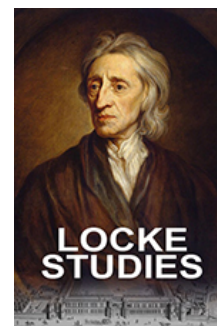


## Locke Studies

# Sarah Cowper's "Character" of John Locke

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### Résumé de l'article

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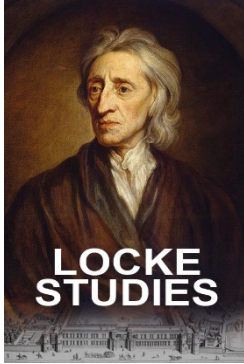
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## Sarah Cowper's "Character" of John Locke

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### *Abstract:*

Lady Sarah Cowper (1644–1720) is best known for her commonplace books, which preserve unique and variant versions of poems by Restoration “wits.” She also kept a diary, in which she recorded her readings and meditations. The diary contains an encomiastic “Character” of John Locke, composed at his death. It is one of the earliest obituaries of him, but it was commonplacéd from other sources. Her use of her sources exemplifies aspects of the manuscript circulation of texts and the ways in which the active selection and redaction of textual material reflected a reader’s own religious, political, and personal preoccupations. Cowper portrays Locke as a moral exemplar and Christian virtuoso, whose orthodoxy she defends and whose latitudinarian and Whig commitments she shares.

*Keywords:* John Locke, Sarah Cowper, Anthony Collins, Jean Le Clerc, John Toland, first Earl of Shaftesbury, third Earl of Shaftesbury, commonplace books, latitudinarianism, manuscript circulation, gender, obituary, religious toleration, Toryism, Whiggism

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There is a short encomiastic obituary of John Locke in the diary of Lady Sarah Cowper that has hitherto gone unnoticed.<sup>1</sup> It particularly emphasises Locke's religious writings and the nobility of his character. None of the material is of Cowper's own composition, being derived from other sources in the tradition of "commonplacing." Yet it is worth recording and discussing, for several reasons. It is a rare, perhaps unique, instance of a contemporary diarist marking Locke's death; it points to the manuscript circulation of texts prior to their publication; and it exemplifies ways in which the selection of textual material was inflected by a reader's religious, political, and personal preoccupations.

The obituary comprises four separate passages. The first was written seventeen days after Locke's death, which occurred on 28 October 1704, and was reproduced from a character sketch that had not yet been published; the second and fourth, some months later, are more substantial and draw upon Jean Le Clerc's printed *Life and Character of Mr. John Locke*; and the third, dating from April 1705, comments upon a passage in Locke's final letter to Anthony Collins, which also, at that time, was only available through manuscript circulation.<sup>2</sup>

Sarah Cowper (1644–1720), née Holled, and her husband belonged to the Whig circle of Locke's patron the first Earl of Shaftesbury. She married William Cowper in 1664, who became the Member of Parliament for Hertford during the Exclusion Crisis and after the Revolution.<sup>3</sup> There were four children, two of whom also became MPs and one a Lord Chancellor, but she ever after regretted her match. Her diary is, among much else, a record of seething resentment about her unsatisfactory marriage. In 1699 disaster struck the family. Her son Spencer was charged with the murder of a local Quaker, Sarah Stout, whose body had been found drowned. Probably Stout had fallen in love with him and taken her own life. The trial was politically motivated, Hertford Tories

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<sup>1</sup> It came to light through references in Anne Kugler, *Errant Plagiary: The Life and Writings of Lady Sarah Cowper, 1644–1720* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 117, and Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 151. On Cowper see also the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Cowper [née Holled], Sarah, Lady Cowper (1644–1720)," by Anne Kugler, version 13 November 2018, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-66718>.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of Lady Sarah Cowper, DE/P/F30 (1703–4), 310–11 and 347–49; F31 (1705–6), 63 and 137–39, Panshanger Papers, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertford. All citations hereafter to Cowper's diary and commonplace books (F29–45) carry the implied prefix DE/P. Quotations are modernized in the body of this essay, but original orthography is retained in the transcription at the end. Some of Cowper's papers are available online: <https://www.amdigital.co.uk/primary-sources/perdita-manuscripts-1500-1700>.

<sup>3</sup> See K. H. D. Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 645, 647, 682, 727; and the entry in the *History of Parliament Online*, s.v. "Cooper, Sir Anthony Ashley, 2nd Bt. (1621–1683), of Wimborne St. Giles, Dorset and The Close, Salisbury, Wilts," from *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. B. D. Henning (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1983), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/cooper-sir-anthony-ashley-1621-83>.

seeking to erode Whig control of the borough and detach Dissenters from their traditional support for the Whigs.<sup>4</sup>

Sarah Cowper devoted herself, as far as domestic and public affairs permitted, to intellectual and spiritual self-improvement, and, when her commitment to moral reformation did not disavow it, to verse entertainments. She filled several commonplace books, from the 1670s to the 1690s, and then turned to diary writing. She read voraciously.<sup>5</sup> Her library list includes Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De officiis*, Erasmus's *Colloquies*, Francis Bacon's *Essays*, Grotius's *The Truth of the Christian Religion*, Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*, Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, and an unspecified book by Pufendorf.<sup>6</sup> Her favourite spiritual authors were latitudinarian clergy of the Church of England, notably John Wilkins, Benjamin Whichcote, John Tillotson, Simon Patrick, and Gilbert Burnet, and the laymen Sir Matthew Hale and Robert Boyle. In London she attended the Boyle Lectures, founded in 1692 to deploy natural philosophy in defence of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Her interest in the developing school of "physico-theology" is evinced also in her notes from Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684) and John Ray's *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691).<sup>8</sup> Her pages are liberally scattered with citations from classical authors, particularly Cicero and Seneca. She was an astute scholar: when given a manuscript by somebody who said he had composed it, she was not fooled, since she recognized it as "a translation of Minucius Felix," but done in a too "florid style."<sup>9</sup> The breadth of her interests is illustrated by her favourable view of Chinese civilization, derived from Louis Le Comte's *Nouveau mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (1696).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is the subject of Knights, *The Devil in Disguise*; Beverley Adams, "The Body in the Water: Religious Conflict in Hertford, 1660–1702," (PhD thesis, University of London, 2000); and Julia Rudolph, "Gender and the Development of Forensic Science: A Case Study," *English Historical Review* 123 (2008): 924–46. For context see Lionel Munby, *"The Common People are Not Nothing:" Conflict in Religion and Politics in Hertfordshire, 1575–1780* (Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, 1995), <https://www.doi.org/10.1092/ehr/cen178>.

