

# Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from Joseph Priestley to John Seddon

**Date:** April 9, 1762

**Location:** I-BeachW-1966-1

### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

Dear Sir

450  
I am very much obliged to you for your friendly communication of your proceedings. I hope that, if you have a fair hearing, the representation you will be able to make of our affairs will not be without some good effect: however our expectations here are not very sanguine. Prejudices, and particularly unfavourable and unjust prejudices, such as people are ashamed to have contradicted, are not easily conquered. Though great is the power of truth. By all means give us the earliest information of every step you take of importance. We cannot help being a little anxious about the success of your negotiations.

Every body here has heard of your invitation to Lincolns poor Mr. Aikin (I have just been with him) is greatly alarmed at it. To speak the truth I am not without apprehensions myself, tho' I endeavour to keep up his spirits. But I am certain you will not determine rashly in so critical an affair.

We are much at a loss about our Chemical lectures: five of our younger students are not permitted to attend it, and I have not the names of any of the subscribers out of the Academy. When you write, do not forget to mention them.

You will oblige me if you will take the trouble to procure for my friend the Vicar the glasses he mentions in the letter which (to ~~prevent~~ <sup>save</sup> transcribing) I inclose you. Could you not engage Mr. Canton to examine them, as you will see it requires a good deal of exactness. You will easily get a frank in London to return it me in.

I am very angry with Mr. Fleming. Let me know whether you think it will do us any harm



You may let me know what Mr Hippis says about Mr Day; but I shall hardly listen to any scheme of publication. Indeed, Mr Sidden, it is too great a risque for a person in my circumstances, and with my wish to run. I have known the time when nobody was a more fearless freethinker than myself; but tempore mutatur et nos mutamur in illis. Could I afford it, I should not be averse to printing it, and lodging it in the hands of a few friends; but you know I can do no such thing.

I beg you would discharge my account of books with Mr Griffiths.

After I had written the above, which was late last night, I received your second letter this morning. What I have done the enclosed will show, it was all I have attempted yet. Upon the receipt of yours, I invited all the students in Divinity to drink a dish of tea with me, and in the mean time drew up the report, and got Mr Threlkeld to transcribe it. It was signed with all the readiness and cheerfulness in the world, with the most cordial wishes, that it, or any thing else they could do, might have a good effect. Mr Threlkeld read it distinctly and Mr Palmer took it into his hand, and perused it a considerable time, with great attention, and signed it when it came to his turn without the least hesitation. I talked to them above an hour upon the state of the Academy, going over every particular, I enquired into all Mr Within lectures and Mr Palmer was generally the first to express his pleasure and satisfaction in them. I desired they would without all freedom mention, now, or at any time, any objections they had to any



thing respecting the conduct of the academy, assuring them it would be heard with the most favourable attention, for that we were extremely desirous to give them all the advantage and satisfaction that it was possible they could have in ~~their~~ such a situation, they said they were very far from having any objection to make. I asked them particularly if there was any appearance of your ever interfering in an undue manner in the management of the academy, or that ~~of~~ our having any connection with the scheme of Lincoln liturgy, or in any respect endeavoured to lay any bias upon their mind, or had any other view but their improvement, with a great deal to that and the like purposes; they said by no means. Nothing could have given me greater satisfaction than their whole behaviour.

I will talk to Mr Palmer more closely after a few days.

I have not followed your direction exactly, to have singled him out at first, I thought might have alarmed him, and given him suspicions of my intelligence; and then I should not have been able to procure even thus much. I can better remonstrate against his conduct a little time hence, as inconsistent with his frank declaration. I shall probably wait till I hear from you again before I proceed any further.

This evening, likewise, Phil Taylor communicated to me his father's intention of removing him to Dartmouth, and showed me his letters. We both shed tears, I could not help it. He is leaving us presently.

Your letter came when I was at Mr Helt at breakfast. Mr Aikin was soon heard of it, and came, and sat some time with me I mentioned no particulars. You had not need to caution me I durst not tell him. It would affect him too much; He desires



you would enquire whether D<sup>r</sup> Doddridge's lectures were printing

By the way when I mentioned <sup>tried a not printed</sup> Mr. Withins intention of ~~our~~ reading  
D<sup>r</sup> Doddridge's Divinity lectures, Mr. Palmer replied I am glad I  
have transcribed them I should be sorry to be obliged to transcribe  
them <sup>over</sup> ~~again~~.

Mr. Holt if you remember mentioned a Solar Microscope  
I wish you could meet with Banier's Mythology second hand

We are infinitely obliged to you for the generous pains  
you take to serve us. We will do our duty here, and

Let not your noble courage be cast down

Yours and Mr. Seddens, with reciprocal warmth  
Joseph Priestley.

