

64 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 11 March 1790

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 131-132

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ADDRESS: The Rev^d Mr Lindsey Essex Street London

ENDORSEMENT: D^r P March. 11. 1790

Birm. 11 March 1790.

Dear friend

A ride I took to Heath has prevented my writing sooner, notwithstanding several very acceptable letters from you. With this you will receive a second Letter to the inhabitants of Birmingham.¹ A first² you would have before. They gain a good deal of attention, and the more I perceive by a mixture of pleasantry //which I fear you will not like//[.] My Letters to Mr Burn³ were thought too serious and angry. I was very unwilling to have any controversy with the clergy in this town; but, as they have been the aggressors, especially in their mutilated extracts from my Preface to Mr Burn,⁴ an exact copy of which you will see in Woodfall's Diary,⁵ I shall now keep the ball up, and not do it by halves. However, as I do not publish all at once, I can desist whenever I please. I have two more letters composed, and intend a third, which will probably close the whole.⁶ After this, if it be thought worth while, //I can// publish an improved edition of the whole.⁷

Please to send M^{rs} Rayner⁸ copies of them as they may serve to amuse her.

I am glad to find that the second part of your Vindiciæ⁹ is in such forwardness. I hope that by the time of my coming to London it will be finished. I have no doubt of its doing much good, like the former part.

Mr Russell¹⁰ desires me to give his best respects to you, and to request that if you can promote the interest of Mr White¹¹ (who married his sister) at the London Hospital you would be so good as to do it.

¹ Priestley, *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, in Refutation of Several Charges, advanced against the Dissenters, by the Rev. Mr. Madan, Rector of St. Philip's in his Sermon, entitled, 'The Principal Claims of the Dissenters considered.' Preached at St. Philip's Church, on Sunday, February 14, 1790. Part II* (Birmingham, 1790).

² Priestley, *Familiar letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham. Part I* (Birmingham, 1790).

³ Edward Burn (1762-1837), see 26 Feb 1790.

⁴ *The Following Extracts from a Preface to a Late Publication, entitled, "Letters to the Rev. Edward Burn, of St. Mary's chapel, Birmingham," by Dr. Priestly, are humbly submitted to your Consideration. Birmingham, February 26, 1790* (Birmingham, 1790).

⁵ *The Diary; or, Woodfall's Register*, printed daily (except Sundays) in London between 1789 and 1793.

⁶ Five parts of the *Familiar Letters* were published in 1790.

⁷ Priestley, *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, in Refutation of Several Charges, advanced against the Dissenters and Unitarians. By the Rev. Mr. Madan. Also, Letters to the Rev. Edward Burn, In Answer to his on the Infallibility of the Apostolic Testimony concerning the Person of Christ. And Considerations on the Differences of Opinion among Christians, which originally accompanied the Reply to the Rev. Mr. Venn* (Birmingham, 1790).

⁸ Elizabeth Rayner (d. 1800), see 17 May 1786.

⁹ ? Lindsey, *A Second Address to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge, relating to Jesus Christ, and the Origin of the Great Errors concerning Him* (London, 1790).

¹⁰ William Russell (1740-1818), see 5 Jul 1786.

¹¹ unidentified.

I thank you for your account of the proceedings in the House on tuesday last.¹² By all account, the arguments were in our favour, and to this every thing must eventually give way. I think Remarks on all the Speeches would be an useful publication. I may perhaps do it in my Familiar Letters, if I should continue them. Mr Pitt¹³ certainly said nothing to any purpose, and Mr Burke's¹⁴ conduct I think best accounted for by his leaning towards the Court and not to Popery. Mr Fox¹⁵ has either read very little indeed, or his compliments to Mr Burke were very extravagant. Mr Hawkes¹⁶ says that Mr Burke was little attended to.¹⁷ Next to him sat Mr Burn, who on your going out took your sea[t.]

Mr B Vaughan¹⁸ tells me of an Appeal to the people of England. This is not, surely, to come from the London Committee.¹⁹ It should be reserved for the National Meeting of all the Dissenters; but this Committee will engross every thing, and take no care of not offending the Country Dissenters.

Yours & M^{rs} Lindsey's

most affectionately

J Priestley

P.S. I left Sally²⁰ ~~and~~ remarkably well, and the elder child. The younger had a fever, which is common in that part of the country, but I hope it will do very well. They desire their best remembrances.

With this you will receive a copy of a letter which I address to the Members of the House of Commons, and the bishops to //all of// whom the Extracts were sent. I hope you will not dislike it. I made it short as I could.

¹² On Tuesday 2 March 1790 Fox's motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was defeated by 294 votes to 105.

¹³ William Pitt (1759-1806), see 14 May 1789. See *The Speech of the Right Honourable William Pitt, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, the Second of March, 1790, respecting the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (London, 1790).

¹⁴ Edmund Burke (1729/30-1797). In May 1789 the dissenters pressed their case for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, a cause that Burke had supported in the past, notably in 1773. On this occasion he absented himself, citing illness as his excuse, though in 1790 he explained that he had evaded the issue because he had been unable to make up his mind. The fact was that for several years Burke had entertained doubts about dissent as it was developing in the 1780s. One thing that rankled was its leaders' desertion of the whigs in the constitutional crisis of 1784, something which seems to have offended Burke more than Fox. But increasingly he was also disturbed by what he took to be the impious and seditious dogmas of a new strain of 'rational' or Unitarian dissent. On 3 February 1791 Burke crossed something of a Rubicon by attending a royal levee. Face to face with George III and in a subsequent correspondence with the king's son, the duke of Clarence, he received the royal thanks for supporting 'the cause of the Gentlemen' (Correspondence, 6.238-9) [Paul Langford, 'Burke, Edmund (1729/30-1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.].

¹⁵ Charles James Fox (1749-1806), see 14 May 1789.

¹⁶ William Hawkes (1731-1796), see 5 Jul 1786.

¹⁷ Rutt: very little attended to [Rutt, I, ii, 57].

¹⁸ Benjamin Vaughan (1751-1835), see 14 May 1789.

¹⁹ See 'Address to the People of England, from the Committee of Protestant Dissenters, appointed to conduct the Application to Parliament for the Repeal of the Test Laws', *Gent. Mag.*, LX (1790), 472; 566-567.

²⁰ Sarah Priestley (1763-1803), see 5 Jul 1786.