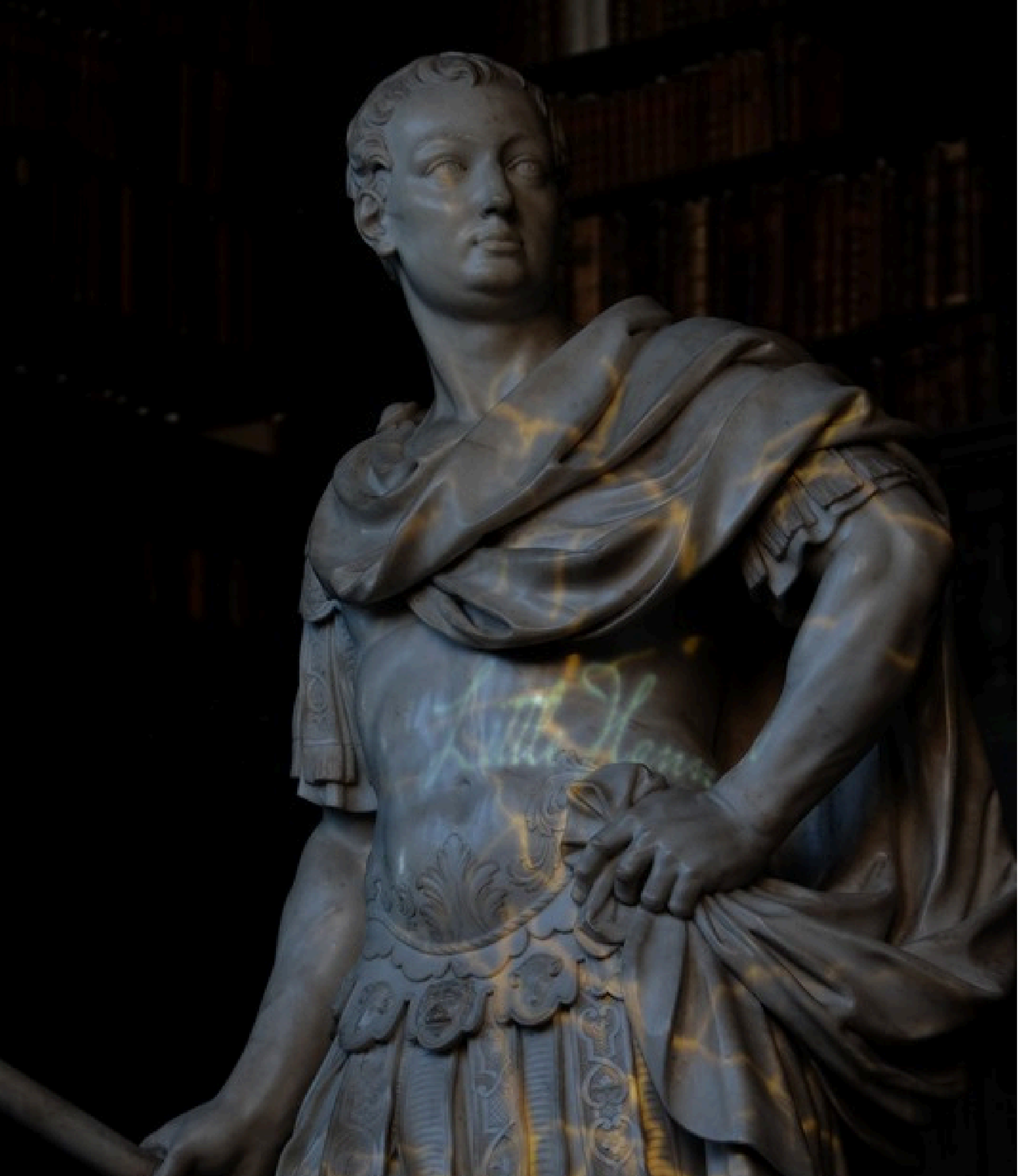


CHRISTOPHER CODRINGTON

Statue and context

text by Peregrine Horden
design by Millie Krantz



Statue and context / Slide 2 of 9

Codrington and the Library

In 1710, All Souls College received a legacy from a former fellow that allowed it to begin the building and provisioning of this library.

The fellow was Christopher Codrington (1668–1710) and his wealth derived largely from the West Indies, where he and his forebears owned plantations worked by enslaved people of African descent.

