

### 3) INTRODUCTION TO PHILIP DODDRIDGE'S 'ACCOUNT OF MR JENNINGS'S METHOD'

The document entitled 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' is presented in the form of 'a letter to a Friend' and is dated 1728. It describes the course of education, reading and day-to-day life at John Jennings's academy. The 'Account' is 123 pages or 64 folios long, and is very neatly written in a hand that resembles Doddridge's. It has a title page and pagination in the same hand as the main text and has been foliated by a later hand, probably a librarian. Both page and folio numbers are given in the transcription and in references to the document below. There is additional writing on the inside covers and on the final pages of the manuscript book indicating use by later owners. It measures 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" (approximately 197 mm x 159 mm) and has contemporary leather binding. This letter has been in Senate House Library since 1963, when it was purchased from F. Norman for £4, but apparently remained unused until Isabel Rivers made a study of the volume in 2002 (Rivers, p. 6).

The traditional narrative of the genesis and use of Doddridge's 'Account' derives from Job Orton's biography of Doddridge (1766):

In Conversation one Day with Mr. *Doddridge*, the Discourse turned upon the best Method of conducting the preparatory Studies of young Men intended for the Ministry. Mr. *Benyon* earnestly desired he would write down his Thoughts upon the Subject. This he did, as a Letter to his Friend, which grew into a considerable volume. But when he had just finished this Work, his Friend, for whose use it was principally intended, died, and the Treatise remained in his own Hands. The reverend Mr. *Saunders* of *Kettering*, happening to see it in his Study, borrowed it, and shewed it the reverend Dr. *Watts*, with whom Mr. *Doddridge* had then no personal Acquaintance. Dr *Watts* was much pleased with the Plan, made some Remarks upon it, and shewed it to several of his Friends, who all joined with him in an Application to Mr. *Doddridge* to solicit his attempting to carry it into Execution. (Orton, p. 49)

Little is known of Benion (or Benyon) other than that he was the son of the dissenting tutor Samuel Benion (1673-1708), and is thought to have attended Jennings's academy. Thomas Saunders was a contemporary of Doddridge, a minister at Kettering, and the two men corresponded during the later 1720s. There is no textual evidence that either man was the intended recipient. Later biographers and editors of Doddridge, unaware of the existence of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', believed that Orton was describing the 1725 letter. Following Doddridge's composition of the 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method', the manuscript circulated among the dissenting community. It was read and commented on by Isaac Watts.

Doddridge himself probably kept a copy (perhaps as an aide-mémoire for conducting his own course) which was later lost. In 1776, Job Orton rediscovered the lost document. As he wrote to Mercy Doddridge:

a Bookseller of Bewdley, with whom I have no Dealings, lately sent me a Catalogue of Books to be sold at Leeds. My Curiosity led me to look into it, & there to my great Surprize I found "Dr D's MS Account of Mr Jennings' Method of academical Education" charged 3<sup>s</sup> . . . I lately rec'd it safe & in good Order. I remember the Author lent me the Book in the Year 1736 & I safely returned it. But I never saw it, or could hear of it since, tho I made all the Enquiry abt it I

could, when I was writing the Life, as I knew, from what I remembered of it, that it w<sup>d</sup> have been of great use to me in that work. As the Catalogue, in which I saw it, contained the Library of D<sup>r</sup> Legh, I conclude D<sup>r</sup> D. lent it him, who, I remember was at Northampton for a few Days in the beginning of the year 1737, at least while we were in Gold-Street. I presume he had not the Gratitude, Manners nor Integrity to return it. I was very glad however to recover it; and not knowing how to dispose of it more properly & where it w<sup>d</sup> be likely to be more acceptable & useful, I have sent it to Daventry for the use of y<sup>e</sup> Tutors & academy there, & put it under the particular Care of M<sup>r</sup> Robins. There I hope it will be safe & useful. And I am thankful to God that after so many years fruitless Inquiry for it & Despair of finding it, it is recovered, in a place of Safety, & where it will be doing good. (DWL NCL MS L.1/8/76, 22 April 1776).

Thomas Robins (1732-1810) was a tutor at Daventry academy from 1775 until 1781. Daventry academy was named by Doddridge as the successor to his own academy, and after his death most of the library from Northampton academy went to Daventry. It is not known what happened to 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' between the closure of Daventry academy in 1789 and the acquisition of the manuscript by Senate House Library from F. Norman in 1963.

Doddridge's 'Account' provides a very detailed description of an innovative dissenting academy in the period 1719-23, when he was a student there, along with his suggested improvements. Key differences between Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy' and this 'Account' are the structure and the quantity of information provided, the inclusion by Doddridge of his suggested improvements to the course and his description of the ideal tutor, none of which appears in the 1725 letter. We now know that Watts's comments are based on this 'Account' and not on the 1725 letter, as was thought by the nineteenth-century editors of Watts and Doddridge (Thomas Milner and John Doddridge Humphreys respectively).

Doddridge's 'Account' and Watts's reply allow scholars insight into the priorities and concerns of pedagogically-minded dissenters in the eighteenth century. Topics covered by the 'Account' include a description of the course of studies at Jennings's academy for each half-year (f. 6/p. 7 - f. 7/p. 9), followed by the reading for each section of the course (f. 7/ p. 9 - f. 13/p. 21); Doddridge's proposed additions and modifications, and suggestions for further reading for the prospective tutor (f. 14/ p. 23 - f. 27/p. 49); an account of Jennings's character as a tutor, the rules, customs and daily routine of the academy, and the expectations placed on students (f. 35/ p. 65 - f. 48/p. 91); some potential difficulties a tutor might face (f. 49/p. 93 - f. 51/p. 101); and an outline of the preparatory studies the potential tutor should undertake before accepting pupils (f. 54/p. 103 - f. 60/p. 115). The academic subjects described in this letter are as follows:

**Mathematics and Natural Philosophy:** Geometry, Algebra, Arithmetic, Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Physics, Anatomy.

**Philology:** French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldee, Samaritan.

**History/Geography/Humanities:** Civil history, Chronology, Jewish Antiquities, Ecclesiastical History, History of Controversies, British History, Geography, Use of globes, Biblical commentary.

**Philosophy and Theology:** Logic, Pneumatology, Ethics, Divinity.

**Miscellanies:** Oratory, Psalmody, Architecture, Heraldry, Fortification, Preaching and Pastoral Care.

As well as familiarising themselves with the editorial notes for the edition as a whole, readers should be aware that Doddridge used both a large-sized lower case 'a' and an upper case 'A' to denote the capital letter, and this has been transcribed as 'A' throughout this edition. Sometimes a word is written in a larger size than the words around it (for example the name of the subject under discussion at the start of a paragraph). In this transcription, these words are set in bold so that they stand out.