefore expedient and necessary to provide that no person of the said politic body and commonality aforesaid be suffered to exercise and practice physic but only these persons that be found sad and discreet grounded learned and deeply studied in physic; In consideration whereof and for the further authorizing of the same letters patent and also enlarging of further articles for the said common wealth to be had and made; please it Your Highness with the assent of your Lords spiritual and temporal and the commons in this present parliament assembled to enact ordain and establish that the said Corporation of the said commonality and fellowship of the faculty of physic aforesaid, and all and every Granted Articles and other things contained and specified in the said letters patent be approved granted ratified and confirmed in this present parliament and clearly authorized and admitted by the same, good lawful and available to your said body corporate and their successors for ever in as ample and large manner as may be taken thought and construed by the same.

And that it please Your Highness with the assent of your said Lords spiritual and temporal and the commons in this your present parliament assembled furthering to enact ordain and establishing that the six persons before said in your said most gracious letters

patent named as principles and first named of the said commonality and fellowship choosing to them two more of the said commonality from henceforth be called and clepyd Elects; and that the same Elects yearly chose one of them to be President of the said commonality; and as often as any of the rooms and places of the same elects shall fortune to be voided by death or otherwise, then the survivors of the said Elects with thirty or forty days next after the death of them or any of them shall chose, name, and admit one or more as need shall be require of the most cunning and expert men of and in the said faculty in London to supply the said room and number of eight persons so that he and they that shall be so chosen be first by the said survivors strictly examined after a form devised by the said Elects and also by the same survivors approved.

And where that in Diocese of England out of London it is not light to find always men able to sufficiently examine after the Statute such as shall be admitted to exercise physic in them, that it may be enacted in this present Parliament, that no person from henceforth be suffered to exercise or practice in physic through England until such time that he be examined at London by the said President and three of the said Elects; and to have from the said President or Elects letters testimonials of their approving and examination, except he be a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge which has accomplished all things for his form without any grace.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> The Statutes of the Realm, Volume 3: [1509-1545], Searchable Text Edition (online).

(Ontario: Tanner Ritchie Publishing and The University of St. Andrews, 2007), p. 213.

## VITA

Erin Halloran was born in April 1983 in St. Paul, Minnesota. About two years later her family moved to her father's hometown of Belle Plaine, Minnesota. She graduated from Belle Plaine High School in 2001. While enrolled at the University of Minnesota- Morris, she studied abroad at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland for the school year of 2003-2004. This time abroad solidified her love of history- especially British history, and gave her the opportunity to travel around Europe and develop lasting friendships. She graduated from U of M-Morris with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in history and minoring in political science in May 2005. She is currently enrolled at the Louisiana State University pursuing a doctorate in history.