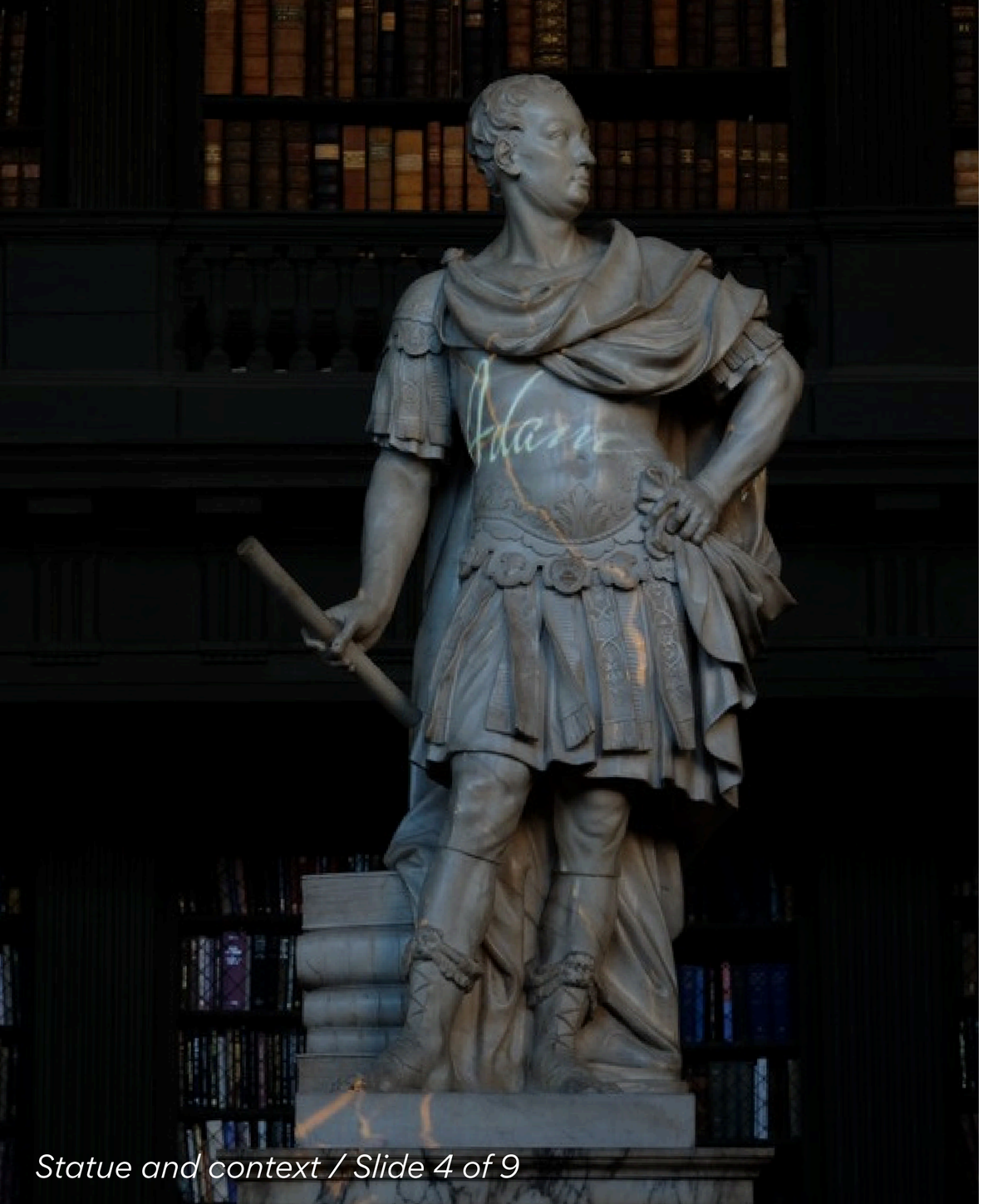
This display is one of several through which the College seeks to contextualize Codrington’s problematic legacy and his statue in the library.

Why is the statue here?

The statue of Christopher Codrington that you will see when you enter the main library was completed in 1734 by Sir Henry Cheere.

It was meant to commemorate Codrington's bequest of his large library of c.12,000 books and £10,000 (over £1 million today) — £6,000 for the building of a new library, and £4,000 for the purchase of more books.





What does the statue represent?

The statue, conceived on a grand scale, was commissioned by fellows of the College to commemorate Codrington as a benefactor in the heart of the library he had helped to create.

