

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIGHT AND
ENLIGHTENMENT

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIGHT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

A STUDY OF THE
CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS AND
THE DUTCH ARMINIANS

BY

ROSALIE L. COLIE



CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1957

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by
Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521108232

© Cambridge University Press 1957

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1957

This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-04688-6 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-10823-2 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To

VIOLET BARBOUR

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>page</i> IX
<i>Chapter I. The Background of Anglo-Dutch Arminianism</i>	I
II. Philippus van Limborch and Jean Le Clerc	22
III. Liberal Theology and Liberal Politics	36
IV. Stages of Mechanism: Descartes and Hobbes	49
V. Henry More and Spinoza	66
VI. Henry More and the Spinozan Opposition in Holland	94
VII. Cudworth and the Vitalist Controversy	117
<i>Bibliography</i>	145
<i>Index</i>	157

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of two desires to know—one, the immodest desire to know the extent of intellectual contact between England and Holland in the seventeenth century, the other the specific desire to know more about the intellectual milieu John Locke found so stimulating during his productive period of Dutch exile. The two principal protestant powers of Europe, the little Netherlands and isolated England, shared more than their religion and the politics that religion implied; over and over again one finds how close their other connections were, philosophical, scientific, social, commercial, even aesthetic. Much fine work has certainly been done on some aspects of these connections, particularly upon puritan or radical protestant thought and action, by Dutch, English and American scholars, but much remains to conquer still. For example, there has been to date no thorough study of the effects of Grotius' work upon English thought or of Locke's impact upon Dutch thought; Hobbes and Spinoza have been similarly neglected, though volumes have been written to analyse their intentions and a few articles to define their contemporary importance.

Perhaps much remains to conquer still because there is so much to conquer: the conquest, however, is important to our understanding of the complexities of the seventeenth century. Holland was a country and an idea to every thinking European of that century, considered sometimes as threat, sometimes as enemy, sometimes as David, sometimes as the philosophers' heavenly city. In working upon Locke's circle of friends in Amsterdam, I came to find in seventeenth-century Dutch Arminianism an involvement in international problems of mind illuminating beyond

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Light and Enlightenment*

the relation of certain Arminians to John Locke, important though that relation unquestionably was. The Arminians, or Remonstrants, as they came to be called after the Synod of Dort, had a long and close association of particular interest with a group of English scholars—the Cambridge Platonists, that force at once seminal and mediating in seventeenth-century English intellectual life. The more I read, the clearer it became that there was an informal alliance between the Platonists in England and the Remonstrants in Amsterdam, both facing against the extremes of thought current in their day. Both groups took upon themselves as a duty the consideration of the principal thinkers of their time, borrowing from one another to support their arguments whenever their own material ran short.

In the period dealt with in this book, the Remonstrants seem to have profited more from this alliance than the Platonists, though the debt English liberal theology owed Jacob Arminius could never hope for repayment. Philippus van Limborch and Jean Le Clerc, the two Remonstrants of this book, were certainly catalytic in their culture, but neither was an original thinker of the stature of More and Cudworth, both constantly on the stretch for new ideas. The philosophical and theological formulations of the two Englishmen proved stimulating and rewarding to their Dutch colleagues.

The eighteenth century is traditionally the age of enlightenment, but the seventeenth century was no less preoccupied with light, in search of light, dedicated to human recovery of divine light and truth. Theirs was not the steady, regulated glow of the next age, however, but rather a fitful flickering and flaming that intermittently lit up ideas, decades, areas of that century. The seventeenth

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction

century was the age of Rembrandt, whose chiaroscuro lit up the depths of humanity and revealed the meanings of God, whose genius-light seemed almost to live of itself and beyond the control of man's discipline. In that very irregularity of illumination, puzzling, exasperating, rewarding, lies the period's fascination: the fires of intelligence sometimes burned up in a great blaze of light, sometimes smouldered slowly in the underbrush of thought, sometimes quickened promisingly only to die out in a puff—and all this just at the moment that the Age of Enlightenment was in formation.

In the last years of the seventeenth century there was indeed a 'crisis of conscience', a shift in perception and preoccupation: those fires permitted no static vision. The Cambridge Platonists with their inner illumination, the Remonstrants deep in love with God's wisdom, felt the impending change and strove to record their world-picture, to interpret their world for their successors. Their vision handicapped by the kinds of light under which they worked, they attempted a reconciliation of those diverse elements of western thought and emotion appropriate, so they felt, to any world however changed from the one they knew. They were reconcilers in Erasmus' tradition, that noblest of renaissance traditions, and tempered an instrument of belief valid, they hoped, in man's most difficult struggles to come. How they succeeded, literally, is suggested in the following pages; their real success, which was, I think, very great, cannot be wholly perceived, since our optics change seventeenth-century tone-values, sometimes past recognition. We must take heed of Sir Thomas Browne's comment on his mysterious self when we seek to know men of other periods and other places: 'This I perceive in myself; for I am in the dark to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Light and Enlightenment

all the world, and my nearest friends behold me but in a cloud.' I can hope that from this book the Dutch Arminians seem a little less shrouded, a little less obscure, and that their place in the international enlightening of the seventeenth century may prove in its turn enlightening.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge my many obligations, both national and international. First of all, I wish to thank the American Association of University Women for their generous grant of a post-doctoral fellowship for study abroad and Barnard College for a research grant, without which this book could not have been finished. My debts to individual scholars are large, largest of all to Professor Marjorie Hope Nicolson of Columbia University, Professor Violet Barbour of Vassar College, and Samuel I. Mintz of the College of the City of New York. I wish to thank also Peter Laslett of Trinity College, Cambridge, for his help with Locke and much else, Dr C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute of Utrecht, Prof. Dr J. Lindeboom of Groningen, Dr C. de Waard of Middelburg, and Prof. G. J. Renier of the University of London for generous assistance of all kinds. Scholars in libraries have done much to lighten my load—Dr L. Brummel of the Royal Library in The Hague and his staff, particularly Prof. Dr G. van Alphen, Dr E. de la Fontaine Verwey, Dr J. Gerritsen, Miss A. Dekker and Miss S. Roelofs; Dr R. Hunt and Mr P. Long of the Bodleian Library; Dr Irene Churchill of the Lambeth Palace Library; Mrs Sue M. Foster of Union Theological Seminary; the staffs of the Library of the Baptist Congregation in Amsterdam, the Manuscript Room of the British Museum, the Rare Book Room of the New York Public Library. Three particular debts are due: to the Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, who permitted me to work in the library More and Cudworth

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10823-2 - Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge
Platonists and the Dutch Arminians

Rosalie L. Colie

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction

used (and More endowed); to Dr Simon Hart of the Oud-Archief of Amsterdam, for searches and researches into the Remonstrants' civil life; to Miss Mary Rita Burns of the Butler Library of Columbia University, without whom I could never have found the valuable uncatalogued material hidden there. Finally, I am grateful to many supporting friends: Dr and Mrs Wijmans, Professor and Mrs Hunningher, Professor and Mrs. Bachrach, Miss Anne Dix, and to my colleagues Lore Metzger, Eleanor Rosenberg, Joseph I. Fradin, and Robert Lekachman.

R. L. C.

BARNARD COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK

February 1956