

'Upon reading over the whole of this Letter I am sensibly struck': affectionate networks and schemes for dissenting academies

Dissenting academies and the materials for their formation

In 1728 Isaac Watts, the renowned dissenting minister, hymn-writer and educational author, read 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method of Academical Education' composed by Philip Doddridge, the twenty seven year-old dissenting minister of a congregation in rural Leicestershire.¹ Watts replied to Doddridge and thus the two men, who had not yet met, began a friendly, correspondence-based relationship that lasted until Watts's death in 1748. Watts began with characteristic exhortatory immediacy: 'Upon reading over the whole of this Letter I am sensibly struck with y^e following Thoughts ... 1: How wonderfull & extraordinary a Man was y^e late M^r John Jennings!'² Throughout Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', practical questions about curriculum, books and discipline cluster around expressions of affection and admiration.³ Such attestations of friendship and affirmations of shared purpose characterize a series of documents from the 1720s which described courses of education at the academy Doddridge had attended and proposed developments for a future academy. Before introducing these documents and tracing their (sometimes complicated) genealogy and afterlife, a little context on dissenting education in the eighteenth century is required.

By the Clarendon Code of the 1660s and the 1673 Test Act, those who chose to dissent from the Church of England were ejected from the Established Church,

I am grateful to Isabel Rivers, the participants of the 'Footprints in the Butter' conference, and the anonymous reader for their helpful comments on this material. I am also grateful to the Trustees of Dr Williams's Library for permission to quote from manuscripts held there.

¹ See Isabel Rivers, 'Watts, Isaac (1674-1748)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [accessed 29 September 2010], hereafter *ODNB*, and Isabel Rivers, 'Doddridge, Philip (1702-1751)', *ODNB* [accessed 29 September 2010].

² Dr Williams's Library (hereafter DWL) MS 24.180.3, f.1. This manuscript is hereafter referred to as Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"'.

³ Senate House Library MS 609 has the short title 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', to which the document is here referred.

prevented from holding civil or military office, and excluded from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Consequently, academies were set up to educate dissenters which tended to operate surreptitiously and were often subject to restrictions. Freedom to worship and attend academies openly was granted by the Toleration Act (1689), but the legal position of dissenters remained uncertain until the nineteenth century, and in the 1730s, Philip Doddridge – by then running his own academy – faced prosecution for teaching without a licence from the bishop.⁴ Dissenting academies provided philosophical and theological training as well, often, as a general course which encompassed classical literature, civil and ecclesiastical history, and natural philosophy. Most matched, and some perhaps exceeded, the education available at the universities.

Doddridge's tutor, John Jennings, ran an academy in Leicestershire from 1715 to 1723.⁵ It closed following his death, and no new academy opened in the area, meaning that there was a dearth of training and educational opportunities for dissenters of university age in the midlands. In the later 1720s the issue of reviving an academy in the region was becoming one of increasing concern to Watts, a leader of the dissenting community who was himself based in London, and to other dissenters. They feared that reduced numbers of academies would mean fewer dissenting ministers were trained, with a consequent decline in the number of active dissenting congregations in the country. The continuation of academies, and the promotion of the dissenting interest more widely, was particularly important for those,

⁴ For the legal status of dissent, and dissenters' reactions to conditions imposed on them, see Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 221-27 and pp. 263-68, and Thomas W. Davies (ed.), 'Introduction', *Committees for Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: Minutes 1786-90 and 1827-8* (1978), pp. VII-XXVI, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38777> [accessed: 12 October 2010]. On the attempted prosecution of Doddridge, see G.F. Nuttall, *A Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge D.D.* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1979), letters 375, 377, 378 (hereafter referred to as *Cal.*), and Isabel Rivers, 'Doddridge, Philip (1702–1751)', *ODNB* [accessed 29 September 2010].

