

informed, the means were not attended to. When the object was right, you thought the means could not be wrong. By the discourses of your teachers, and the exclamations of your superiors in general, drinking confusion and damnation to us (which is well known to have been their frequent practice,) your bigotry has been excited to the highest pitch, and nothing having been said to you to moderate your passions, but every thing to inflame them; hence, without any consideration on your part, or on theirs, who ought to have known, and taught you better—you were prepared for every species of outrage; thinking that whatever you could do to spite and injure us, was for the support of Government, and especially the Church. In destroying us, you have been led to think, you did God and your country the most substantial service.

Happily, the minds of Englishmen have a horror of murder, and therefore, you did not, I hope, think of that; though, by your clamorous demanding of me at the Hotel, it is probable that at that time, some of you intended me some personal injury. But what is the value of life, when every thing is done to make it wretched?

In many cases, there would be greater mercy in dispatching the inhabitants, than in burning their houses. However, I infinitely prefer what I feel from the spoiling of my goods, to the disposition of those who have misled you.

You have destroyed the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments that perhaps any individual, in this or any other country, was ever possessed of, in my use of which I annually spent large sums, with no pecuniary view whatever, but only in the advancement of science, for the benefit of my country, and of mankind. You have destroyed a library corresponding to that apparatus, which no money can re-purchase, except in a long course of time.—But what I feel far more, you have destroyed manuscripts, which have been the result of the laborious study of many years, and which I shall never be able to recompose; and this has been done to one who never did, or imagined, you any harm.

I know nothing more of the hand-bill, which is said to have enraged you so much, than any of yourselves, and I disapprove of it as much; though it has been made the ostensible handle of doing infinitely more mischief than any thing of that nature could possibly have done. In the celebration of the French Revolution, at which I did not attend, the company assembled on the occasion only expressed

their joy in the emancipation of a neighbouring nation from tyranny, without initiating any desire of a thing more than such an improvement of our own Constitution, as all sober citizens, of every persuasion, have long wished for. And though, in answer to the gross and unprovoked calumnies of Mr. Madan and others, I publicly vindicated my principles as a Dissenter, it was only with plain and sober argument and with perfect good humour. We are better instructed in the mild and forbearing spirit of Christianity, that ever to think of having recourse to violence; and can you think any such conduct as yours any recommendation of your religious principles, in preference to ours?

You are still more mistaken, if you imagine that this conduct of yours has any tendency to serve your cause, or to prejudice ours. It is nothing but reason and argument that can ever support any system of religion. Answer our arguments, and your business is done; but your having recourse to violence, is only a proof that you have nothing better to produce. Should you destroy myself, as well as my house, library, and apparatus, ten more persons, of equal or superior spirit and ability, would instantly rise up. If those ten were destroyed, an hundred would appear; and believe me, that the Church of England, which you now think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by this conduct of yours, than I and all my friends have ever aimed at it.

Besides, to abuse those who have no power of making resistance is equally cowardly and brutal, peculiarly unworthy of Englishmen, to say nothing of Christianity, which teaches us to do as we would be done by. In this business, we are the sheep, and you the wolves. We will preserve our character, and hope you will change yours. At all events, we return you blessings for curses; and pray that you may soon return to that industry, and those sober manners, for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished. I am,

Your sincere Well-wisher,

J. PRIESTLEY.

London, July 19, 1791.

P. S. The account of the first Toast at the Revolution Dinner in *The Times* of this morning, can be nothing less than a malicious lie. To prove this, a list of the Toasts, with an account of all the proceedings of the day, will soon be published. The first of them was, *The King and the Constitution*, and they were all such as the friends of Liberty, and the true principles of the Constitution, would approve.