<sup>5</sup> Historians of the transition in the history of reading from pre-modern "intensive" to modern "extensive" reading will note her self-described habit of "skimming" and "gleaning." See F29 (1701), 116.

<sup>6</sup> F36, unpaginated; 133 items, dated 1701; printed in Kugler, appendix to *Errant Plagiarism*, 195–208.

<sup>7</sup> F29 (1702), 212; cf. F42, 31–32. She called Boyle an "excellent divine" as well as "profound philosopher." Several series of published Boyle Lectures occur in her library list. Yet she spread her net wide and found value even in Catholic spiritual writers: Thomas a Kempis, Robert Parsons, and Francis de Sales. See F43 (Miscellany, 1690s).

<sup>8</sup> F43 and F40A (Miscellanies).

<sup>9</sup> F30 (1703), 90.

<sup>10</sup> F30 (1703), 145. The 1697 English translation is in her library list.

Like other intellectual woman of her time, Cowper read Katherine Phillips and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, two of the best-known published female authors of the age. She admired the poetry of the former but was dubious of the philosophic “pudder” of the latter. She regretted, as a woman, the “manner of my education, since I feel in myself a natural thirst after knowledge,” and she did not think much of the “pedantic learning too often found among men.” These thoughts were prompted by reading an account of “above threescore eminently learned, and otherwise brave women, beyond what I thought the sex to be capable of.”<sup>11</sup> This can be identified as *An Account of the Women Philosophers* (1702), an English translation of Gilles Ménage’s *Historia mulierum philosopharum* (1690), dedicated to Madame Anne Dacier.<sup>12</sup>

Cowper had a lifelong interest in collecting *risqué* poetry and political ballads, and she was rare, as a woman, in partaking in the Restoration culture of manuscript circulation of libertine verse. Her notebooks include a collection of the second Duke of Buckingham’s verse, for which only one other, variant, source survives.<sup>13</sup> She owned an otherwise unknown defence of Buckingham from charges of immorality, including sodomy.<sup>14</sup> There are unique letters and a variant of Abraham Cowley’s epic poem *The Civil War*,<sup>15</sup> and poems by the Earl of Rochester and Sir Charles Sedley. She was close to Martin Clifford, Buckingham’s friend and secretary, the author of *A Treatise of Humane Reason* (1674);<sup>16</sup> and she possessed another heterodox book from that circle, Charles Wolseley’s *The Reasonableness of Scripture Belief* (1672). Her political tastes are striking too. Her collection contains the sole surviving copy of Algernon Sidney’s “The Character of Henry Vane Junior,” in which Vane, an executed republican, is depicted as being of “unblemished life,” “solicitous for the public good,” and “versed and skilled in

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<sup>11</sup> F29 (1701), 117–18. Pudder: a confused mixture of thoughts.

<sup>12</sup> Appended to Diogenes Laertius et al., *The Lives of the Ancient Philosophers* (London, 1702), 535–64; (for “above threescore” see 535). For context see Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings Associated with George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*, eds. Robert D. Hume and Harold Love, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2:143–59.

<sup>14</sup> Allan Pritchard, “A Defence of his Private Life by the Second Duke of Buckingham,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 151–71.

<sup>15</sup> *The Collected Works of Abraham Cowley*, eds. Thomas O. Calhoun, Laurence Heyworth, and Allan Pritchard, 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), passim; Alan Pritchard, “Six Letters by Cowley,” *Review of English Studies* 18, no. 71 (August 1967): 253–63, <https://www.doi.org/10.1093/res/XVIII.71.253>.

<sup>16</sup> For whom see Giovanni Tarantino, *Martin Clifford (1624–1677)* (Florence: Olschki, 2000).

the sacred writings.”<sup>17</sup> These collections align Cowper with both the republicans of the Interregnum and the wits of the Restoration. Although the ethical tone of her reflections changed in the 1690s, in keeping with the movement for the “reformation of manners,” which prompted some embarrassment at her youthful interests, her opinions, as a Whig and latitudinarian, remained strikingly vehement.<sup>18</sup>

In recent scholarly literature, Cowper is explored, on the one hand, as an exemplar for the history of the family, gender, and the emotions;<sup>19</sup> and, on the other, as an instance of the practice of manuscript circulation of verse satire.<sup>20</sup> Her intellectual life still awaits full treatment.<sup>21</sup>

Cowper’s diary, which extends from 1701 to 1716, is vast, some 2300 pages long.<sup>22</sup> Writing it was therapeutic; she spent many hours alone in her chamber, reading and writing. It is chiefly devoted to religious meditations, scripture commentary, prayers, preparation for receiving the sacrament, and resolutions to improve her virtue and conduct. Not much of her text is diary-like, in the sense of a regular narrative of events. Although she calls it a “diary,” its form echoes her earlier practice of commonplacing: it is a miscellany in which personal reflections intermingle with extracts from her

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<sup>17</sup> F45; printed in V. A. Rowe, appendix to *Sir Henry Vane the Younger* (London: London University Press, 1970). The several recent books on Sidney that use this text leave Cowper entirely invisible.

<sup>18</sup> Arguably Kugler, in *Errant Plagiary*, exaggerates her mature “conservatism.” For context see: Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Melinda S. Zook, *Protestantism, Politics, and Women in Britain, 1660–1714* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith, eds., *Religion and Women in Britain, c.1660–1760* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014). For comparison with an earlier figure, Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, see Sara H. Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), ch. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Anne Kugler, “Constructing Wifely Identity: Prescription and Practice in the Life of Lady Sarah Cowper,” *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 3 (July 2001), 291–323, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3070726>; idem, “‘I Feel Myself Decaying Apace’: Old Age in the Diary of Lady Sarah Cowper,” in *Women and Aging in Britain since 1500*, eds. Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001), 66–88; Anne Kugler, ed., *The Diary of Sarah, Lady Cowper*, part 2 vol. 7 of *The History of Old Age in England 1600–1800*, eds. Lynn Botelho and Susannah Ottaway (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire, 1660–1702* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 8; and items cited above.

<sup>21</sup> But see Daniel Woolf, “A Late Seventeenth-Century Englishwoman and Her History Books: Sarah Cowper (1644–1720) as Reader and Commentator,” in *Books and Bookmen in Early Modern Britain*, eds. James Willoughby and Jeremy Catto (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 2018), 362–85. There is a brief discussion in Kugler, “The Angry Years: Intellectual Life, 1700–1714,” chapter 5 of *Errant Plagiary*, 103–22. See also Leonie Hannan, *Women of Letters: Gender, Writing, and the Life of the Mind in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 13, 65 and passim.