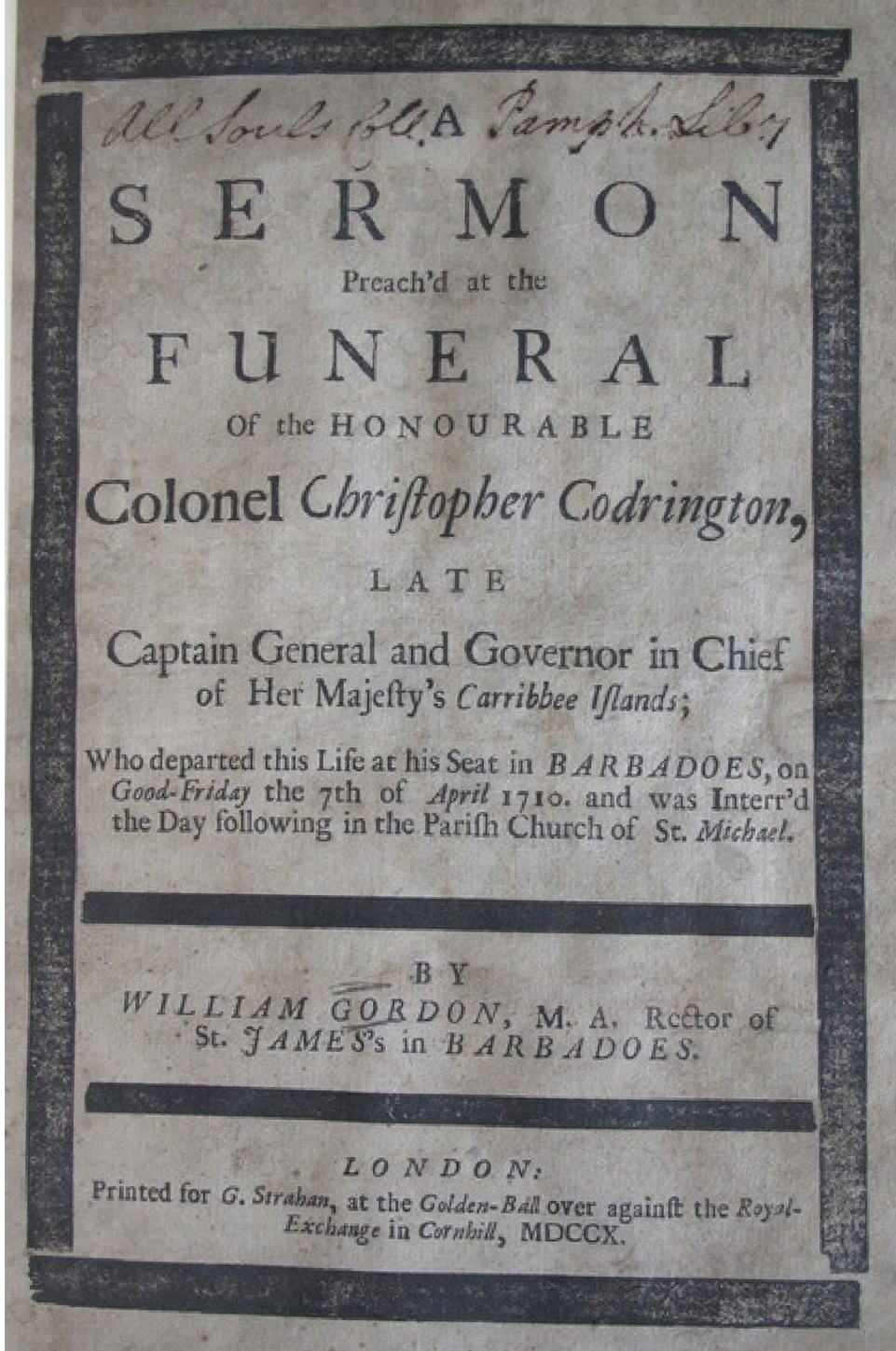
The decision to portray him as a Roman general was intended as a tribute to the military side of his career. The Latin inscription on the plinth celebrated his achievements. The fellows who composed this were evidently as untroubled as he was by the role of slavery in his life and background.

Who was Christopher Codrington?

Codrington was born in Barbados, where his family owned plantations worked by enslaved people. He was sent to England for his education. He was an undergraduate at Oxford, and became a Fellow of All Souls in 1690.

He had literary interests and was a serious book-collector. Having volunteered for military service, he served with some distinction in the army in Flanders in the mid-1690s.

In 1699 he was appointed Governor-General of the Leeward Islands and returned to the West Indies for the remainder of his life.


All Souls 8vo. A Pamph. Lib.

