

53 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 10 November 1789

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 105-106

PRINTED: Rutt, I, ii, pp. 40-41

ADDRESS: The Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Lindsey Essex Street Strand London

POSTMARK: Nov 12 1789

Birm Nov 10. 1789

Dear friend

I received the MS very safe the day after my last was sent off, and I thank you for your attention to it. As I shall not make any material alteration in the Defences,<sup>1</sup> and the printer I shall employ about it will not go on fast, I think to ~~go~~ put it into his hands the next week. It will then be ready about X<sup>mas</sup>. But I think I shall make some addition to the Preface, and therefore may perhaps trouble you with it again.<sup>2</sup>

I cannot say that I see ~~you~~ the force of your reasons for not sending my packet to Mr Nicholls.<sup>3</sup> However, I am not sorry that it is delayed another month, and have no objection to your striking out of my letter all that respects the serious letters and the application to Mr Wesley<sup>4</sup> //(on second thoughts I will write it over again)//. As to those people who object to my frequent publications, they are not worth considering at all. To please them I must write nothing at all, and if possible ~~to~~ //~~to~~// undo all that I have done.

I am sorry you have not time to read my History.<sup>5</sup> I have taken some pains to render the tedious reign of Constantine less heavy, by dividing it into many sections, and have made some strictures on Gibbon,<sup>6</sup> which you have not seen. We shall finish about X<sup>mas</sup>, or sooner, and therefore I have to have the Dedication returned to me as soon as may be/as I have no other perfect copy.

On the fifth of November I preached a Sermon on the Corporation and Test Acts, which I am much importuned to print.<sup>7</sup> I think I shall do it, but there is no occasion to trouble you with it before it is printed. I think to do it in a small form, to circulate in the country, and perhaps may not advertize it at all, I mean //not// in London. My text is 1 Cor. 7. 21

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<sup>1</sup> Priestley, *Defences of Unitarianism for the Years 1788 & 1789* (Birmingham, 1790).

<sup>2</sup> Excepting the first sentence, this paragraph is omitted from Rutt's edition.

<sup>3</sup> John Nichols (1745-1826), see 14 Jul 1787.

<sup>4</sup> John Wesley (1703-1791), see 9 Mar 1789.

<sup>5</sup> Priestley, *A General History of the Christian Church, to the Fall of the Western Empire*, 2 vols. (Birmingham, 1790).

<sup>6</sup> Gibbon's 'hatred of Christianity gives a tinge to his whole history', which 'like any other strong and unreasonable prejudice, has often misled him, and made him ascribe events to the most improbable causes' (*A General History of the Christian Church, to the Fall of the Western Empire*, vol. ii, 105). Priestley's 'strictures' comprise his criticism of Gibbon's insinuation that Constantine converted to Christianity either to exploit the passive and unresisting obedience of the early Christians, or as a result of the death of his son (ii, 106-111) and Gibbon's inaccuracies in his description of the flight of Archbishop Athanasius during the raid on the church of St. Theonas (ii, 147-148).

<sup>7</sup> Priestley, *The Conduct to be observed by Dissenters in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, recommended in a Sermon, preached before the Congregations of the Old and New Meetings, at Birmingham, November 5 1789*. (Birmingham, 1789).

I rejoice much in your account of D<sup>r</sup> Price's Discourse,<sup>8</sup> and shall be impatient to see it in print. Many Dissenters know nothing of their principles, and ~~have~~ are wholly destitute of zeal for them, so that I do not wonder at the censure that has fallen upon him. I myself gave more offence to many Dissenters than to the members of the church of England, by my writings on the subject formerly.

I am very glad that you have suc[c]eeded in getting me Horsley's Prospectus.<sup>9</sup> I now only want an opinion of a mathematician of the merit of his Commentary on Newton.<sup>10</sup> such as I may quote.

I have just read Gabriel's Facts.<sup>11</sup> Before I had, I could not have believed the story. He<sup>12</sup> can never hold up his head again.<sup>13</sup> But I hear to day that he is a man so low, and debauched, that he has probably but little sense of shame.

My wife is gone to Heath to stay a few weeks. I shall go over now and then. I hope she will now do very well

Yours & M<sup>rs</sup> Lindsey's most affectionately  
J Priestley

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country, delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain* (London, 1789).

<sup>9</sup> unidentified.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Horsley, *Isaaci Newtoni Opera quæ exstant Omnia*, 5 vols. (London, 1779-1785).

<sup>11</sup> R. B. [Robert Burd] Gabriel, *Facts relating to the Reverend Dr. White's Bampton Lectures* (London, 1789).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph White (bap. 1746, d. 1814), orientalist and theologian [ODNB].

<sup>13</sup> Rutt's text ends here.