<sup>22</sup> There are extensive extracts (without the Locke material) in Kugler, ed., *The Diary of Sarah, Lady Cowper*, in *The History of Old Age in England 1600–1800*, eds. Botelho and Ottaway.



reading.<sup>23</sup> Its secular content is preoccupied with family and household, and comprises outrage about her husband, anxiety about her children, and vexation about her servants. The Stout affair cast a long shadow: just after the first entry on Locke she records a move by the family's enemies to have her son re-arrested, and she spits venom against the Tory grandee Sir Edward Seymour.<sup>24</sup> Just prior to the entries on Locke there is a philosophical reflection, conceivably shaped by reading Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, though its sentiments could readily be drawn from elsewhere. "I have reason to observe . . . how custom, prejudices, and opinions have more influence upon the mind than true reason we so much boast of . . . leaving the mastery of our soul to weak and silly passions."<sup>25</sup> Valuably, she reports her dinner conversations: the Cowpers were liberal, for Baptists and Catholics as well as Anglicans dined at her table.

There are scarcely any obituaries, apart from the barest record of deaths. There is high praise for Martin Clifford, but he had died in 1677. Given her celebration of Locke, it is worth quoting her "character" of Clifford, written just a year earlier, in 1703, for it is almost the only comparable case of extended laudatory treatment. Given Clifford's reputation for heterodoxy, her tone is vindictory.

In vain do I wish to meet with such another old fellow as Martin Clifford. In laughing at a worthless world we should agree more than ever. Upon reflection and experience I find the same notions and sentiments about humankind as appeared in him. Because he treated fools according to their folly, it got him the character of ill nature; but I never knew him other than compassionate, charitable, generous and just. Nor did I ever hear him talk profanely or obscenely at any time. He was an approver of virtue in those that had it. No contemner of religion, or such as maintain the principles of it, but would express great veneration for Bishop Wilkins, Dr Tillotson, Dr Barrow and the like. I hope his sins are forgiven, and his soul at rest.<sup>26</sup>

There is a no less earnest and partisan praise of her friend Bishop Gilbert Burnet, after his death, though this turns out to be copied from the third Earl of Shaftesbury:

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<sup>23</sup> On the distinction between formal (alphabetized) commonplace books and personal miscellanies see: Harold Love, "How Personal Is a Personal Miscellany?: Sarah Cowper, Martin Clifford, and the Buckingham Commonplace Book," in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History*, ed. Robin Alston (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 111–26. The literature on commonplacing is extensive. See Fred Schurink, "Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature, and Reading in Early Modern England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010), 453–69, <https://www.doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2010.73.3.453> and items cited there; David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For Locke's method, see Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, ed. J. R. Milton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> F30 (1704), 313; cf. 303.

<sup>25</sup> F30 (1704), 306.

<sup>26</sup> F30 (1703), 131. Quoted in Kugler, *Errant Plagiary*, 91–92 and Pritchard, "Six Letters," 256.

The late bishop of Salisbury Gilbert Burnet, who, as he has done more than any man living for the good and honour of the Church of England and the reformed religion; so he has suffered more than any man from the tongues and slander of those ungrateful churchmen; who may well call themselves by that single form of distinction, having no claim to that of Christianity or Protestant, since they have drawn off all the temper of the former, and all concern or interest with the latter.<sup>27</sup>

Otherwise, the only figure who attracts extended eulogy is King William III:

This great prince, whom God made our deliverer from popery and by consequence slavery. . . . He was the head and heart of the confederacy.<sup>28</sup> The assertor of liberties, and deliverer of nations. The support of the Empire.<sup>29</sup> The bulwark of Holland and Flanders. The preserver of Britain. The redeemer of Scotland and terror of France. His thoughts were wise and secret. His words few and faithful. His actions heroic. His government without tyranny. His justice without rigour. His religion without superstition. He was great without pride. Cautious without fear. Meritorious without thanks.<sup>30</sup>

Cowper's obituary of Locke is the longest character portrait she gives of any recently deceased person. It is reproduced below. But more may yet be said by way of context.

In the diary, political content is occasional but pronounced. Around the time of Locke's death she was vehemently hostile to the "Anti-Christian"<sup>31</sup> attempts by High Churchmen in press and pulpit, and Tories in Parliament, to stamp out "occasional conformity," the practice whereby Dissenters qualified themselves for public office by taking the Anglican sacrament the requisite once a year. Advanced Whigs had hoped, at the Revolution, that the Test Act, which imposed this sacramental requirement, would be repealed; it remained in place until the nineteenth century, although was routinely evaded. Cowper wrote, "with all my heart I wish the Act of sacramental test were repealed."<sup>32</sup> Locke's own final embroilment in public affairs concerned this matter. In November 1703 John Shute begged Locke to "reassume your pen, and vindicate the

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<sup>27</sup> F35 (1716), 338. Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, to Michael Ainsworth, 10 July 1710, published in *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University* (London, 1716), 45. Burnet died in 1715.

<sup>28</sup> I.e. the European alliance against France.

<sup>29</sup> Here meaning the Habsburg Empire, an ally in the war against Louis XIV.

<sup>30</sup> F29 (1702), 198 and 209. Cowper apparently draws on Robert Fleming, *The Blessedness of Those Who Die in the Lord: A Practical Discourse Occasioned by the Death of King William* (London, 1702).

<sup>31</sup> F30 (1703), 10.

<sup>32</sup> F29 (1702), 316.



liberty of occasional communion.”<sup>33</sup> Edmund Calamy, a leading Dissenting spokesman, recorded that Locke wrote to him, shortly before his death, approving of his *A Defence of Moderate Nonconformity* (1704).<sup>34</sup> Cowper used her obituary of Locke to allude to this controversy and attest Locke’s commitment to a non-partisan position concerning the significance of the Anglican sacrament.<sup>35</sup> In another passage she expressed her opinion eloquently. “Unity and uniformity are two things. The coat of Christ had no seam, but the Church’s vesture was of diverse colours. Men must beware that in procuring religious unity they do not dissolve and deface the laws of charity and human society.” So sharp were differences between Low and High Church that she refers to being in company with “a latitudinarian” and “another [who was] for the Church,” as if these were distinct denominations.<sup>36</sup> Yet, for all her sympathy with the Dissenters, her ecclesiastical preference, again characteristic of a latitudinarian Anglican, leaned rather towards comprehension within the national church than towards plurality of sects. While “every private Christian should be tolerated by his fellow subjects to worship God inwardly according to his conscience; so all should conspire in that exterior uniformity of worship which the laws of his country enjoin.”<sup>37</sup>

Cowper’s loathing of High Churchmen enabled an apparently incongruous combination of deep Anglican spirituality and virulent anticlericalism.<sup>38</sup> “The reading of history doth teach us that the politic government of priests is unfortunate and fatal;” priests are men “who have coloured their passions with the name of the Church.” She reproached the Duke of Newcastle, for “methinks the duke should not keep a Tory chaplain.”<sup>39</sup> At the same time, she was hostile to “infidels and sceptics,” expressed particularly in her vehemence against John Toland, plainly sharing Locke’s dismay at the damage done to “reasonable Christianity” through its appropriation by, and

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<sup>33</sup> John Shute to Locke, 30 November 1703, in *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976–89), no. 3394, 8:133–34.