SERMON

Preach'd at the

FUNERAL

Of the HONOURABLE

Colonel *Chriſtopher Codrington*,

LATE

Captain General and Governor in Chief of Her Majeſty's *Carribbee Iſlands*;

Who departed this Life at his Seat in *BARBADOES*, on *Good-Friday* the 7th of *April* 1710. and was Interr'd the Day following in the Pariſh Church of St. *Michael*.

BY

WILLIAM GORDON, M. A. Rector of St. *JAMES*'s in *BARBADOES*.

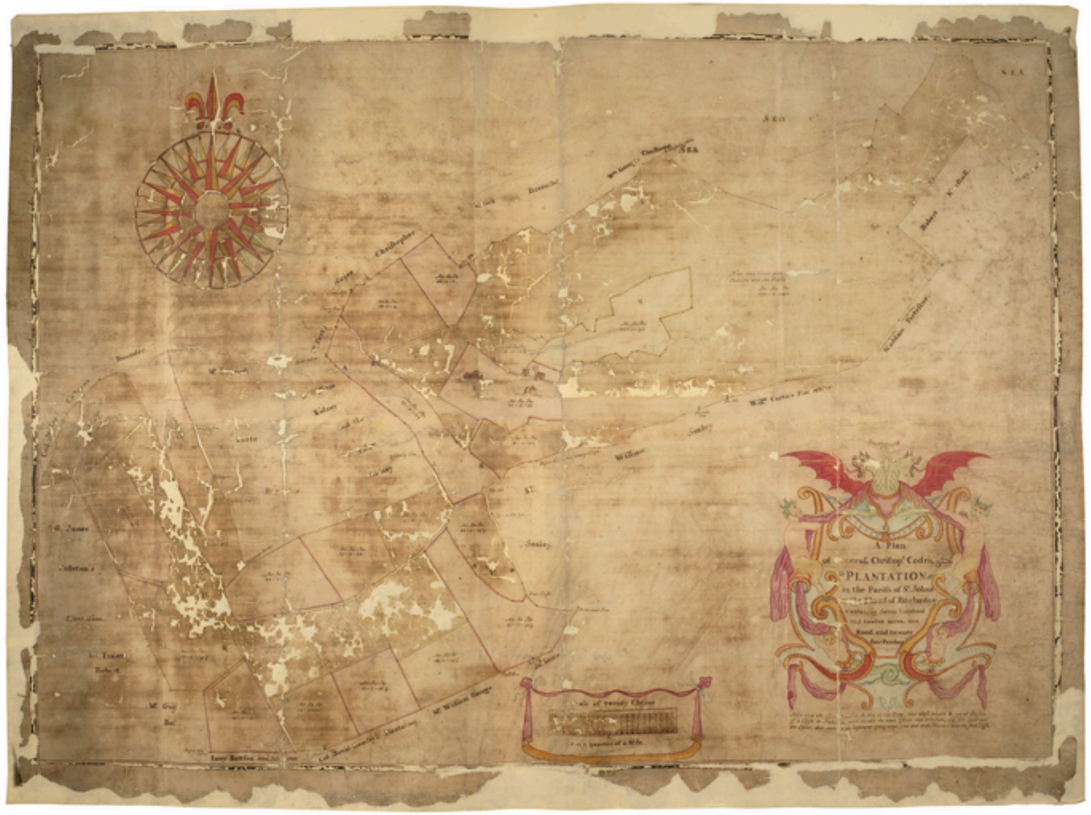
LONDON:

Printed for *G. Strahan*, at the *Golden-Ball* over againſt the *Royal-Exchange* in *Cornhill*, MDCCX.

