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THE SANDARS LECTURES IN BIBLIOGRAPHY

THOMAS HOLLIS
OF LINCOLN'S INN

Thomas Hollis, a connoisseur and collector of art and antiquities, devoted the greater part of his substance and his energy to promoting the ideals of civil and religious liberty. He is best known to modern bibliophiles for the distinctive bindings that he commissioned for the many books he distributed in Britain, the American colonies, and all over Europe. This book contains the first comprehensive catalogue and interpretation of his emblematic binding tools and a discussion of the several binders who worked for him. It also explores other activities that are less well known: his patronage of writers, printers, publishers, and artists, and his work as a designer of books and medals. This study should encourage a re-evaluation of Hollis's influence in the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution.

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Crayon drawing of Thomas Hollis by Giovanni Battista Cipriani, 1767 (detail)

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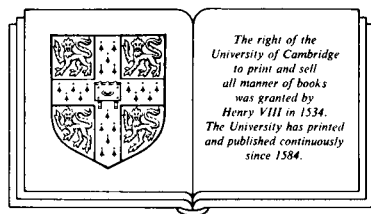
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THOMAS HOLLIS OF LINCOLN'S INN

A WHIG AND HIS BOOKS

W. H. BOND

*Librarian Emeritus
The Houghton Library
Harvard University*



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*In memory of
four men of books*

A. N. L. Munby

Howard M. Nixon

William A. Jackson

Philip Hofer

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But if there be in glory aught of good
It may by means far different be attain'd,
Without ambition, war, or violence;
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance. . .

John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, III:88–92

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Preface

Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn was regarded by most of his contemporaries as a more or less harmless eccentric, perhaps to be looked upon with some suspicion as an atheist (which he was not) and watched as a radical and potential trouble-maker. They misjudged him. He was, in fact, quietly and vigorously pursuing a course of public service, inspired, as he was in many of his actions, by the writings of his chief literary hero, John Milton. Among many Miltonian writings that shaped his life, the epigraph of this book and the forty-one lines that precede it in *Paradise Regained* are peculiarly significant. 'By deeds of peace' was one of the mottoes most frequently inscribed in the many books that he placed strategically in libraries and in the hands of his contemporaries in Europe and the New World.

In the two centuries since his death, his chief fame among librarians and collectors has arisen from the striking emblematic bindings that he commissioned for those books; still, however, considered as a curiosity. Twentieth-century scholars, led by Professor Chester Noyes Greenough and more recently by Professors Caroline Robbins and John L. Abbott, have penetrated Hollis's self-protective veil of anonymity and have gone far towards establishing him in his rightful position in intellectual and political history. The books he gave away or caused to be reprinted were not random choices, nor were the symbols adorning them; and the web of his personal contacts and correspondence is a significant manifestation of the Enlightenment and the struggle for civil and religious freedom, a struggle by no means at an end even today.

The present study, originally delivered in the spring of 1982 as a series of four lectures while I was Sanders Reader in Bibliography, attempts to carry this work of rehabilitation still further. Lectures such as these are inevitably bounded by constraints imposed by the patience and endurance of the lecturer's audience. The four chapters that follow reflect the four lectures, but each has been revised and to some degree expanded in the light of subsequent research and much correspondence with librarians, collectors, scholars, and book dealers, the extent of which will be readily apparent in my acknowledgements and footnotes.

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It is not false modesty to say that some statements uttered in the lectures were mistaken, much was left unsaid not only through lack of time but also through ignorance, and much of interest remains to be discovered about Thomas Hollis. I would be the last to claim that full justice has now been done to his memory.

We would not know so much about Hollis's character and motivation were it not for his extraordinary generosity to the Harvard College Library after its disastrous fire of 1764, and the high rate of survival of his many gifts over more than two centuries, which I judge to be close to 98 per cent. During the intervening years successive classification schemes dispersed Hollis books far and wide through a vast university library system, and despite diligent searching and the interested cooperation of many colleagues, I am certain that the two thousand or so titles that I have located by no means exhaust the inventory of his bounty, though they must represent a considerable preponderance of the total. They are surely more than sufficient to define his aims, and enough of them contain significant annotations to make his purpose and method abundantly clear. Reinforcing them at Harvard are the records and catalogues preserved in the University Archives, and two important resources acquired in modern times through the generosity of Mr Arthur A. Houghton, Jr: Hollis's unpublished holograph diary for the years 1758–70, and a large collection of drawings and proofs of engravings commissioned by Hollis from Giovanni Battista Cipriani and other artists, including Cipriani's original drawings for the emblematic tools.

