

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 163-164

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Birm Aug. 18. 1790

Dear friend

I have received a copy of Mr Dexter's Letter¹ for the new edition of my Familiar Letters,² and therefore shall print it off immediately. I think you may expect a Copy at the end of the next week, or the beginning of the week following. I have written a pretty large Preface, which I hope you will not dislike. I introduce D^r Withers's Letter to me,³ in such a ~~man~~ manner as you will not disapprove.

I have also persuaded Mr Johnson⁴ to give an edition of Collins on Liberty and Necessity,⁵ and I have written a Preface to it. It is exceedingly scarce, and ought to be preserved.

I lament with you the fate of Daventry Academy, and the more, as the place of my own education. It had many disadvantages, but certainly afforded little opportunity of dissipation, and, on that account, was favourable to study. The students had little or no society except with themselves.

I have just received Mr Robinson's book.⁶ It seems to be curious, but has much that is foreign to his purpose. He seems to have [[been]] greatly deficient in judgment.⁷ When I have seen more of the book I shall give you my thoughts of it more particularly.

I am much pleased with your account of Mr Bedell.⁸ I hope there are many such forming silently.⁹ I was much amused with an account I have just received from Miss Judith Mansell,¹⁰ who is returned from a visit to Oxford. Her hairdresser, a Mr Mackenion,¹¹ finding the last time he dressed her hair that she was going to Birmingham, inquired after me; and after much discours[e], which amused her much, he desired she would ~~?~~ inform me, that there were at least 40 that do not bow the knee to Baal even in Oxford. He regretted much that he did not see you, as you went thru Oxford. He is very intimate, as you will suppose, with Mr Hinton.¹² He said that the wife of one of the heads of houses was an unitarian, and that when he dressed her hair, th//e//y often shut the door,

¹ Matthew Dexter, Baptist minister. See Priestley's *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, in Refutation of Several Charges, advanced against the Dissenters and Unitarians* (Birmingham, 1790), second edn., x.

² Priestley, *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1790), second edn.

³ Philip Withers (d. 1790), see 29 Mar 1790. See *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1790), x-xi.

⁴ Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), see 18 Jan 1770.

⁵ Anthony Collins (1676-1729), *A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty. By Anthony Collins, Esq. Republished with a Preface, by Joseph Priestley* (London, 1790).

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

⁷ This sentence is omitted from Rutt's edition.

⁸ unidentified.

⁹ The remainder of this paragraph is omitted from Rutt's edition.

¹⁰ Judith Mansell. Priestley wrote to Judith Mansell from Clapton in 1791 and Philadelphia in 1797. The letters are held amongst the Joseph Priestley Papers at the American Philosophical Society.

¹¹ Allin Mackinnion, listed as a 'Hair-dresser' in the 'Universal Directory of Britain: City of Oxford in 1794', http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/people_lists/oxford_1794_universal/index.htm.

¹² Henry Hinton (1749-1816), see 6 May 1787.

and had much free conversation. He seemed to be something like the Barber in the Arabian nights. He shut the door before he would talk on the subject with Miss Mansell, and detained her an hour extraordinary.

I shall be glad to see the account of //the// Unitarians in S Wales – I am much [[pleased]] with your account of M^r Dyer.¹³ Mr Robinson¹⁴ had too much imagination. His accounts were not to be depended upon. As Mr Johnson says he has not the books I left behind me (tho I still believe they were left with him) I wish, if you have an opportunity, that you would inquire of Mr W^m Vaughan¹⁵ about them. – I have received the book¹⁶ from Mr Thompson,¹⁷ but doubt whether it be so much to the purpose as has been imagined. Dr Furneaux¹⁸ has given an account of it Letters to Blackstone 2nd Ed. p.89 &c.¹⁹ I shall however, make some remarks on the subject in my Preface.²⁰

Mr Toulmin²¹ has called as I was writing and I have been talking to him about the ~~–~~ DD. He had his MA from an American University, and prefers having the other from the same country.²² I am about to write to D^r Price,²³ and shall desire his concurrence, which will make the thing easy. You will be so good as to transmit the recommendation. I hope the degree from America will not cost anything. When I mentioned the expence of an Edinburgh degree, viz 13 or 14 £, he objected to it.

I inclose my letter to Mr Dodson,²⁴ and beg you would forward it.

Yesterday I had my two teeth drawn, which was the most painful operation of the kind that I had had. Today I am quite easy. My wife is surprizingly better, and has engaged a new servant to come on Sunday next. Yours & M^{rs} Lindsey's, most affectionately

J Priestley

She and Mr Toulmin desire to be remembered to you both.

¹³ George Dyer (1755-1814), see 29 Jun 1788. In 1785 Dyer was a tutor in the family of Robert Robinson [ODNB].

¹⁴ Robert Robinson (1735-1790), see 11 Jun 1790.

¹⁵ William Vaughan (1752-1850), 27 Jul 1787.

¹⁶ ? Francis Mason, *Of the Consecration of the Bishops in the Church of England: with their Succession, Jurisdiction, and Other Things incident to their Calling: as also of the Ordination of Priests and Deacons. Fiue Bookes* (London, 1613).

¹⁷ Josiah Thompson (c. 1724-1806), Particular Baptist minister and historian [ODNB].

¹⁸ Philip Furneaux (1726-1783), Independent minister [ODNB].

¹⁹ Philip Furneaux, *Letters to the Honourable Mr. Justice Blackstone, concerning his Exposition of the Act of Toleration, and some Positions relative to Religious Liberty, in his Celebrated Commentaries on the Laws of England* (London, 1771), second edn.

²⁰ See Priestley, *Familiar Letters, addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1790), second edn., v-vii.

²¹ Joshua Toulmin (1740-1815), see 9 Mar 1789.

²² Toulmin was awarded the degree of DD by Harvard College in 1794. His MA had been awarded in 1769 by Brown University, a Baptist institution [G. M. Ditchfield, 'Toulmin, Joshua (1740-1815)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.].

²³ Richard Price (1723-1791), see 18 Dec 1769.

²⁴ Michael Dodson (1737-1799), see 27 Nov 1787.