All our compliments and good wishes await you

Warington Aug<sup>th</sup> 9. 1762

This is a copy of the  
to be the first volume of letters  
of the first volume of letters  
of the first volume of letters



JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, 1733 - 1804  
to JOHN SEDDON, 1725 - 1770

Dear Sir

I am very much obliged to you for your friendly communication of your proceedings. I hope that, if you have a fair hearing, the representation you will be able to make of our affairs will not be without some good effect: however our expectations here are not very sanguine. Prejudices, and particularly unfavourable and unjust prejudices, such as people are ashamed to have contracted, are not easily conquered, though great is the power of truth. By all means give us the earliest information of every step you take of importance. We cannot help being a little anxious about the success of your negotiations.

Everybody here has heard of your invitation to Liverpool. Poor Mr. Aikin (I have just been with him) is greatly alarmed at it. To speak the truth I am not without apprehensions myself, tho' I endeavor to keep up his spirits. But I am certain you will not determine rashly in so critical an affair.

We are much at a loss about our Chemical lecture: five of our younger students are not permitted to attend it, and I have not the names of any of the subscribers out of the Academy. When you write, do not forget to mention them.

You will oblige me if you will take the trouble to procure for my friend the Vicar the glasses he mentions in the letter which (to save transcribing) I enclose you. Could you not engage Mr. Canton to examine them, as you will see it requires a good deal of exactness. You will easily get a frank in London to return it me in.

I am very angry at Mr. Fleming. Let me know whether you think it will do us any harm.

You may let me know what Mr. Kippis says about Mr. Paul; but I shall hardly listen to any scheme of publication. Indeed, Mr. Seddon, it is too great a risque for a person in my circumstances, and with my vision to run. I have known the time when nobody was a more fearless freethinker than myself; but tempore mutantur et nos mutamen in illis. Could I afford it, I should not be averse to printing it, and lodging it in the hands of a few friends; but you know I can do no such thing.

I beg you would discharge my account of books with Mr. Griffiths.



After I had written all the above, which was late last night, I received your second letter this morning. What I have done the enclosed will show, it was all I have attempted yet. Upon the receipt of yours, I invited all the students in Divinity to drink a dish of tea with me, and in the meantime drew up the report, and got Mr. Threlkeld to transcribe it. It was signed with all the readiness and cheerfulness in the world, with the most cordial wishes, that it or anything else they could do, might have a good effect. Mr. Threlkeld read it distinctly and Mr. Palmer took it into his hand, and perused it a considerable time, with great attention, and signed it when it came to his turn without the least hesitation. I talked to them above an hour on the state of the Academy, going over every particular; I enquired into all Mr. Aiken's lectures and Mr. Palmer was generally the first to express his pleasure and satisfaction in them. I desired they would with all freedom mention, now, or at any time, any objections they had to anything respecting the conduct of the Academy, assuring them it would be heard with the most favourable attention, for that we were extremely desirous to give them all the advantage and satisfaction that it was possible they could have in such a situation. They said they were very far from having any objection to make. I asked them particularly if there was any appearance of your ever interfering in an undue manner in the management of the Academy, or if our having a connection with the scheme of Liverpool liturgy, or in any respect endeavoured to lay any bias upon their minds, or had any other view but their improvement, with a great deal to that and the like purposes, they said by no means. Nothing could have given me greater satisfaction that their whole behaviour.

I will talk to Mr. Palmer more closely after a few days. I have not followed your directions exactly, to have singled him and at first, I thought might have alarmed him, and given him suspicions of my intelligence; and then I should not have been able to procure even thus much. I can better remonstrate against his conduct a little time hence, as inconsistent with frank declaration. I shall probably wait until I hear from you again before I proceed any further.

This evening, likewise, Phil Taylor, communicated to me his father's intentions of removing him to Exeter, and showed me his letters. We both shed tears, I could not help it. He is leaving us presently.

Your letter came when I was at Mr. Holt's at breakfast. Mr. Aikin soon heard of it, and came, and sat some time with me. I mentioned no particulars. You had not need to caution me. I dare not tell him, it would affect him too much. He desires you would enquire whether Dr. Doddridge's lectures were printings.

By the way when I mentioned Mr. Aikin's intention of reading Dr. Doddridge's Divinity Lectures, printed or not printed, Mr. Palmer replied, "I am glad I have transcribed them. I should be sorry to be obliged to transcribe them now."

Mr. Holt if you remember mentioned a solar microscope.

I wish you could meet with Banier's Mythology second hand.

We are infinitely obliged to you for the generous pain you take to serve us. We will do our duty here, and

Let not your noble courage be cast down.

Yours, and Mrs. Seddons, with reciprocal warmth,

Joseph Priestley

All our compliments and good wishes await you

Warrington Apl. 9th 1762