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Title: Letter from Joseph Priestley to Joseph Berrington

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To the Editor of the National Gazette.

Dear Sir—The enclosed is a copy of the Dedication which I mentioned to you yesterday. It was written by Dr. Priestley a few days before his death, and was prefixed to a work entitled "The Doctrines of Heathen Philosophy compared with those of Revelation." It is strikingly characteristic of the temper of his mind. While he resided at Birmingham, Mr. Berrington was one of his personal friends. On one occasion that gentleman was requested to preach a charity sermon in Dr. Priestley's meeting-house; and although Mr. Berrington declined doing so, the correspondence in relation to that incident was such as to reflect great honour on both parties. The invitation was hearty and unanimous, and the reply was courteous and respectful. Mr. Berrington's able work on the literature of the Middle Ages is well known to every scholar.

As to Bishop White, it is only necessary to say that his attentions to Dr. Priestley were such as might be expected from one so pre-eminent in the excellencies of the Christian character to a stranger alike distinguished by his talents and virtues. That the kindness of the good Bishop was duly appreciated, I know from the best authority.

It is impossible that men who use their understandings can think alike; yet, among the wise and good there is a sufficient correspondence for all practical purposes; and, what is of vital importance, there is a community of feeling and a harmony of affection.

A Sempronius is as little to be depended on in the church as in the state. Let the truth be spoken in love.

I remain, dear sir, truly and respectfully yours,
T.

DEDICATION.

To the Reverend Joseph Berrington, a Catholic Priest in England,

And to the Right Reverend William White, a Bishop of the Episcopalian Church in the United States.

Gentlemen,—You will, I doubt not, be surprised at my dedication of any work of mine to you, differing so much as we do in our sentiments concerning Christianity. But, entertaining the highest respect for your characters, as men and as Christians, I do it *because* we differ; to show, with respect to a subject in which we are equally interested, as in that of this work, that I regard all that bear the Christian name, how widely distant so ever their different churches and creeds may be, as friends and brethren, and therefore entitled, by the express direction of our common Saviour, to particular respect and attention as such.

Though few persons have written more than myself to controvert the established principles of each of your churches, I consider the articles in which we all agree as of infinitely more moment than those with respect to which we differ. We all believe in the being, the perfections, the universal providence, and the righteous moral government of God, as the maker and sovereign disposer of all things. Whatever we may think of the person of Christ, we all believe that his doctrine is divine, and his precepts obligatory upon all. We all believe in his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension, as related in the books of the New Testament. We also all believe that he will come again, to raise all the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works; and these are all the articles of faith that can have any considerable influence on the lives and conduct of men. Believing this, our gratitude for the communication of knowledge of such infinite importance must be common to us all, and such as should lead to a cheerful obedience to all the commands of God.

I know that the creeds of both your established churches doom me, and all that are out of their pale, as discarding some particular articles of your faith, to *perish everlastingly*, notwithstanding every thing that we may believe, or do. But I know that the candid and liberal of all persuasions are provided with some salvo for the conscientious heretic. But whatever may be your opinion with respect to me, which I know will be as favourable as you can make it, I have no doubt but, if I ever do get to Heaven, I shall meet with both of you there. In that state our minds will be so much enlightened, that the bigotry which has contributed so much to the miseries of this life, but which has, at the same time, been a valuable exercise of Christian candor, will no longer exist. With respect to myself, the time in which every thing of this kind will be cleared up, and no doubt to universal satisfaction, cannot be very distant; and the difference between my opinion that it will be after an interval of rest in the grave, and yours that it will take place with respect to each individual immediately after his death, cannot be thought of much moment, by those who believe they shall live for ever after it.

With the highest esteem for your personal characters, though you are probably unknown to each other, I am, gentlemen,

Your brother in the faith
and hope of the Gospel,

(Signed) J. PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, 1804.