

II.3.c
The Humanistic
Spirit

chief persons and their outworkings. Humanism did not produce the reformation but it did have an effect on and in the masses that aided the reformatory thrust. Following our earlier discussion we amplify the following humanist thinkers:

John Colet -1466-1519

A scholar in Florence, Colet received some help from Mirandola and possibly Savonarola. He returned to Oxford and influenced Erasmus in 1499. He became famous for popularizing the study of Paul and argued strongly for a grammatical approach to the interpretation of Scripture in preference to the prevailing allegorical-mystical-traditional method. He became Dean of St. Paul's and founded a new school there about 1512. He had a marked effect on Henry VIII in the area of interesting him in the lives and needs of his subjects. Colet was familiar with the older Wycliffite and Hussite movements and in a limited sense was a forerunner of the Reformation in England. He did not live sufficiently long to influence directly the English reform but certainly helped set the stage. Academically he was associated with Sir Thomas More (UTOPIA) and later humanists.

Desiderius Erasmus 1466-1536

Perhaps the greatest humanist of them all, Erasmus, of Dutch descent, was of monastic calling although he obtained a special dispensation to live outside the monastery and to wear non-clerical dress. As a general rule he ridiculed life as it was lived in the monastic orders and most of the monastics responded by hating him. His early interest in the classics was redirected by Colet towards the Scriptures and he brought forth an edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516 with the aid of the humanistically oriented printer, Froeben. His edition was annotated and the notes were strongly critical of the clergy and the Roman establishment but his major work, *IN PRAISE OF FOLLY*, constituted his great critique of ecclesiastical life. Unfortunately, as we see it, his interest in the Bible was largely a general interest with little or no real commitment. At one time he deeply admired Luther but he could not follow the reformatory trend and he became extremely critical of Luther over the matter of election and Luther's marriage. Luther had a similar deteriorating view of Erasmus, of course. Although Erasmus was one of the best thinkers of his time, his desire to remain on good terms with all