⁵ David L. Wykes, 'Jennings, John (1687/8-1723)', *ODNB* [accessed 29 September 2010].

like Watts, who remembered times persecution. Legislative, political and religious factors had combined to make dissenters a close-knit community who drew comfort from their self-sufficiency and loyalty to their cause of freedom of conscience. The interplay of these elements shapes the documents discussed here.

One of the best-known academies of the eighteenth century was run by Philip Doddridge from 1729 until his death in 1751. Research into the foundation of Doddridge's academy is possible thanks to the existence of various manuscript letters and notebooks.⁶ The notebooks contain timetables and reading lists, while the letters describe the course of education at academies in the 1710s and 1720s, offer proposals for a new academy, and exchange responses to the central document, an 123-page long bound volume in the form of a letter written Doddridge and in his hand, in which he presents 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' to an unnamed recipient (dated 1728). A letter written by Doddridge in 1725 – Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy' – describes the subjects studied and authors read at Jennings's academy.⁷ The 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' reproduces all the content of this shorter description but restructures the material and gives more detail on the books read. As well as describing the course, the letter proposes developments to the structure of the curriculum, suggests new subjects to be taught and recommends new authors to be added to the syllabus. It suggests preparatory reading a prospective tutor should undertake as well as the qualities he ought to cultivate. It also offers a personal view of academy life, describing day-to-day

⁶ For a selection of these documents, see 'Dissenting Education and the Legacy of John Jennings, c.1720 - c.1729', ed. Tessa Whitehouse, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, <http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/pubs/jennings%20legacy.html> [accessed: 29 September 2010]. Doddridge's 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' has not previously been available, and the other documents have been published in faulty transcriptions. The edition also brings together materials held in different repositories for the first time.

⁷ DWL MS 24.179.4 is a nineteenth-century copy of a letter from Doddridge written in 1725, referred to here as Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy'.

routines and extra-curricular activities, and sketches a vivid picture of an ideal tutor, based on Jennings.⁸

Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"' comprises of a series of suggestions and queries, to which Doddridge responded on the same document. Doddridge emphasised that he took his information from papers belonging to Jennings as well as his own notes and memories. One possible source of Doddridge's factual information is a notebook which contains timetables for each class, reading lists, rules of behaviour and sample dramatic scenarios all in Jennings's hand. The book was later owned by Doddridge, who used it to record donations to the library of his academy and the reading of his earliest students; the notebook thus became a site for collecting ideas, materials and information that was passed from tutor to tutor.⁹ This article focuses on the three 'letters'. It investigates their purpose, and the nature and importance of their epistolarity.

'My dear Friend': forms and intimacy

Doddridge begins his 'Account of Mr Jennings' Method' with a memory:

You seem'd to enter so deeply into the Subject of our Discourse, the last Time I had the pleasure of your Company, that I cannot imagine you have ^yet^ forgot it, or think it necessary that it should be repeated, in order to introduce the Letter, which at your desire, I am now setting myself to write.¹⁰

There is no doubt that this is a letter: it is constructed as a direct address to a named recipient, and an eighteenth-century reader would instinctively interpret the opening to signal a familiar letter, in which certain intimacies of address and thought would be expressed in language characterised by a degree of informality. But an

⁸ The relationship between these two letters is complicated. See the individual introductions to the manuscripts in 'Dissenting Education and the Legacy of John Jennings c.1720-c.1729'.

⁹ DWL NCL MS L.185. The notebook was owned successively by John Jennings, Philip Doddridge and Thomas Belsham, tutor at Daventry academy (which Doddridge named as the successor to his own) and at Hackney New College. See R. K. Webb, 'Belsham, Thomas (1750–1829)', *ODNB* [accessed 29 September 2010].

¹⁰ 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 3.

eighteenth-century reader would have already perceived that this particular letter is not quite the familiar, personal piece of writing it purports to be, for it has a title page whose existence and wording echo that of a printed book. The title itself declares that the 'Account' is in the form of 'a Letter to a friend'.¹¹ This affectionate yet anonymous formulation is intensified on the title page where instead of a name, there is a series of crosses: 'a Letter to M^r xxxx'.¹² Intimacy is evoked but then withdrawn.

