

74 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 11 June 1790

MS: Dr. Williams's Library MS. 12.12, f. 150-151

PRINTED: Rutt, I, ii, pp. 67-69

ADDRESS: The Rev^d Mr Lindsey Essex Street London

POSTMARK: Birmingham, Jun 11 1790

ENDORSEMENT: D^r P. June. 11. 1790

Birm June 11. 1790.

Dear Friend

We have had a melancholy scene here since I wrote last. Mr Robinson,¹ who preached our charity sermon on Sunday last, was found dead in his bed on Wednesday morning at Mr Russell's.² He was much enfeebled in body and mind, but had been bent on taking the journey, and exerting himself to the utmost. His disorder the physicians call angina pectoris. Two nights he was with us, and ~~he~~ on Monday evening he had a fit from which I thought he would hardly have recovered. However, he was much better the next day, when he dined with Mr Hawkes,³ and after dinner was in remarkably good spirits, and entertained us with many stories and anecdotes. He ate a hearty supper, and went to bed seemingly in good health, but it was evident that he had another fit soon after he went to bed, and that he expired in it; for he was almost cold at nine o'clock the next morning.

He was by no means fit to preach, and tho he was not //at// a loss for words, he rambled into many things quite foreign to the subject, dwelling much on unitarianism at both meetings, tho they were different sermons. He used no notes. I have composed //a sermon// on the occasion of his death, which I shall preach next Sunday.⁴ We expect letters or messages from Cambridge, but expect to bury him here.

I am very glad that you propose to omit the Creed,⁵ and to make a discourse on the occasio[n.] Your example will give a sanction to the measure every where else. Mr Robinson said he never felt so sensible a relief to his mind as when he read what I published on the miraculous conception[.] He had always doubted the story, but never ventured to mention his suspicions to any body.

He was correcting some of the last sheets of his history of Baptism,⁶ which I dare say will be a curious and valuable work.⁷

I was not much struck with the Observations on prophecy in the last N^o of the Commentaries⁸ tho I was pleased with the mention of ~~your~~ the opening of Essex Chapel, which was certainly an important event, but whether referred to in the Revelation I

¹ Robert Robinson (1735-1790), see 26 Aug 1787.

² William Russell (1740-1818), see 5 Jul 1786.

³ William Hawkes (1731-1796), see 5 Jul 1786.

⁴ Priestley, *Reflections on Death. A Sermon, on Occasion of the Death of the Rev. Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, delivered at the New Meeting in Birmingham, June 13, 1790* (Birmingham, 1790).

⁵ In Lindsey's fourth edition of the Reformed Liturgy, printed in 1793, see *Memoirs of Lindsey*, 336-337.

⁶ Robert Robinson, *The History of Baptism* (London, 1790).

⁷ This sentence is omitted from Rutt's edition.

⁸ See 'A Summary View of the Prophecies relating to Antichrist, contained in the Writings of Daniel, Paul, Peter, Jude, and John', *Commentaries and Essays published by the Society for promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures*, 2 vols. (London, [ECCO gives 1800?, although this letter suggests an earlier date of publication]), vol ii, 123-252.

doubt.⁹ I wondered much at the adopti[ng] of Mr Henley's¹⁰ account of the fallen angels,¹¹ af[ter] the much more probable one of Mr Palmer's in the Repository.¹²

By this time you will have seen my 5th Part of Familiar Letters,¹³ and have formed your opinion. It is liked by my friends here, but may not please you. I ordered you 12 copies, which you will distribute as you please. Do not forget B. Vaughan,¹⁴ //Mr Salte¹⁵// or Mr Radcliffe.¹⁶ My other friends you will naturally think of.

Yours & M^{rs} Lindsey[['s]] most affectionately

J Priestley.

P.S. When shall we see you and M^{rs} Lindsey. Many people ask me about it. You must not disappoint us. I have even told Mr Tayleur we shall spend a day with him as before. – I have had no account of D^r Franklin¹⁷ but from you.

⁹ 'The year 1774 was famous in the ecclesiastical history of our country for the opening of an *Unitarian* house of worship, in which a congregation of Christians, avowing the proper unity of God, *singing the song of Moses and the Lamb*, began, without molestation, to assemble and pay their devotions to the Almighty', *Commentaries and Essays published by the Society for promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures*, vol. ii, 170.

¹⁰ Samuel Henley (1740-1815), Church of England clergyman [ODNB].

¹¹ Samuel Henley, *A Dissertation upon the Controverted Passages in St. Peter and St. Jude concerning the Angels, that sinned, and who kept not their First Estate* (London, 1778).

¹² See *Anglo-Scotus* [Thomas Fyshe Palmer], 'An Attempt to prove the Fallen Angles to have been only the Sons of Seth', *Theol. Repos.*, V (1786), 166-184.

¹³ Priestley, *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham. Part V* (Birmingham, 1790).

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

¹⁵ Samuel Salte (d. 1817), see 18 Nov 1789.

¹⁶ Ebenezer Radcliffe (1732-1809), see 18 Nov 1789.

¹⁷ Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), natural philosopher, writer, and revolutionary politician in America [ODNB].