<sup>34</sup> In *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 9, *Supplement*, ed. Mark Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), no. 3600A.

<sup>35</sup> Perhaps echoing Le Clerc’s remark: “He was a man of too great understanding to take the sacrament as a test of a schism or party.” *The Life and Character of Mr. John Locke* (London, 1706), 24. For the opposing position, see Mary Astell’s vehement attacks on Dissent in general and occasional conformity in particular, in *Moderation Truly Stated* (London, 1704) and *A Fair Way with the Dissenters* (London, 1704).

<sup>36</sup> F30 (1703), 150 and 152.

<sup>37</sup> F35 (1714), 134.

<sup>38</sup> On this theme, see Mark Goldie, “John Locke, the Early Lockeans, and Priestcraft,” in “Priestcraft: Early Modern Variations on the Theme of Sacerdotal Imposture. A Special Issue in Honor of Professor Justin Champion,” eds. James A. T. Lancaster and Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, *Intellectual History Review* 28, no. 1 (January 2018): 125–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080.17496977.2018.1402444>.

<sup>39</sup> F31 (1705), 125 and 153.

association with, Toland's *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (1696). In 1701 she heard Toland in person "vent such incredible stuff that he seems to outlie the devil," so that she felt like giving him "a box in the ear."<sup>40</sup> Like other Whig anticlericals, she saw religious scepticism as an unfortunate reaction against the nonsense and imperiousness of priests.<sup>41</sup> Speaking of clergy of the ilk of the ferocious High Church preacher Henry Sacheverell she remarked, "We may justly fear 'tis such priests occasion so many freethinkers."<sup>42</sup>

Placed in context, Cowper's selection of passages about Locke shows her to be an early instance of that strand of interpretation of Locke that insisted on his latitudinarian Anglicanism. For her, Locke was of course no High Churchman, but equally neither was he a sceptic nor freethinker, and likewise no Dissenter, albeit a friend to the latter's case for toleration. Her selection from Le Clerc's *Life* of the incident in which the dying Locke received the sacrament at home not only chimes with her own devotion to the eucharist, which she solemnly received once a month, but also with her commitment to outward and established forms of worship, as against those "moralists" who thought that merely virtuous living was sufficient. "Let them consider that to pretend to any morality without religion, or to religion without morality, is equal folly."<sup>43</sup>

While Cowper does not specify that she read Locke's books, and her library list, dated 1701, does not include any books by him,<sup>44</sup> she frequently made remarks that echo Locke's sentiments, and her obituary of him suggests familiarity with the *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. When she "fell into discourse with a woman of Socinian principles," she was sure that both of them "talked but ignorantly of such sublime matters," implying that nothing certain could be known either way. What she disliked about her interlocutor was not so much her opinions as her dogmatism, her haughty disapproval of Cowper's "not complying with her notions."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> F29 (1701), 152–53; cf. F29 (1700), 14. Quoted at length in Kugler, *Errant Plagiary*, 117. Cowper's attack has not been noticed by Toland scholars.

<sup>41</sup> This was the theme of William Stephens, *An Account of the Growth of Deism* (London, 1696).

<sup>42</sup> F33 (1710), 122.

<sup>43</sup> F29 (1701), 91–92. And yet she trimmed, for, like Locke, she preferred "moralism" to "enthusiasm." "Modern enthusiasts profess to give account of the inward motions and impulse of the Holy Spirit, yet God hath revealed no other way for us to know but by the effects of it in our life and conversation." F30 (1703), 37 The "modern enthusiasts" probably refers to such contemporary French mystics as Madame de Guyon: see n.95 below.

<sup>44</sup> However, these are her books "at London," not at Hertford. The works included that are most proximate to Locke are William Popple, *A Rational Catechism* (London, 1687) and Edward Synge, *A Gentleman's Religion* (London, 1693). The latter was sometimes attributed to Locke (William Molyneux to Locke, 24 December 1695, in *Correspondence*, no. 1984, 5:491–96). Popple's *A Discourse of Humane Reason* (London, 1690) was an English translation of the introduction to the French edition of Clifford's *Traité de la raison humaine* (1675).

<sup>45</sup> F29 (1701), 86.

Like most contemporary religious diarists, Cowper meditated upon sermons. The *Book of Common Prayer* specified commemorative sermons on days of historic national significance. January 30 had become the Tory day, commemorating the regicide of “Charles King and Martyr;” November 5 was the Whigs’ day, marking deliverances from popery, originally the Gunpowder Plot, but now from James II, for William of Orange had landed on 5 November 1688. A few days before writing her Locke obituary, Cowper dwelt on deliverance from the “Powder Plot” and “no less reason have we to give thanks for the coming in of the Prince of Orange to deliver us from popish slavery.”<sup>46</sup> By contrast, she disliked 30 January preaching. Indeed, she frankly says that under Charles I “the oppression of the subjects was very great and provoking” so that “at the beginning [of the Civil War] no doubt I should have been a Parliamentarian.” She complains that casuistical Tory clergy squirm in their pulpits as they try to reconcile themselves to the Revolution. Her own “Revolution principles” were downright: she thought that “the history of our kings from William the Conqueror, to James the Second, gives no account of any that deserves the title of *jus divinum* or of blessed memory.” Indeed, “when it once comes to the deposing of kings, whether by imprisonment, banishment, or death, methinks the difference is not much.”<sup>47</sup> Cowper’s Whig credentials are also attested by her friendship with Lady Rachel Russell, widow of the Whig “martyr,” Lord William Russell, executed for treason in 1683, the anniversary of which tragedy she recorded in her diary as late as 1705.<sup>48</sup>

One of Cowper’s passages on Locke occurs among a miscellany of entries gathered together at the end of the volume containing the diaries for 1703–4.<sup>49</sup> The medley is worth a moment’s attention, to illustrate the context of her longest extract on Locke. There are ballads, “A Song to the Tune of Lilly Bolero” and “The French King’s Cordial.” The latter has Louis XIV reflecting that, though he has been defeated at the Battle of Blenheim, he can still rely on his Tory friends in England.<sup>50</sup> There is a hostile commentary on the Parliamentary “Tackers,” the Tories who attempted to tack to a money bill a clause banning occasional conformity.<sup>51</sup> There is a defence of maternal authority: “the scripture makes no manner of difference betwixt the obedience, fear, or

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<sup>46</sup> F30 (1704), 306.