These strategies for the display of intimacy in the first two pages of the 'Account', can be compared to the opening of the 1725 letter, Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy':

Harborough. Nov: 16. 1725.

Rev^d. Sir

M^r Some informed me some time ago that you desired an Account of M^r. Jennings's method of Academical Education & as I was one of the last Pupils my dear Tutor sent out I suppose he thought I might have his scheme pretty fresh in my memory, which is the only reason I can give for his applying to me to write to you upon this occasion. I am ashamed to think how long I have delayed it. The best excuse I can make is that I have been engaged in a Journey to London & since that in a Remove to Harborough where I have been settled but a few Days. Upon the whole I cannot repent my staying till my Return from London before I wrote, for at S^t. Alban's I met with a Copy of a Letter which M^r. Jennings wrote to M^r. Clarke on the same subject you are now enquiring after, by the Review of which I am something better furnished and prepared to answer your demands than I formerly was.

Our Course of Education at Kibworth was the Employment of 4 years, & every half year we entered upon a new set of Studies, or at least changed the time and the Order of our Lectures.¹³

There are some significant differences between these two documents in terms of presentation and tone. The salutation of the latter does not declare friendship, but rather hints at deference. The letter is not a response to the recipient, but sent at the

¹¹ Printed letters, which were a numerous genre in the eighteenth century, were styled as 'to a Friend' relatively frequently. See Clare Brant, *Eighteenth Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 7-9, 12.

¹² 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 1.

¹³ Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy', f. 1.

request of an intermediary, Mr Some.¹⁴ The introductory paragraph is wordy, filled with excuses about the practicalities of letter-writing and house-moving; and the shift to describing the course is abrupt and unconnected to the introductory paragraph. All this quotidian information is far removed from the stylised scenario Doddridge creates in his later letter. We see, then, how artfully constructed the intimacies of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' are. But why has Doddridge chosen to present what is in fact a long and detailed factual account of studies, authors, timetables and rules in this way?

In Paul Oskar Kristeller's classic study of medieval features of Renaissance scholarly forms and activities, he alerts us to the overlapping genres of treatise and letter and suggests a way of telling the two apart:

In many cases, the letter had a scholarly or philosophical content and was really nothing but a treatise to which the form of the latter gave as it were a personal tone, as the humanists liked to do. In fact it is not always easy to draw the line between letters of this kind and treatises, which are likewise addressed for the most part to a specific person. The sole, half-way safe criterion is generally the size.¹⁵

Doddridge gives his piece two titles, allowing two possible identifications: as 'An Account' of an academic method – in Kristeller's terms, a suitable topic for a treatise – or as a 'letter to a friend'. Doddridge's dual classification of the document alerts us to the importance of its epistolarity: clearly he believed that a treatise on dissenting education would benefit from taking an epistolary form. Janet Gurkin Altman has defined epistolarity as 'the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning'.¹⁶ In the case of Doddridge's 'Account', we might consider whether some meanings of his 'Account' are intensified, and others created, by it being a letter.

¹⁴ David Some (1682-1727) was minister at Market Harborough, where Doddridge was living at the time. He and Doddridge were friends.

¹⁵ Paul Oskar Kristeller, tr. Edward P. Mahoney, Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1974), 12-13.

¹⁶ Janet Gurkin Altman, Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 4.