Among the staff of the Harvard College Library I should single out for special thanks my friends Roger E. Stoddard, Rodney G. Dennis, Eleanor M. Garvey, Harley P. Holden, Richard J. Wolfe, Hugh Amory, James E. Walsh, Mollie Della Terza, Cynthia Naylor, Dennis Marnon, Joseph McCarthy, Peter Accardo, and the entire staff of the Houghton Reading Room, all of whom have at one time or another answered questions or ferreted out Hollis gifts that would otherwise have escaped my attention. Among other members of the Harvard community, Professors Mason Hammond and David Gordon Mitten have given indispensable assistance in dealing with Hollis's classical references and designs, as have Miss Agnes Mongan and Mrs Louise Amler, of the staff of the Fogg Art Museum, on questions concerning the fine arts. Dr Cornelius Vermeule of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was the first to suggest to me that several of Hollis's designs derive not from coins and medals but from friezes and intaglios.

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PREFACE

The collegial gift to me of virtually the whole mass of Hollis materials accumulated by Professor Emerita Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr College has been of incalculable help, and I cannot adequately express my gratitude to her. Immensely helpful, too, have been the Hollisian notes passed down by earlier Harvard scholars such as Professors Chester Noyes Greenough and Henry J. Cadbury, and my friend and former colleague, G. W. Cottrell, Jr, first editor of the *Harvard Library Bulletin*. Other debts are acknowledged in text and footnotes.

My continued study of Hollis was greatly facilitated by the grant of a fellowship in 1982–83 by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, enabling me to extend my investigations far beyond the bounds of the Harvard College Library and thus enlarge the scope of the original Sandars Lectures. I wish in particular to record my gratitude to the Foundation's late President, Dr Gordon L. Ray.

Among many persons and institutions I wish especially to thank the Massachusetts Historical Society (Mr Peter Drummey, Dr Louis L. Tucker, Mr Conrad E. Wright); the Pierpont Morgan Library (Dr Anna Lou Ashby, former Director Charles Ryskamp, and Mr William Kmet); the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale (Miss Marjorie G. Wynne); the Princeton University Library (Mr Stephen Ferguson); the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin (Dr John Chalmers); the British Library (Dr Mirjam M. Foot, who also contributed rubbings and notes on bindings in several other European libraries); the Royal Society of Arts (Mr D. G. C. Allan); Dr Williams's Library; the library of Christ's College, Cambridge (Dr and Mrs C. P. Courtney); the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Bern (Mrs Margaret Eschler); the Zentralbibliothek Zürich (Herr Ludwig Kohler); and the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen (Dr Reimer Eck). Many of these extended far more than the usual courtesies by providing facilities for work, supplying photocopies, and answering many questions. I owe particular thanks to the Cambridge University Library for appointing me to the Readership and thus motivating me to bring to a focus hitherto occasional and diffuse work on Hollis; and especially to Dr Frederick W. Ratcliffe, University Librarian, and his colleagues Dr J. C. T. Oates, Mr R. P. Carr, Dr J. T. D. Hall, and Dr David McKitterick (now Librarian of Trinity College). During our stay in Cambridge, Mrs Bond and I enjoyed the generous and warm hospitality of Mrs A. N. L. Munby, who provided us with a welcome home away from home.

The Reverend Peter B. Godfrey, Minister of the Upper Chapel in

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Sheffield, sent me invaluable information about the Hollis connection with the Chapel, the Hollis Hospital, and various other charities, and incidentally with clues I would not otherwise have discovered concerning Robert Thorner and his Trust. I am grateful to Mr Cyril Humphris of Cyril Humphris Ltd for the opportunity to study Joseph Wilton's monumental bust of Hollis, and for furnishing me with photographs and permitting me to reproduce them; likewise to Mr Patrick King of Patrick King Ltd, for a photograph and rubbings of a binding executed for Dr John Hawkesworth illustrated in his *Catalogue Thirteen*, also with permission to reproduce. I am indebted to Mr H. D. Lyon, Mr Howard S. Mott, Mr Robert H. Rubin, Mr W. R. Fletcher, Mr Arthur Freeman of Bernard Quaritch Ltd, and especially Mr George T. Goodspeed of Goodspeed's Book Shop for making available and in some cases presenting to me Hollis materials through the channels of the book trade. Indeed, the trade has always manifested a particular interest in Hollis bindings, and booksellers' catalogues contain many valuable illustrations.

Through the long years of my obsession with Thomas Hollis my family has shown exemplary patience, and for that I am profoundly grateful.