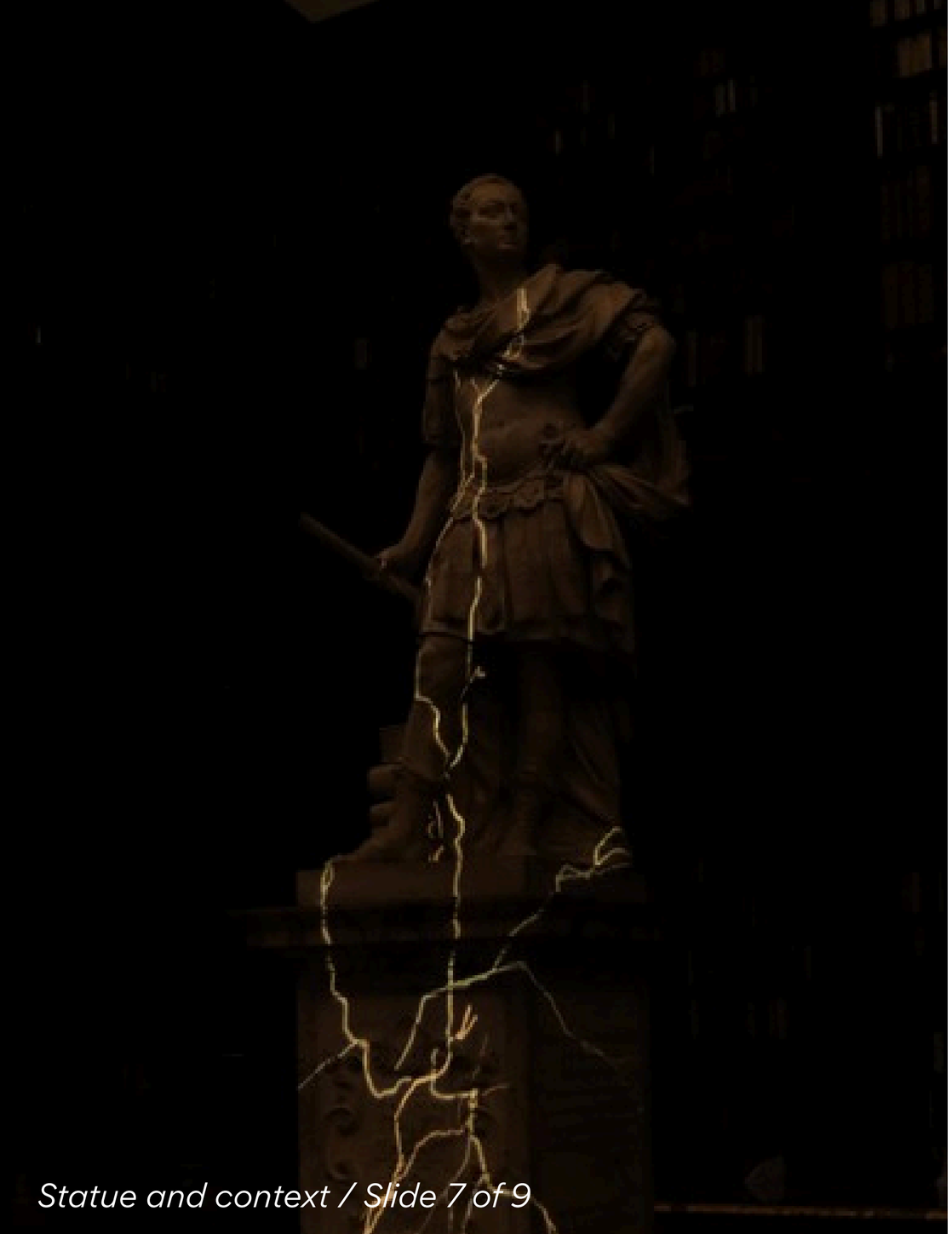
Where did the Codringtons' wealth come from?

Codrington's grandfather and father had developed sugar plantations in Antigua and Barbados, and they owned land in Barbuda that was used for stock-rearing and other forms of agriculture. All of these plantations were worked by hundreds of enslaved Africans.

The income from these forms of agriculture dependent on the labour of enslaved persons, together with the profits of office-holding, made the family very wealthy.



A contemporary map of Christopher Codrington's plantations in the Barbadian parish of St John