Casting his 'Account' as a letter enables Doddridge to maintain a particular decorum. A letter must have an addressee, and in this case Doddridge gives that person – his 'friend' – a particular role by specifying on the title-page that he 'had some Thoughts of reviving' the academy. By addressing his 'Account' to a clearly-characterised recipient, Doddridge gives the letter an inherent justification for its length and detail, neither of which was necessarily in keeping with the decorum of a familiar letter.¹⁷ He also separates the person describing the academy (himself) from the proposed tutor of that academy even though ultimately they were one and the same.¹⁸ This was an important distinction for Doddridge, who worried that he might be accused brashly pushing himself forward. Creating the character of a warmly-invoked friend as the recipient for the letter yet leaving that recipient unnamed compels any reader of the 'Account' to take on the role of 'My dear Friend', and consequently invites him into a network of personal exchanges. The letter form foregrounds participation from readers, suggests Gary Schneider: 'One of the most salient early modern characteristics of letters was that they embodied a sense of "dialogic" discourse, predicated as letters were on the assumption of exchange, response, and reciprocity'.¹⁹ Doddridge was not generating demands for a new academy single-handedly: elsewhere in his correspondence he responds to the suggestions of

¹⁷ As well as the works cited above, some studies of letter-writing and epistolarity which discuss the conventions of familiar letters include Eve Tavor Bannet, Empire of letters: letter manuals and transatlantic correspondence, 1688-1820 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Gary Schneider, The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, Letter-writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present Day (Charleston, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2007); and Susan Whyman, The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ It is not clear when precisely Doddridge decided to become a tutor. In February 1728 he told Samuel Clark he had only 'Slight Thoughts' of renewing Jennings's course (Cal. 291), and by March 1729 he was considering taking Joseph Saunders through Jennings's course (Cal. 315). In his comments on Watts's reply he seems to have accepted the task (see below).

¹⁹ Schneider, The Culture of Epistolarity, 189.

others, such as his friend Thomas Saunders, who repeatedly entreated Doddridge to tutor his younger brother.²⁰

Documents relating to John Jennings's academy and Doddridge's academic ideas circulated around the dissenting community. In a letter to his mentor Samuel Clark, Doddridge adds the postscript:

Please to inform me in your next whether M^r Hunt of Newport sent for y^e MSS. of Education w^{ch} I left with you. I gave him a Commission to do it. If he has not I desire M^r Wood would return it to you that it may be ready for a Friend of mine who will call for it next Week.²¹

The image of the manuscript treatise of ideas on education and practical suggestions for a new academy travelling around and being read by a geographically-dispersed community of dissenters is vividly evoked in this postscript, which encourages the reader to view the foundation of a new academy as a consciously collaborative project. The appearance of the document contributes to this process: the pages of Doddridge's 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' are foliated, the text is written in a neat hand, and the document is sturdily bound. These features affirm that the 'Account' was composed carefully and prepares for circulation. Kristeller's description of sixteenth century epistolary practice presents a scenario appropriate to the appearance and diffusion of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method':

The humanist wrote his letters with his reading public in mind, and in this he followed a tradition of the art of letter-writing which can be followed from antiquity down through the entire Middle Ages. The writer as well as the addressee gladly showed around an interesting or beautifully written letter.²²

Framing the 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' as a letter also constructs the project as one in which readers of the 'Account' might participate. It also facilitated the foundation of a new dissenting academy in very practical ways: it allowed Doddridge

²⁰ Cal. 287, 290.

²¹ DWL NCL MS L.1/10/17, Cal. 315 (though Nuttall does not reproduce the postscript), 12 March 1728/9. Doddridge asked others for their opinions on the idea of reviving Jennings's scheme, see Cal. 316.

²² Kristeller, Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning, 12.

to write a personal but factual account of an academy, and the very anonymity of its addressee allowed it to be passed around various readers.²³ The epistolary form of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' facilitated the circulation of ideas while generating the sense of a community project.

