

78 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 6 July 1790

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 157-158

PRINTED: Rutt, I, ii, pp. 72-73

ADDRESS: The Rev^d Mr Lindsey Essex Street London

[(6 July 90)]

Dear friend

I now send the reprinted and additional leaf,¹ with which the family is satisfied. In my opinion it was better, and more for the honour of Mr Robinson,² before.³

Here I receive yours of yesterday.⁴ The virulence with which the orthodox pursue their enemies is, indeed, extraordinary. You and I have had our share, but every thing turns out favourably to truth in the end. It is much to be regretted that Mr M Gill⁵ was not more firm, especially if the general assembly would have supported him. However, if this be understood, it may serve to make others more courageous.

Mr Robinson certainly died a natural death, but not so, I believe, Mr S. Deane.⁶ Mr W^m Wilkinson⁷ says he always talked of taking laudanum in extremity, and doubts not but he did it. He had the greatest aversion to going to America with less honour than he left it; and tho he had nothing to fear, he was poor, and would have been overlooked. He had lived a very licentious life at Paris. But Mr Wilkinson says he spent almost all he was worth to purchase arms for the Americans, and was never afraid.

I am sorry to perceive the two brothers are not likely to agree, and will probably † decide their differences by law. Mr J. W⁸ talks of sending my son into France to make some inquiries concerning his brother's conduct there. These things are very unpleasant, and will probably be materially hurtful to us.⁹

¹ Of *Reflections on Death. A Sermon, on Occasion of the Death of the Rev. Robert Robinson* (Birmingham, 1790).

² Robert Robinson (1735-1790), see 11 Jun 1790.

³ This paragraph is omitted from Rutt's edition.

⁴ Rutt: I have received yours yesterday [Rutt, I, ii, 72].

⁵ Rutt: Dr. M Gill [Rutt, I, ii, 72]. William M Gill (1732-1807), Church of Scotland minister and author of *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ* (1785). Following a controversy surrounding M Gill's publication of a centenary sermon defending the benefits of the revolution of 1688, a complaint was presented to the synod of Glasgow and Ayr accusing him of heterodox doctrine. The synod required the presbytery of Ayr to take up the matter and they in turn presented a fifty-page document which claimed that M Gill's book (*A Practical Essay*) contained passages 'contrary to the word of God and the confession of faith'. The general assembly of 1789 reversed the synod's decision, but instructed the presbytery to take steps to preserve the purity of doctrine of the church and the authority of its doctrinal standards. For several months the case went back and forth between the presbytery and the synod until a settlement was reached at a meeting on 14 April 1790. Here M Gill offered an explanation and an apology for that which 'may appear improper' which the majority of the synod accepted, though Calvinist opponents of moderatism made several subsequent attempts to reignite the issue [John R. McIntosh, M Gill, William (1732-1807)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.].

⁶ Silas Deane [formerly Dean] (1737-1789), revolutionary politician and diplomat in America [ODNB].

⁷ William Wilkinson (1744-1808), see 27 Jul 1787.

⁸ John Wilkinson (1728-1808), see 17 May 1786.

⁹ The previous two paragraphs are omitted from Rutt's edition.

78 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 6 July 1790

I am sorry to hear of the death of Mr Palmer,¹⁰ and the paralytic affection of Mr Jones.¹¹ He was a valuable man, and an unitarian. I saw him first at Cambridge, when I lived in Suffolk. He must be about seventy.

I shall be happy to have Mr Belsham¹² with us at Birmingham. On monday next I meet him at Warwick. I go on Sunday, to preach a sunday school sermon.

M^{rs} P is better, tho far from being well[. We] shall be glad to see you at the time you //[[visit?] us// and then ~~we~~ can take further measure[s.]¹³

I have just received Mr Hamilton's book,¹⁴ but have barely looked into it. It is impossible that he can find any evidence for his strange assertions I hope the book will not be much noticed. But Whiston's¹⁵ oddities did no material harm[.]

Yours & M^{rs} Lindsey's
most affectionately
J Priestley

Birm July 6. 1790.

¹⁰ John Palmer (1729-1790), Presbyterian minister [ODNB].

¹¹ Richard Jones (1728?-1800), minister at Green Street, Cambridge (c. 1750-1763), Crosby Square, London (1763-1769), Hanover Chapel, Peckham, Surrey (1770-1800) [CSICM 1363].

¹² Thomas Belsham (1750-1829), see 3 Apr 1789.

¹³ This paragraph is omitted from Rutt's edition.

¹⁴ James Edward Hamilton, *Strictures upon Primitive Christianity, by the Rev. Dr. Knowles, Prebendary of Ely; as also upon the Theological and Polemical Writings of the Rt. Rev. the Lord Bishop of St. David's. The Rev. Dr. Priestley, and the late Rev. Mr. Badcock. By James Edward Hamilton, Esq; Part the First* (London, 1790).

¹⁵ ? William Whiston (1667-1752), natural philosopher and theologian [ODNB].