<sup>47</sup> F31 (1705), 20; F35 (1714), 180; F29 (1702), 185. Cf. F30 (1703), 13 and (1704), 170.

<sup>48</sup> F31 (1705), 102–3. See Lois G. Schwoerer, *Lady Rachel Russell, 1637–1723* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> F30 (1704), 339–70, after “end of this year 1704.”

<sup>50</sup> The text is in Frank H. Ellis ed., *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714*, gen. ed. George de Forest Lord, vol. 7, 1704–1714 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 43–52.

<sup>51</sup> The attempted Tack occurred in November 1704.

honour due to parents, the mother is still included, still expressed with the father, Honour thy Father and Mother.”<sup>52</sup>

And there is a reflection on diary writing, which begins: “The writers of diaries record the most memorable things that befall them; the temper and acts and exercises of their own minds in relation to such occurrences, and the assistances and withdrawals of the Holy Spirit upon such occasions.” The note goes on to single out King David’s practice of recording “the more remarkable passages of his life both dark and bright and his behaviour under them, his own weakness, and the assistance he had from God.” This aspiration for her diary casts her encomium of Locke as intended to be an occasion for spiritual improvement, Locke an exemplar of a devout life.<sup>53</sup> In selecting passages from the first published *Life of Locke*, Le Clerc’s, she shows little interest in the narrative of his career, but reduces the material to a “Character,” which is the word written in the margin of her fourth extract. Locke has become, immediately upon death, if not quite a saint, a model spiritual virtuoso.<sup>54</sup> The Locke she selects is also the author of meditations upon scripture, to which he devoted his final years, yielding his posthumously published *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*. As with the Locke whom she recounts receiving the sacrament, she extracts passages which enable her to invoke his authority to vindicate her own religious practices. Finally, her Locke is also morally hortatory. She selects a passage which attests to Locke’s propensity to anger but his ability to school his emotion: a clear echo of her own struggle with that passion. In her third passage she inscribes two manicules in the margin, drawing attention to the passage on anger, especially in handling servants, and to another passage on the duty to write honest character references.

That Cowper copied her material without citation of her sources would not have troubled her. As Harold Love remarks, she would have been “astonished to have been told that this constituted plagiarism,” for “her view, like that of most other compilers of personal miscellanies, . . . was that such texts were a universal resource, like air and water.”<sup>55</sup> There is, moreover, a powerful drift currently in literary studies towards accenting readers’ agency in the purposeful appropriation and selection of texts.

There are questions concerning Cowper’s access to her material. Very likely she was personally acquainted with Locke, although there is no surviving evidence of encounters and she does not appear in Locke’s extant correspondence. Yet Sir William had been a close aide to the first Earl of Shaftesbury. He stood bail for the earl in 1681, when accused of treason and was one of four trustees for his estates. Locke was intimate with

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<sup>52</sup> F30, 339–40. Compare Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. with amendments (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), I.60–62, 201–4 and II.52–53, 321–22.

<sup>53</sup> F30, 372.

<sup>54</sup> See Victor Nuovo, “A Portrait of John Locke as a Christian Virtuoso,” in *Christianity, Antiquity, and Enlightenment* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 1–19.

<sup>55</sup> Love, “How Personal Is a Personal Miscellany,” 125. The title of Kugler’s book, *Errant Plagiary*, albeit drawn from Cowper herself, is somewhat misleading.

the other three trustees, Edward Clarke, John Hoskins, and Thomas Stringer, and his correspondence shows he met with Sir William and advised concerning the trust.<sup>56</sup> After Shaftesbury's death, the Cowpers remained close to the dowager countess, Margaret, with whom Locke corresponded, Sarah sometimes staying with her; and in 1703 Sarah was still close to the family, for she protested that the philosopher third earl, "whom I thought of consummate rare qualities," was badly treating his sister, which "grieves me."<sup>57</sup> Sarah's familiarity with another of Locke's close associates, John Freke, is evident from her wry portrait of him: "Mr. Morose, a cynical fellow who every day goes his rounds to some set place" and spends much time "in company of ladies" and "smoking tobacco."<sup>58</sup> There is a further connection: both Locke and Sarah Cowper were close to Jane Stringer, wife of Shaftesbury's steward Thomas Stringer.<sup>59</sup>

The second and fourth passages in Cowper's four part "Character" of Locke come from a printed copy of Le Clerc's *Life and Character of Mr. John Locke*, which appeared at the end of July 1705.<sup>60</sup> But the provenances of the other two are more striking. Her first extract is taken from a "Character" of Locke most likely written by Richard Laughton, a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. It appeared in print in January 1705, yet, on 14 November 1704, barely two weeks after Locke's death, Cowper was able to copy it into her diary. Evidently, the piece was available in manuscript circulation. That it was a freestanding text is suggested by the manner of its printed appearance, where it is tacked on as a "Character" after a factual biographical narrative.<sup>61</sup> We know that Lady

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Stringer to Locke, 12 February 1683, in *Correspondence*, no. 754, 2:577–78 and Locke to Edward Clarke, 2 March 1683, in *Correspondence*, no. 759, 2:584–85; cf. Thomas Stringer to Locke, 10 February 1676, in *Correspondence*, no. 308, 1:435–37.

<sup>57</sup> F30 (1703), 68. Shaftesbury was negotiating a marriage for his sister Frances. With thanks for this point to Christine Jackson-Holzberg, co-editor of Shaftesbury's correspondence.

<sup>58</sup> F32 (1707), 115; quoted in Mark Knights, "John Locke and Post-Revolutionary Politics," *Past and Present* 213 (November 2011): 49, <https://www.doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtr004>.

<sup>59</sup> There are letters from Cowper to Stringer: Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, HRO 9M73/672/4-5.

<sup>60</sup> "1706" on the title page, but advertised in the *Post Man*, 28–31 July 1705, as "this day published" and listed in Michaelmas Term in *The Term Catalogues*, ed. Edward Arber, 3 vols. (London: privately printed, 1903–6), 3:481. Cowper copied almost verbatim: she cannot have been using either the French original (called an *Eloge*) published in April 1705 or Damaris Cudworth's manuscript memoir upon which Le Clerc largely relies, but which was filtered through the French version. One of her two passages from Le Clerc is dated 3 October 1705; the other is copied into the end papers of the volume for 1704. For the date of publication of the *Eloge* see Le Clerc to J. A. Turretini, 2 April 1705, in Le Clerc, *Epistolario*, eds. Maria Grazia Sina and Mario Sina, 4 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1987–97), 2:545.