Watts' response to the 'Account' affirms Doddridge's choice of genre. He accepts Doddridge's invitation to engage in personal terms with the materials by commencing with a brief encomium of John Jennings and adopting a warm tone which generates a sense of friendship and community. He makes it clear that the 'Account' has affected him emotionally before going on to ask questions and give practical suggestions. Framing information (in the case of Doddridge's 'Account') and suggestions (in Watts's 'Reply') within epistolary features foregrounds a dialogic dimension to the proposals, and emphasises exchange, communication and personal engagement as crucial features of the project to found a new academy. It also situates Doddridge, and dissent, within an educational and philosophical tradition which looked back to classical writers. Seneca's *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* was a central text in the stoic tradition, which shaped an epistolary philosophy in order to construct a theory of community. Senecan ideas had renewed currency among exiled and excluded Royalist circles in seventeenth-century England, as Diana Barnes has outlined.²⁴ While Stuart elites and groups of

²³ This advantage could have been secured by printing 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', but there is no evidence that this was ever considered. The question of why 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' was not privately printed is hard to answer. After all, it was common to frame printed works as letters. There is little evidence that other educational treatises were circulated in print in this period. It is likely, too, that the project developed in an *ad hoc* way, and any possible benefit of printing 'An Account' did not become apparent until later. Multiple printed copies are harder to keep track of than a small number of manuscript copies, and given the dissenters' precarious legal status and widespread opposition to dissenting academies among the Established Church and universities of Oxford and Cambridge, perhaps those involved thought that a printed account of a dissenting academy might be interpreted as a provocation if it fell into the wrong hands.

²⁴ Diana Barnes, 'Mary Cavendish's *Philosophical Letters*', *Parergon* 26:2 (2009), 39-64. Seneca's moral writings were frequently reprinted in translation as well as in Latin, for example Roger L'Estrange's *Seneca's Morals Abstracted* (London: H. Broome, 1678) reached its twelfth edition in 1722.

protestant dissenters of the eighteenth century may appear to have little in common, they both struggled to maintain their distinctive identities in hostile political climates, and found that letters offered a source of and channel for the expression of their community.

The humanist antecedents of letter-writing also share characteristics with Doddridge's aims and style. Erasmus's influential textbook of sample letters *De Conscribendi Epistolis* (itself indebted to Cicero) was used in English grammar schools from the sixteenth century onwards, ensuring that his ideas circulated widely.²⁵ Erasmus's view that letters were a scripted space for homosocial relations is an important, if unarticulated, context for the epistolarity of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method'. *De Conscribendi Epistolis* specifically considers relationships between tutors and students and among friends and offers examples of how these might be inscribed, and 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' and Doddridge's subsequent exchange with Watts negotiate precisely this territory. While these ideas of epistolarity and its community functions were not often actively articulated in the eighteenth century, Doddridge's use of the epistolary form can be seen as a light gesture towards these traditions.²⁶ Given the periodical dismissals of dissenters as rude and unlearned, it seems no coincidence that Doddridge framed his proposals for a serious and thorough education and ministerial training for dissenters in the form favoured by the most esteemed educationalist of an earlier age.²⁷ Doing so

²⁵ Lynn Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 61-90.

²⁶ Susan Whyman has drawn attention to classical letter-writing as a 'stable foundation' for the form of the familiar letter in the eighteenth century in *The Pen and the People*, 23-30.

²⁷ Connections between perceived dissenting rudeness and dissenting education are considered by Strickland Gough in *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest. In a letter to a dissenting minister* (London: J. Roberts, 1730).

evokes Erasmus's Ciceronian ideals of courtesy and friendship and displays the classical learning and rhetorical skill that a dissenting education could provide.²⁸

'I ... have Swell'd my Letter into a Book': identification, forms and use

Doddridge's 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' is an artfully constructed demonstration of dissenting learning, an appeal to the reader to support the proposal for a new academy, and a physical document that circulated among groups of readers. We know that it fulfilled the dialogic function of letters, for it elicited at least one written response. Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"' is, however, very different to the bound letter to which it responds. Its affectionate tone and lively address are reminiscent of a familiar letter, and its specific questions regarding items in 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' show it was definitely intended for Doddridge to read and reply to, but the item itself has none of the physical properties of a letter. There is no date, no salutation, no sign-off, no address, no seal. The sheet of paper is folded and stitched into a document with four leaves which has then been folded in half, rather than being folded in the manner of a letter.