The College and slavery today

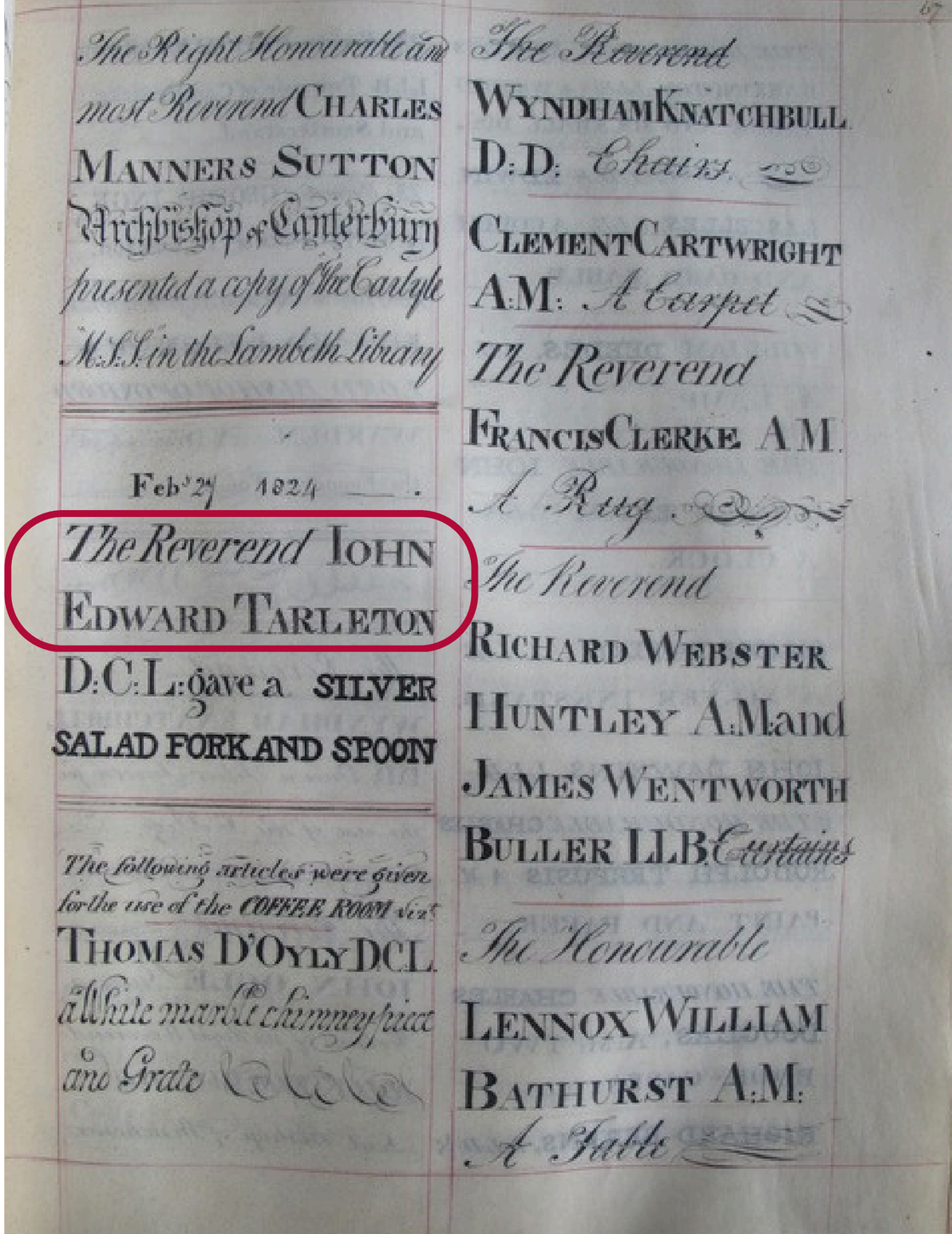
Today we cannot fail to be profoundly troubled by the role of slavery in this life story. The College abhors slavery in all its forms.

The statue remains here for two reasons:

First, because it forms an intrinsic part of this exceptionally well-preserved 18th-century interior; it is part of the history of the building and the College, and it is one of the most important works of art of which the College is custodian.

The College and slavery today

Secondly, the statue remains here because its presence creates a focus for serious reflection on the deeply problematic nature of the Codrington legacy. It also draws attention to the role of colonial power and the labour of enslaved persons in the development of British society, culture, and the economy, from the 18th century to the present day.


The Right Honourable and most Reverend CHARLES MANNERS SUTTON Archbishop of Canterbury presented a copy of the Carlyle M.S.S. in the Lambeth Library

Feb.y 27 1824

The Reverend JOHN EDWARD TARLETON D:C:L: gave a SILVER SALAD FORK AND SPOON

The following articles were given for the use of the COFFEE ROOM viz.t

THOMAS D'OYLY D.C.L. a White marble chimney piece and Grate

The Reverend WYNDHAM KNATCHBULL D:D: Chairs

CLEMENT CARTWRIGHT A.M: A Carpet

The Reverend FRANCIS CLERKE A.M. A Rug

The Reverend RICHARD WEBSTER HUNTLEY A.M and JAMES WENTWORTH BULLER LL.B Curtains

The Honourable LENNOX WILLIAM BATHURST A.M: A Table

A page from the Benefactors' Register (ASC MS 424). Re-evaluation of the Codrington legacy has also led to research on other donors with ties to slaveholding and the slave trade, such as John Edward Tarleton (highlighted).

Scan to learn more about the college's response to the legacy of slavery:

https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives/legacy