<sup>61</sup> Printed in "Addenda" to the "Continuation" of Jeremy Collier's *A Supplement to the Great Historical, Geographical, Genealogical and Poetical Dictionary* (London, 1705), sig. K2r. For the date of publication: *London Gazette*, no. 4089 (15–18 January 1705): "ready for delivery to subscribers on Thursday the 25th this instant January." Also advertised in the *Term Catalogues*, 3:441 (Hilary Term, February). The "Character" is said to be by "a gentleman who knew him very well;" he is named as

Damaris Masham wrote to Laughton on 8 November 1704 with an account of Locke's death: it seems that Laughton then quickly compiled and circulated his "Character," a melange of his own and Lady Masham's recollections.<sup>62</sup> It may be that Lady Masham herself sent Laughton's "Character" of Locke to Sarah, for there was a kin connection and Sarah evidently received other Masham news: on 5 October she recorded, "I am told [of] Coz Francis Masham being at the taking of Gibraltar."<sup>63</sup>

Cowper's third extract is taken from the closing lines of Locke's final letter to Anthony Collins, written on 23 August 1704, in which Locke pronounces this life to be "a scene of vanity" and commends to him "the hopes of another life" after death.<sup>64</sup> This passage did not appear in print until 1713,<sup>65</sup> so is another instance of manuscript circulation, here of an epistolary fragment just a few lines long. (She confirms that what she "met with" was a "fragment of a letter.") Exactly the same fragment was available in December 1704 to the third Earl of Shaftesbury.<sup>66</sup> Whereas it prompted him to write a letter disparaging Locke's philosophical sentiments, Cowper's response is to say that the passage vindicated Locke from charges that he was "either atheist, or infidel."<sup>67</sup>

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Laughton in the third edition of Le Clerc's *Life* (London, 1714), 28. There is a different, contemporary attribution, to James Tyrrell, by the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne: *Remarks and Collections*, eds. C. E. Doble et al., 11 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1885–1921), 1:19. Later, George Ballard attributed it to Damaris Masham: *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (Oxford, 1752), 379–88. The printed memoir in Collier's *Supplement* erroneously gives Locke's date of death as 28 November; that Cowper had the correct date further shows that she was not reliant on the printed edition.

<sup>62</sup> Masham to Laughton, 8 November 1704. Only an excerpt survives, in a later printed source: *The General Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Alexander Chalmers, 32 vols. (London: Nichols, 1812–17), 30:369. Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 9, no. 3651.

<sup>63</sup> F30 (1704), 291. This, however, is a slip: it was Samuel Masham and Winwood Masham who were involved in England's capture of Gibraltar.

<sup>64</sup> 23 August 1704, but delivered after Locke's death: Locke to Anthony Collins, 23 August 1704, in *Correspondence*, no. 3648, 8:417–19.

<sup>65</sup> William Whiston, *Reflexions on an Anonymous Pamphlet, Entitled, A Discourse of Freethinking* (London, 1713), 55 ("which I have leave to publish on this occasion"). The letter was promptly republished in the third edition of Le Clerc's *Life*, 28, and again in *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr. John Locke*, ed. Pierre Desmaizeaux (London, 1720), 328–29.

<sup>66</sup> The National Archives, Kew, Shaftesbury Papers, PRO 30/24/47/25.

<sup>67</sup> The same use of the passage was made in the third edition of Le Clerc's *Life*: "in vindication of his memory" against those who say Locke was a deist and freethinker. Shaftesbury, by contrast, attacked from a different direction. Although, he says, the remark to Collins "savours of the good Christian," it is not really so, for to do good because you are "frighted or bribed" into it, by hopes and fears of the afterlife, is to demean both humanity and the deity. We should act "disinterestedly, generously and freely," not from a calculus of future rewards and punishments. The only motive for goodness is doing it "for its own sake," so that "I ask no reward from heaven." Shaftesbury 'to a friend', 2 December 1704: Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 9, no. 3653.



Although she did not elaborate, she was plainly aware of the barrage of, mainly clerical, attacks on Locke, during his final years, for holding doctrines which, they believed, tended toward irreligion. Once again, Cowper sought to craft Locke as a Christian virtuoso. The contrasting reactions of Cowper and Shaftesbury to Locke's last letter to Collins proved a dress rehearsal for later reactions throughout the century. When William Whiston published the fragment in 1713 he used it to reproach the deistic Collins with evidence of Locke's belief in revealed religion. William Warburton, in his *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1738), one of the monuments of eighteenth-century philosophical theology, used the letter against both Collins and Shaftesbury, a letter which is "one of the most precious remains of the true piety of this incomparable man." But against this, Conyers Middleton retorted, echoing Shaftesbury's dismay, that Locke, in parting this life, "has nothing to preach [about earthly life] but its vanity."<sup>68</sup>

We may finally note that Cowper continued to look out for Lockean material and to evince her loyalty to the Shaftesbury family. In October 1706 she copied out a paragraph from Locke's "Memoirs relating to the Life of *Anthony* first Earl of *Shaftesbury*," which had recently appeared in the *Posthumous Works of Mr. John Locke*. Again, she does not cite the source: one needs to be able to recognize Locke's lines to spot it. And, just as in her excerpting from Le Clerc, she discards the biographical narrative and singles out a "character," this time attesting to the earl's extraordinary capacity to size up a person at first encounter: "no one did penetrate so quick into men's breasts and from a small opening survey that dark cabinet as he would. He understood men's true errand as soon as they had opened their mouths."<sup>69</sup>

Sarah Cowper belonged to the Republic of Commonplacers. It would not be correct to say she belonged to the Republic of Letters, for she appears not to have engaged in scholarly epistolary exchanges with other women or men.<sup>70</sup> Commonplacing was a more reserved and discrete activity. Yet both republics had things in common: they exemplify the extent to which intellectual life in the seventeenth century was still conducted in manuscript form and not only in the world of print; and they both reveal the extent to which the political, religious, and cultural beliefs and sentiments of their members were animated and facilitated by the circulation, excerption, editing, appropriation, and repurposing of texts that passed across their desks.

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<sup>68</sup> Whiston, *Reflexions*, 55; William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses* (London, 1738), Dedication, xxiii-iv; Conyers Middleton to William Warburton, 8 February 1738, in *The Posthumous Works of the Learned Conyers Middleton* (London, 1753), 487.