As already noted, Watts commences his response to Doddridge's 'Account' with warm expressions of approval, both for the 'beauties & Congruities' of the course and for the way in which Doddridge has 'so admirably' described it.²⁹ Having created a frame of positive engagement, he proceeds to pose searching questions on the syllabus and practicalities of the course: why are Latin poets not taught until the

²⁸ Erasmus's ideas permeated John Jennings's pedagogy. Lynn Magnusson notes that Erasmus recommended 'role-playing practices for assimilation of speech genres'. The aim to enhance the preaching skills of students motivated weekly sessions of role-play at Jennings's academy which Doddridge described thus: 'It was partly to improve us in an handsome Address, and partly to wear off that ungraceful Bashfulness w^{ch} is so frequently an Embarrassment to the modester part of Young Schollars, that every Wednesday at Night we had a Diversion w^{ch} we us'd to call Drama. In plain English ^this^ was Sometimes a Play or rather a part of one'. See Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue*, 66, and 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 10.

²⁹ Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 1v.

second half-year? Why is oratory training not continued throughout the course? Is adopting a mathematical method for philosophy and theology really appropriate?³⁰ Watts also gives additional suggestions based on his own education – such as reading 'plain Easy books of Divinity' on Saturdays – and expresses reservations about some of the activities Doddridge described. In particular, acting out dramas and visiting the Church of England are singled out as dangerous activities.³¹ Watts's suggestions are presented in the form of a list, and the tone of his questions is abrupt. This is in contrast to the polished language and syntax of Doddridge's 'Account'.

The document also differs from 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' in its manner of composition:

At y^e End of this Course I do not find ^{^this^} one thing mentioned in the whole of it which must be granted to be very necessary & ought not to be omitted. (Viz) that y^e whole Scripture should be read over in y^e 4 years time ~~with y^e Tu~~ perhaps at Morning & evening prayer with y^e Tutors remarks on y^e difficult texts, both Criticall & Controversiall. Whatsoever is omitted this ought not. NB. Page 100 answers this.³²

Crossings out and self-correction in this extract are consistent with the document as a whole, and indicate this was a rough document, in contrast to the carefully-presented and neatly-transcribed 'Account', to which it responds. The remark 'Page 100 answers this' tells us that Watts was drafting these comments as he read, and not afterwards. Watts's comments have been annotated with numbers in Doddridge's hand which correspond to a numbered list of responses on the final leaf. Here, Doddridge answers some of Watts's questions: he says whose maps he prefers, suggests that Watts might like to draw up a system of ontology which could become the academy's textbook and, notably, accepts almost all of Watts's suggested changes with the unequivocal 'Allow'd in its full force. I propose to alter that

³⁰ Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 2-2v.

³¹ 'Watts's Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 2, f. 3.

³² Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 2v.

Circumstance'.³³ Did the paper, having been sent to Doddridge, return to Watts?

Then what happened to it? We find some clues in the final remark from Doddridge:

N^o. 15. I should be very glad of the Concurrence of a person capable of taking a part in the Course if I publickly under<take th>e Work as a Tutor. In the mean Time I propose by the Divines Assistance to make a private Essay with ~~the~~ a few young Gentlemen who have no dependance on our publick Charities. I shall not expect immediately to bring y^e Course to any Thing ^{near} of the perfection that I have describ'd it nor can I hope ever to do it fully. Yet I trust that if God favour me with anything of y^e success w^{ch} my Friends encourage me to expect, the Attempt will be for my own Improvement & that of my pupils: ... I earnestly desire the Advice & prayers of all my pious & learned Friends, & peculiarly of D^r Watts to whom I acknowledge my self exceedingly indebted for these Remarks & his other Favours.³⁴

