

20 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 17 May 1786

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 44-45

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ADDRESS: The Rev^d M^r Lindsey Essex Street London

POSTMARK: May 19

Birm. May 17. 1786

Dear friend

I did not write to you immediately on my arrival here, because I had nothing particular to write about. Neither, indeed, have I yet, but I thought you would wish to hear that I was arrived. We had a good journey, and found all very well, and [g]lad to hear that I left you so. Mr Wilkinson¹ is still with us, but leaves us at the end of the week, to return the middle of the next month, about the 12th, when, I believe, the wedding is to take place²

I cannot say that I am yet set down to any serious business, but am reading some things, and preparing my laboratory for experiments. I have also been examining those passages of the Fathers which D^r Horsley³ appeals to in his Remarks, and find them either nothing to his purpose, or directly against him. Indeed I am astonished at his obstinacy and blindness. All my friends here expected from my advertisement, that I would write and publish my Reply immediately.⁴ If that be the case in general, I think I had better do it soon, but you, who hear more what is said about it, will judge better. To myself it is a matter of indifference. I think, however, I may as well compose my Reply, and so have it ready, whenever it may be called for. I wish I knew when Mr Howes⁵ would publish another N^o of ~~the~~ his work, and have some thoughts of writing to him on the subject, but I shall not do it without your approbation. I shall soon send your Theodoret,⁶ and may then inclose a letter to him, for your opinion.

We are soon to have a meeting here about the affairs of the Academy; but there is a strong bias with many in favour of Manchester (chiefly owing to the appointment of Mr

¹ John Wilkinson (1728-1808), ironmaster and industrialist. Wilkinson was Priestley's brother-in-law, through Priestley's marriage to Wilkinson's sister Mary in 1762. When Priestley moved to take charge of the Unitarian New Meeting in Birmingham in 1780 Wilkinson bought him a house, and for a time he tried to train Priestley's son as a manager in the iron trade [J. R. Harris, 'Wilkinson, John (1728-1808)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online, edn.].

² The previous three paragraphs are omitted from Rutt's edition.

³ Samuel Horsley (1733-1806), bishop of St Asaph [ODNB]. The work referred to is Horsley's *Remarks upon Dr. Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, with Proofs of certain Facts asserted by the Archdeacon* (London, 1786).

⁴ Priestley published the third part of his *Letters to Dr. Horsley* in the same year, see *Letters to Dr. Horsley. Part III. Containing an Answer to his Remarks on Letters, Part II. To which are added Strictures on Mr. Howes' Ninth Number of Observations on Books Antient and Modern* (Birmingham, 1786).

⁵ Thomas Howes (1728-1814), historian and religious controversialist. Howes's *Critical Observations on Books, Antient and Modern* commenced publication in 1776. Until 1783 Howes published a numbered part each year. While these recondite researches went largely unnoticed by Howes's contemporaries, the appearance of Priestley's *History of the corruptions of Christianity* in 1782 led Howes to believe that he could contribute to a topic of more general interest. For several years he suspended his chronological researches in favour of a study of the unitarian question [David Chandler, 'Howes, Thomas (1728-1814)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.].

⁶ Theodoret (c. 393-c. 460), Bishop of Cyrrhus [ODCC].

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Worthington⁷) and a great prejudice against the idea of a large fund, which seldom answers the purpose of the founders.

All here desire to be remembered to you and also to M^{rs} Rayner.⁸ Mr Lee⁹ is hard[ly] with you.

I wish your journey could bring y[ou] this way. My annual interview with you is one of the greatest satisfactions I have in this life, and I could wish to have it oftener; but must submit.

I am

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

J Priestley.

P.S. The clergy, I believe, are ashamed of what they have done about my History,¹⁰ and nobody feels for them.

⁷ Hugh Worthington (1752-1813), dissenting minister. In 1785 Worthington had been elected a trustee of Dr Williams's foundation and the next year was appointed to a committee of nine formed to establish a new college for dissenters, eventually settled at Hackney [*ODNB*].

⁸ Elizabeth Rayner (d. 1800), attendee at Lindsey's Essex Street Chapel, who became a generous patron of Priestley and Unitarianism.

⁹ John Lee (1733-1793), see Mar 1770.

¹⁰ Probably Priestley's *An History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*, 4 vols. (Birmingham, 1786).