



A Letter Concerning Toleration and Other Writings (The Thomas Hollis Library)

John Locke

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A Letter Concerning Toleration and Other Writings brings together the principal writings on religious toleration and freedom of expression by one of the greatest philosophers in the Anglophone tradition: John Locke. The son of Puritans, Locke (1632–1704) became an Oxford academic, a physician, and, through the patronage of the Earl of Shaftesbury, secretary to the Council of Trade and Plantations and to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. A colleague of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton and a member of the English Royal Society, Locke lived and wrote at the dawn of the Enlightenment, a period during which traditional mores, values, and customs were being questioned.

This volume opens with Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) and also contains his earlier *Essay Concerning Toleration* (1667), extracts from the *Third Letter for Toleration* (1692), and a large body of his briefer essays and memoranda on this theme. As editor Mark Goldie writes in the introduction, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* "was one of the seventeenth century's most eloquent pleas to Christians to renounce religious persecution." Locke's contention, fleshed out in the *Essay* and in the *Third Letter*, that men should enjoy a perfect and "uncontrollable liberty" in matters of religion was shocking to many in seventeenth-century England. Still more shocking, perhaps, was its corollary, that the magistrate had no standing in matters of religion. Taken together, these works forcefully present Locke's belief in the necessary interrelation between limited government and religious freedom. At a time when the world is again having to come to terms with profound tensions among diverse religions and cultures, they are a canonical statement of the case for religious and intellectual freedom.

This Liberty Fund edition provides the first fully annotated modern edition of *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, offering the reader explanatory guidance to Locke's rich reservoir of references and allusions. The introduction, a chronology of Locke's life, and a reading guide further equip the reader with historical, theological, and philosophical contexts for understanding one of the world's major thinkers on toleration, who lived and wrote at the close of Europe's Reformation and the dawn of the Enlightenment.

This book is the first volume in Liberty Fund's Thomas Hollis Library series. As general editor David Womersley explains, Thomas Hollis (1720–1774) was a businessman and philanthropist who gathered books he thought were essential to the understanding of liberty and donated them to libraries in Europe and America in the years preceding the American Revolution.

John Locke (1632–1704) was an English philosopher and physician.

Mark Goldie is Reader in British Intellectual History, University of Cambridge and is co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* and editor of *John Locke: Two Treatises of Government* and *John Locke: Political Essays*.

David Womersley is Thomas Warton Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford. His most

recent book is *Divinity and State*.

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