Doddridge's invocation of 'all my pious and learned friends' suggests he anticipated readers beyond himself and Watts. This remark is the first time Doddridge acknowledges that he himself, rather than his 'Friend' will undertake the work of a tutor. Contemporary readers would require this document alongside 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' to be conversant with the latest developments in the scheme, and it is possible that the two documents circulated together. Perhaps they comprised the MSS of Education' that Doddridge sought news of in March 1728/9.³⁵

Nineteenth-century editors of Watts and Doddridge and twentieth-century scholars were unaware of the existence of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', and thought that Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy' (whose date was altered from 1725 to 1728 by one editor) was the document to which Isaac Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"' responded. This could not have been the case, for Watts makes direct reference to 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', introducing each point with the page number which identifies the section of 'An Account to which he is referring. He writes, for example:

³³ Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 4.

³⁴ Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 4v. Words within angle brackets offer a conjectural reading of words lost where the manuscript is damaged.

³⁵ Cal. 315.

p. 87. I do not think y^e leading ^{^of^} pupills sometimes to the Church of Engl. could be done as things now stand without greater danger than benefit. One might teach them Catholick principles without that danger.³⁶

This is evidently referring to Doddridge's remark about Jennings that:

He took Care to establish us in those Principles and Sentiments of Christian Liberty on which I perswade my self the Dissenting Cause will subsist, till it be happily lost in universal Catholicism: Yet he always taught us to treat the Establishment with Respect. He sometimes attended on the Divine Worship at the Parish Church, and most willingly allow'd us the like Liberty and if we happen'd to hear ourselves abus'd and condemn'd there, he taught us rather to Pity than to retalliate so scandalous a Prostitution of the Ordinances of Religion to subserve the Purposes of Hell.³⁷

This point only appears in 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' and not in Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy'. Nineteenth-century editors avoided the problem of explaining how it was that Watts was referring to items not present in Doddridge's description by suppressing points where this was the case, and removing Watts's page numbers from their transcriptions of the document.³⁸ The discovery of Doddridge's 'Account' corrects an error in scholarship that has caused misunderstandings for over a century.³⁹ However, the problem is not entirely solved. Watts notes 'p. 87' in 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' as the source for his remark. Doddridge's information about Jennings's practice of attending services at the local Anglican church (quite risky behaviour for a dissenting minister in the 1720s) appears on page 75 (f. 40) of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method'. It appears that the extant copy of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' is not the actual manuscript that Watts read. 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' is

³⁶ Watts's 'Reply to Doddridge's "Account"', f. 3.

³⁷ 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 40.

³⁸ Watts's comments have been published in an incomplete form as footnotes to transcriptions of Philip Doddridge's 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy', in Williams and Parsons (eds), The Works of the Rev. P. Doddridge, D.D. (Leeds: E. Baines, 10 vols, 1802-05), vol. 5 (1802) 557-67, and in J. D. Humphreys (ed.), Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge (London: Colburn and Bentley, 5 vols, 1829-31), vol. 2 (1829), 462-475. They also appear, again in an incomplete form, in Thomas Milner, The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D. (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834) with the title 'Dr. Watts's Remarks upon the scheme of Mr. Jennings's Plan of Education, drawn out by Doddridge, with the Annotations of the latter', 461-63.

³⁹ The manuscript has been in Senate House Library, University of London since 1963 but remained unused until Isabel Rivers made a study of the volume in 2002. See Isabel Rivers, 'The Defence of Truth Through the Knowledge of Error: Philip Doddridge's Academy Lectures (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 2003), 6.

undoubtedly in Doddridge's hand, which means that there must have been more than one copy in existence in the eighteenth century. One possible solution is suggested by a letter written to Doddridge's widow by Doddridge's friend, biographer and former student Job Orton more than twenty years after Doddridge's death. Orton wrote:

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 "D^r D's MS Account of M^r Jennings's Method of academical Education" charged 3^s ... 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 a^{bt} it I could, when I was writing the Life, as I knew, from what I remembered of it, that it w^d have been of great use to me in that work. As the Catalogue, in which I saw it, contained the Library of D^r Legh, I conclude D^r D. lent it him ... 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^d be likely to be more acceptable & useful, I have sent it to Daventry for the use of y^e Tutors & academy there, & put it under the particular Care of M^r 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.⁴⁰

As well as describing how Doddridge circulated the document in the 1730s as a shared resource for tutors, this evidence strongly indicates that Doddridge kept a personal copy of 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', perhaps to consult in his own work as a tutor. However we still do not know what happened to the copy that Watts did read, or whether there were other copies.