<sup>69</sup> F31 (1706), 299; Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, 346. The *Posthumous Works* was published in June.

<sup>70</sup> See Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

## Appendix

Cowper's four meditations on Locke follow.<sup>71</sup>

### The Character of John Locke

[1]

<sup>72</sup>October 28th the Famous Mr. John Lock departed this Life. <sup>73</sup>His Name will last as long as our present Language is understood, or English-men have a relish for good sense. His literature was Universal, his Notions usefull and his Observation Critical and Just. He knew how to write Controversie and differ in Conversation with equal strength and manners. He was as much a Master of them as if he had alwaies been innur'd<sup>74</sup> amongst Books, and yet had so Decent and winning a Behavior that no Courts cou'd have added to the Complaisance<sup>75</sup> of his Temper. How much he cou'd improve our Understandings may be found by those who read what he writt with that intent.<sup>76</sup> Indeed upon whatever Occasion he employ'd his pen he wrote in a Masterly strain, shewd Compass<sup>77</sup> of Thought and the utmost penetration besides a perspecuity scarce to be mett with. He had himself a larg mind and yet was the farthest man alive from ridiculing Men of a lower form,<sup>78</sup> from being assuming and magisterial<sup>79</sup> in his Discourse. And in short he was as well a good Natured and well-bred Gentleman as a Finish'd Scholler and profound philosopher. <sup>80</sup>By his own great insight into Nature and a Constant Temperance he preserv'd a very weak Constitution to an Age very few attain

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<sup>71</sup> The total length of the four passages is 1500 words. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of the originals is retained, but superscripts have been lowered and thorns expanded. Matter in square brackets are my own insertions.

<sup>72</sup> This first passage is in the second volume of the diary: F30, 310–11. In the margin: "Novemb: 14 [1704] | See page 347 | Mr. Lock."

<sup>73</sup> The remainder of this paragraph is a transcription of most of Richard Laughton's "Character" of Locke. See n.61 above.

<sup>74</sup> Inured: accustomed, habituated. The published version of Laughton's "Character" has "immured." Both are plausible.

<sup>75</sup> Complaisance: agreeableness, obligingness.

<sup>76</sup> Cowper here omits two sentences which noted Locke's writings on toleration, coinage, and trade.

<sup>77</sup> Compass: intellectual range.

<sup>78</sup> Form: degree or grade of rank.

<sup>79</sup> Magisterial: arrogant, dictatorial.

<sup>80</sup> Cowper here omits half a sentence.

to, and att last was brought to his End by a meer gradual Decay, which made him for some time, without Consternation expect his Chang.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>82</sup>So hath the great Architect fram'd us that there is in us such an Inclination to imitate the Actions of them whose Characters please us, that the patterns of such are sensibly<sup>83</sup> more prevalent with us than an Abstract of Sentences drawn up with the greatest Care.

[2]

<sup>84</sup>It is said in the Life<sup>85</sup> of the Famous Mr. John Lock. That some years before his Death, He applyed himself entirely to the Study of the Holy Scripture and found so much pleasure therein that he was very much troubled he had apply'd his Mind to that study no sooner. The world has seen the fruits of these studys in his Reasonableness of Christianity<sup>86</sup> which is one of the best peices that has been published these many years on that subject and with that Design.<sup>87</sup> This study of the Holy Scriptures wrought in him a lively and sincere though unaffected piety. Having not been able to go to Church for a Considerable time he thought convenient some months before he dyed to receive the Blessed Sacrament at home according to a usual practice of the Church of England and two of his friends communicated<sup>88</sup> with him. When the Minister<sup>89</sup> had perform'd his Office, Mr. Lock told him, That he was in perfect Charity with all Men, and in a sincere Communion with the Church of Christ by what names soever it might be distinguish'd. He was a Man of too great Understanding to take the Sacrament as a Test of a Schism or party as a great many ignorant persons do, who by communicateing with their own

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<sup>81</sup> Change: death (change from one state of being to another).

<sup>82</sup> In the margin this paragraph is separated from the preceding by a dash, by which Cowper separated her entries. However, this meditation was almost certainly prompted by her entry on Locke, and it completes her writing for the day. (She uses dashes in her fourth passage, below, to separate paragraphs *within* the entry on Locke.)

<sup>83</sup> Sensibly: of the senses.

<sup>84</sup> The second passage is in F30, 347–49, at the end of the volume for 1703–4. In the margin: “Mr. Lock | See page 310.” The passage is undated, but apparently inserted in October 1705, since the same source was used on that date in the fourth passage, below.

<sup>85</sup> Le Clerc, *Life and Character of Mr. John Locke*. See n.60 above.

<sup>86</sup> Cowper evinces no surprise that Locke was the author of this anonymous work.

<sup>87</sup> Cowper omits some lines concerning Locke's *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*, and some anecdotes, but returns to the latter in her fourth passage.

<sup>88</sup> Communicated: took the sacrament of the eucharist.

<sup>89</sup> Samuel Lowe, vicar of High Laver, Essex.

Church condemn all other Christian Societies.<sup>90</sup> He had a deepe sense of the Divine Wisdome that discovers<sup>91</sup> itself in those methods God has taken in saving men; and when he discours'd about it, he cou'd not forbear joining with the Apostle in the Exclamation, Oh the depths of the Riches and Wisdom of God.<sup>92</sup> And he was perswaded that all persons would be of the same mind who should read the Scriptures without prejudice, and this study he very frequently recommended to those with whom he convers'd toward the latter end of his Life. This Application to these Holy Writeings had given him a more noble and compleat Idea of the Christian religion than he had before; and if he had enjoy'd strength enough to have begun any new works, 'tis very likely he wou'd have compos'd some on purpose to have imprest this Great and Sublime Idea on the Minds of others in all its extent. <sup>93</sup>Thus [died]<sup>94</sup> one of the greatest philosophers of our Age, who after he had made himself a perfect Master of almost all the parts of philosophy; and discover'd its greatest secrets with uncommon strength of reason and correctness of thought happily turned his studies to the Christian Religion, which he examin'd in its Original with the same Liberty he had used in his study of other sciences; and which he judg'd so reasonable and excellent an institution that he dedicated the remainder of his Life to the contemplation of it, and endeavor'd to raise in the minds of others the same high veneration he had for it himself. And as he did not choose a religious course of life in a fitt of discontent or ill-humor, so his piety was neither tainted with mellencholy nor superstition<sup>95</sup> The same light that guided him in his philosophical studies directed him in explaining the New Testament, and kindled in his soul a rational piety; such as was worthy of Him who gave us our reason for no other end but that by it we might be helpt to make a good use of revelation, and who by revealing His will, supposes we will imploy the judgment and understanding He has given us, in acknowledging, admiring, and following it.

