

21 To THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, 5 July 1786

MS: Dr. Williams's Library, MS. 12.12, f. 46-47

PRINTED: Rutt, I, i, pp. 391-393

ENDORSEMENT: July 5: 1786 Mr Nicholas Ashton¹ at Gataker near Liverpool – wishes to introduce our liturgy

[July 5. 1786]

Dear friend,

You will think it a long time since you have heard from me. But, besides that I have made an excursion to Worcester, with Mr Russell,² I waited till I could send you a copy of the continuation of my Essay on the Jewish Ritual,³ and of my Letters to the Jews.⁴ Those I intended to have sent to you in MS, but besides that I had only one copy, I considered of it with so much care, together with Mr Hawkes,⁵ as well as heard what my friend the Jew had to say to it, that I thought I might venture it without your seeing it. I inclose two copies one for yourself and the other for M^{rs} Rayner.⁶ I shall order more presents when a parcel can be sent to London. My friend here assures me that he and his countrymen will give the closest attention to it, and write in return. He seemed to be much pleased with the respectfulness of my address to them. I have just finished the reading of Basnag[e's] History of the Jews,⁷ and I do not wonder at their giving no serious attention to any thing that has yet been addressed to them, and am filled with horror at the butcheries that have been made of them in all parts of the world. I shall continue to give the closest attention to this subject; and perhaps all that I have done lately may only have been preparatory to what is now before me – D^r Schiff,⁸ I understand, was much pleased with our visit to him. I much question whether any lettered christian ever noticed ~~–?~~ any of their Rabbis in this country before, and they will never be gained by harshness or contempt. When the bulk of the pamphlets arrive in town I shall be

¹ unidentified.

² William Russell (1740-1818). Russell was a leading figure in the local Presbyterian-Unitarian congregation at Birmingham and was a particular friend and patron of Priestley. He was a member of the select Society for Constitutional Information from 1783 and a midlands regional leader in the agitation of 1787-90 for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. His principal residence was at Showell Green in the parish of Yardley, two miles from Birmingham, and he served as a justice of the peace in Worcestershire [Jacob M. Price, 'Russell, William (1740–1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, online edn.].

³ Hermas [Priestley], 'Of the Perpetuity of the Jewish Ritual', *Theol. Repos.*, VI (1788), 1-21. See also Hermas [Priestley], 'An Attempt to prove the Perpetual Obligation of the Jewish Ritual', *Theol. Repos.*, V (1786), 403-417.

⁴ Priestley, *Letters to the Jews; inviting them to an Amicable Discussion of the Evidences of Christianity* (Birmingham, 1786).

⁵ William Hawkes (1731-1796), minister with Samuel Blyth at the New Meeting Congregation, Birmingham (1754-1780) [CSICM 991] [Rutt, I, i, 339].

⁶ Elizabeth Rayner (d. 1800), see 17 May 1786.

⁷ Jacques Basnage, sieur de Beauval (1653-1723). Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* (Rotterdam, 1706) was translated into English as *The History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present Time: containing their Antiquities, their Religion, their Rites, the Dispersion of the Ten Tribes in the East, and the Persecutions this Nation has suffer'd in the West* (London, 1708).

⁸ Possibly a misspelling of David Tevele Schiff, rabbi of the Great Synagogue at Duke's Place from 1765 to 1791. See C. Duschinsky, *The Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue, London from 1756-1842* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921).

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obliged to you if you will instruct Mr Johnson⁹ how to send a hundred copies to D^r Shiff, and also to get Mr Chambers¹⁰ to convey what number you think proper to the two other learned Jews ~~→~~ he mentioned to you; tho my friend here, who knows them both, says they are not equal to D^r Shiff. I shall write to D^r Shiff at the time. If you were to call upon him sometimes, it might have a good effect.

If you should see M^{rs} Barbauld,¹¹ tell her my wife thanks her for her obliging letter, and will write to her soon, but at present is far from being well. She has been very ill, but is now better. ~~→~~ My own health is tolerable, tho nothing to boast of.

I inclose a letter from Mr Parker¹² which will explain what passed at his shop. Please to call again and pay the guineas to himself, or son.

I am with all my respects yours & M^{rs} Lindseys

most affectionately

J Priestley

July 5. 1786

P.S. I thankyou for your kind attention to my son. However I do assure you Harry¹³ is as fond of reading as any of them My daughter¹⁴ is returned from Cambridge. I did not see her being at Worcester

Mr Russell desires me to inform you that you may send to me twice every week by Mr Rogers.¹⁵

⁹ Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), see 18 Jan 1770.

¹⁰ unidentified.

¹¹ Anna Letitia [Anna Laetitia] Barbauld [née Aikin] (1743-1825), poet and essayist [*ODNB*].

¹² William Parker (fl. 1776-1817), glass manufacturer at 69 Fleet Street. See Eric Robinson, 'The Lunar Society and the improvement of Scientific Instruments', *Annals of Science*, XIII (1957), 1-8.

¹³ Henry (Harry) Priestley (b. 1777), Priestley's third son.

¹⁴ Sarah Priestley (1763-1803).

¹⁵ ? Thomas Rogers (1735-1793), banker, one of the principal founders of New College, Hackney.