Conclusions: reimagining the academy

As these examples of how the form and content of the materials were fashioned have shown, Doddridge wanted his 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' to be emotionally affective as well as providing information. He explicitly combines these strands when he writes:

⁴⁰ DWL NCL MS L.1/8/76, 22 April 1776. It has not been possible to identify 'Mr Legh'. Thomas Robins (1732-1810) was minister and tutor at Daventry academy from 1775 until 1781. Daventry academy was named by Doddridge as the successor to his own academy at Northampton. It was led by Caleb Ashworth (a former student of Doddridge's) until his death in 1775, whereupon Thomas Robins took over. It is not known what happened to 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method' between closure of Daventry academy in 1789 and the acquisition of the manuscript by Senate House Library from F. Norman in 1763.

it wou'd be easy for me to break out into something very passionate, if I wou'd indulge to the Show of my affections; nay it is very difficult to refrain from doing it. But I will not give way to the Fulness of my Heart, nor to those Tears which have often forc'd themselves into my Eyes since I begun this Letter. I wou'd rather chuse to express my regards to the Memory of so great a Friend, in a more manly and rational Way. And I can recollect none more proper than this Attempt, to continue the Remembrance of this useful scheme he had form'd, and if possible to revive the prosecution of it.⁴¹

To Doddridge, the letter is an important statement of his esteem for John Jennings and a mechanism for creating an institution which builds on the foundations of Jennings's educational system, which is the most fitting memorial to his tutor he can devise. The decorum of the letter permits this effusion of intimate feeling and invites collective participation in the foundation of a new academy. Both these activities are appropriate means of memorialising Jennings.

Among scholars, Doddridge's academy is one of the best-known and most frequently discussed dissenting academies, yet little attention has been paid to the significance of personal relationships to it. In his 'Account of Mr Jennings's Method' Doddridge calls Jennings's academy 'the Family'.⁴² As Naomi Tadmor has shown, early modern use of the term 'family' often denoted a household with an authoritative leader, which need not exclusively comprise of blood relatives.⁴³ Doddridge's own academy was a place where a mixed community lived together. As its tutor, he gave lectures and engaged in private conversation with the students who boarded in the house. He employed an assistant tutor to give lectures and undertake pastoral duties, and his wife ran the domestic side of the academy. 'Family prayers' (which Doddridge led) and meals brought Doddridge, his wife and children, students, assistant tutor and household servants together each day. As well as a place of education, the academy was a home and religious community. The model for this structure is articulated in

⁴¹ 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 47.

⁴² 'An Account of Mr Jennings's Method', f. 8.

⁴³ Naomi Tadmor, Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21-24.

Doddridge's 'Account', which, unlike the earlier 'Shorter Description of Jennings's Academy', detailed the social and domestic elements of Jennings's academy with loving attentiveness.

The intellectual and social environment of Doddridge's academy can be better understood with reference to Jennings's academy, and particularly by attending to how Doddridge chose to present the course and the ways in which he circulated information about it. Indeed, if the materials relating to the foundation of Doddridge's academy are used solely as a repository of information about the academic courses at dissenting academies, an important dimension of Doddridge's educational project is effaced. The epistolary form in which he chose to present his 'Account' had built into it the capacity for dialogue and friendship, and Doddridge's style encouraged personal engagement with his words. Doddridge's proposals to found a new academy welcomed inclusive, thoughtful debate and promoted warm personal relationships; features which were to characterise the conduct of his own dissenting academy.

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