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<sup>90</sup> An allusion to the Occasional Conformity controversy, at a high pitch at the time of Locke's death.

<sup>91</sup> Discovers: reveals, discloses.

<sup>92</sup> Rom. 11:33.

<sup>93</sup> Cowper omits a narrative of Locke's last days but returns to it in her fourth passage.

<sup>94</sup> Word accidentally omitted by Cowper.

<sup>95</sup> The more usual twinning was "enthusiasm" and "superstition," but the former was readily regarded as a symptom of "melancholy." Cowper penned a Lockean sentiment when given two books written by the French mystic Madame de Guyon: "I relish neither; for, unless my understanding be enlightened, my affections are not apt to be moved. It seems to me like whipt sillibub the froth of which leaves no taste. I like those writings best that instruct and help me in the conduct of my life." F30 (1704), 168.

## [3]

<sup>96</sup>I mett with this Fragment of a Letter writt by the justly fam'd Mr. John Lock to his Friend, not to be Deliver'd till after his Death.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>98</sup>I know you lov'd mee living, and will preserve my Memory now I am Dead. May you live long and Happy in the Enjoyment of Health, Freedom, Content, and all those Blessings which Providence has bestow'd on you, and your Vertue Entitles you to. All the use to be made of it is, that this Life is a Scene of Vanity that soon passes away, and affords no solid sattisfaction but in the Consciousness of doing well and in the Hopes of another Life. This is what I can say upon Experience, and what you will find when you come to make up your<sup>99</sup> Account.

Methinks the man who writes thus ought not to be term'd either Atheist, or Infidel; as some take Liberty to do.<sup>100</sup>

## [4]

<sup>101</sup>I collected part of the Character given the much Celebrated Mr. Lock. <sup>102</sup>If he was subject to any passion it was Anger but he had made himself so much Master of it by Reason that it was very rarely troublesome to him or others. No person cou'd better expose that passion or make it appear more ridiculous than he. He wou'd say it was of

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<sup>96</sup> The third passage is in the third volume of the diary: F31 (1705), 63. In the margin: "26 [April 1705] | Letter of Mr. Lock."

<sup>97</sup> The following passage is from the close of Locke's last letter to Anthony Collins, written on 23 August 1704, with instructions for it to be delivered after his death. Locke to Collins, 23 August 1704, in *Correspondence*, no. 3648, 8:417–19 See n.67 above for the third Earl of Shaftesbury's use of the same letter.

<sup>98</sup> The first two sentences appear in reverse order in the version in Locke, *Correspondence*, and in the copy in the British Library, Add. MS 4290, fos. 1–2, but in the same order as here in the version that appeared in Whiston's *Reflexions* and the third edition of Le Clerc's *Life*.

<sup>99</sup> Your: likewise in Whiston's version, but "the" in the *Correspondence*.

<sup>100</sup> This final sentence is Cowper's own remark. A number of Locke's critics regarded aspects of both *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* as heretical and encouragements to atheism. As noted above, Cowper had especially in mind the damage done to Locke's reputation by association with Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696).

<sup>101</sup> The fourth passage is in the third volume of the diary: F31, 137–39. In the margin: "Character," and a date against each paragraph, 3, 4, and 5 October [1705].

<sup>102</sup> The following derives from Le Clerc's *Life of Locke*. Cowper returns to the same part of the text from which she had made extracts in her second passage, now selecting more material, this time not in sequential order. I have not recorded all the omissions and switchbacks. Whereas her second passage concerned Locke's study of scripture and Christian practice, this fourth concerns his character.

no use in keeping servants in order,<sup>103</sup> but that it did indeed make a person lose his Authority.<sup>104</sup> He wou'd take the trouble to instruct them with a great deal of mildness after what manner he expected to be serv'd by them. He kept good orders and took an account of every thing. If there was any thing that he cou'd not bear 'twas ill-manners which were indeed very ungratefull<sup>105</sup> to him when he perceiv'd that they did not arise from want of Conversation and knowledge of the world but from pride, ill nature, brutality<sup>106</sup> and other vices of that kind. He look'd on civility to be not only something very agreeable and proper to win upon men, but also a Duty of Christianity and which ought to be more press'd and urg'd than it commonly is.

He spake very often against raillery<sup>107</sup> which indeed is the nicest point in Conversation and of dangerous consequence if not prudently mannag'd; and yet no person rally'd<sup>108</sup> with a better grace than he, but he alwaies took care to say nothing offensive or prejudicial to any person. He knew how to give pleasant and agreeable turns to every thing he said. He was so extraordinary civil that when he seem'd dispos'd to jest the company was sure he was about to say something<sup>109</sup> to their Advantage. He never jested with the natural infirmities or misfortunes of any persons. He not only Faithfully kept a secret that had been trusted with him, but wou'd never report any thing that might prejudice the person from whom he heard it tho' his silence had not been desired. He was very exact to his word and religiously perform'd whatever he promis'd. He was very scrupulous of giving recommendations of persons whom he did not well know,<sup>110</sup> and wou'd by no means commend those who he thought did not deserve it.

<sup>111</sup>A few weeks before his Death he perceiv'd he shou'd not live long but yet he continu'd cheerfull and pleasant as before; and when some persons seem'd to wonder at it, he would say, While we are Alive, Let us Live. He said that his work here was almost att an end and he thank'd God for it. He exhorted Lady Masham to look on this world

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<sup>103</sup> In the margin, Cowper has written a manicule. She had constant trouble controlling her temper with her servants.

<sup>104</sup> It is a mark of Cowper's sense of guilt about her own treatment of servants that she here omits a phrase: "He was very kind to his servants."

<sup>105</sup> Ungrateful: unpleasing.

<sup>106</sup> Brutality: brutishness.

<sup>107</sup> Raillery: mockery, banter, teasing.

<sup>108</sup> Rally: to subject someone to raillery.

<sup>109</sup> Cowper accidentally repeats the phrase "to say something," which indicates that she was copying from another text.

<sup>110</sup> In the margin, a manicule. Cowper is again applying the advice to herself.

<sup>111</sup> Cowper here jumps backwards several pages in Le Clerc's *Life*.



only as a state of preparation for a better: He added that he had lived long enough and that he thank'd God [he] had enjoy'd a Happy Life; but that after all he look'd upon this life to be nothing but vanity. He desired they wou'd remember him in the evening prayers – The next day he departed October 28th 1704.<sup>112</sup>

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