

**LIFE OF PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D.
D.: WITH NOTICES OF SOME
OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
AND SPECIMENS OF HIS STYLE**

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Life of Philip Doddridge, D. D.: with notices of some of his contemporaries, and specimens of his style by D. A. Harsha

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D. A. HARSHA

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PREFACE

To persons of refined minds, and of sincere and ardent piety, it must afford great pleasure and profit to study carefully the life, character and writings of PHILIP DODDRIDGE, a name 'on which all who have sympathy with the generous, the benevolent and the devout will ever delight to linger.' The object of the present volume is to sketch the personal history and character of this excellent divine; to give some account of his times and of some of his distinguished cotemporaries; and to present a few choice specimens of his style.

The author has aimed to give a clear, succinct and comprehensive account of the principal events in the active and valuable life of Dr. Doddridge, in chronological order, with special reference to the interesting, touching and melancholy scenes of his last days, till the happy hour when, 'without one cloud of gloom,' his spirit winged its way to God. The dates and leading circumstances connected with his most important publications are also given, with brief criticisms on their peculiar merits.

Some of the gems of Doddridge's epistolary correspondence, throwing light on a variety of interesting matters, are interwoven with the biographical narrative. It is worthy of remark, that some of his earlier letters, written in the midst of rural delights, in his free and fresh communion with nature, display more of the beauties of imagination and of style than his later writings, reminding one, frequently, of the easy, graceful and vigorous letters of Pope, Gray, and some other distinguished writers of the classic age of Queen Anne and George I. The remark which Mr. Morell has made respecting Doddridge is, we think, very true, that 'none who have read his earlier correspondence can doubt, that if he had chosen to direct the

bent of his genius to works of imagination and taste he could have rivalled some of the most sprightly wits of that polished age.' Doddridge carried on an extensive correspondence with many eminent theologians and literary men, such as Samuel Clarke, David Jennings, Isaac Watts, John Barker, Hugh Farmer, Bishop Warburton, Daniel Neal, Benjamin Fawcett, Dr. Stonehouse, Robert Blair, William Secker, Nathaniel Lardner, Gilbert West, and Samuel Davies. As an instance of his large correspondence we quote his own words on one occasion; 'I marshalled my unanswered letters, and found them one hundred and six, near one-quarter of which reached me since Friday noon (and it was then Monday evening), and all this though I have written between fifty and sixty letters the last fourteen days, with my own hand, having no secretary.'

As it is interesting to trace the progress of intellectual discipline in superior minds, the author has been careful to mention some of the principal books which Doddridge studied, especially during his student-life, and which aided in the development of his mental powers, and in forming his taste. Doddridge, as it will be seen, was a great reader; but he did not peruse a book superficially; he carefully reflected on what he read and endeavored at the same time to make the stores of knowledge thus accumulated subservient to some valuable practical purpose—to the improvement of his understanding and heart. In the early days of his ministry, during his studious pursuits in a rural retreat, he writes to his brother-in-law: 'I find it most useful to join *reading* and *reflection*, and would not entirely depend either upon myself or others.' When such a course is pursued with regard to reading we can readily say with old Bishop Hall: 'No law binds us to read all; but the more we can take in and *digest*, the greater will be our improvement.' The criticisms of Doddridge on some of the books he read, during his student-life, frequently show a fine literary taste and a just appreciation of the beauties of celebrated authors.

Several of the specimens in the last chapter of this volume are taken from Doddridge's *Sermons* in four volumes octavo, published in London, in 1826, now a scarce work. It is believed that these selections, both in prose and in poetry, are among the choicest that can be made from his practical and devotional compositions. Of the sermons of Doddridge, in general, Mr. Morell has well remarked that they 'furnish delightful specimens of genuine pulpit eloquence;' that 'they breathe the very soul of tenderness, and pastoral fidelity;' and that 'they abound with earnest and pathetic appeals to the conscience.'

In the preparation of this volume the principal publications relating to Doddridge and his friends have been carefully consulted; while some information belonging to this subject has been gained in conversation with several of his descendants. The author would especially acknowledge his obligations to the biographical memoirs of Doddridge by Orton, Kippis and Stoughton; and to *The Correspondence and Diary of Doddridge*, in five octavo volumes, edited by his great grandson, John Doddridge Humphreys. Mr. Humphreys has been rather severely criticised in Stoughton's *Memorial*, in the *Boston Christian Examiner*, and in other publications, for laying before the public, in these volumes, some of Doddridge's youthful letters of a trifling character, and some written in a very affectionate style, and addressed to certain young ladies of his acquaintance under romantic names. Admitting that the volumes of Mr. Humphreys are, in some respects, injudiciously edited, we, nevertheless, regard them, on the whole, as very interesting and valuable.

While alluding to this foible of Doddridge's youth it may be proper to remark that other faults have been laid to his charge—such as 'his habits of speaking somewhat ostentatiously of his own employments, and particularly that accommodation of religious phraseology to the opinions or associations of others.' As Dr. Kippis has remarked, 'It is not the lot of the purest

virtue to pass through the world without reproach.' And Doddridge, with all his moral excellence, and in the midst of the applause he received from the great and the good in his day, also endured reproach from the tongues of the envious and the malicious. Orton in his *Memoirs*, has devoted a whole section to his behaviour under injuries. Doddridge himself thus gives us his own sentiment on this point: 'I settle it as an established point with me, that the more diligently and faithfully I serve Christ, the greater reproach, and the more injury I must expect.' With reference to some calumnies that his enemies aimed at him, his faithful friend the Rev. John Barker very pointedly writes to him; 'As for the unmanly flirts, and ungenerous reflections of those who are not worthy to carry your books after you, it puts me in mind of a dog barking at the moon, which after all his impotency shines, and is still very far out of his reach.' With all Doddridge's trivial faults we verily believe that few persons have ever exhibited in so favorable a light the various excellencies of the Christian character. In the annals of sacred biography few names have been so universally revered by the Christian world for amiableness, zeal, devotedness and piety. And to the most distant posterity will his name continue to shine in the firmament of the Christian church as a star of the purest and gentlest lustre.

May the divine blessing still attend the labors of this saintly divine, who *being dead yet speaketh* in his valuable writings in strains of exquisite simplicity, tenderness and pathos, to thousands in all Christian lands; and by means of his writings may multitudes still be enlightened and guided to the blessed Saviour, who is the way and the truth, and the life,—THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR.

'The joy of earth and heaven.'

D. A. H.

ARGYLE, N. Y., May 1st, 1864.

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DODDRIDGE WAS A BURNING AND SHINING LIGHT WHICH, IN DAYS OF MORE THAN ORDINARY COLDNESS, DIVINE PROVIDENCE WAS PLEASED TO ENKINDLE, IN ORDER TO IMPART BOTH WARMTH AND ILLUMINATION TO THE PROFESSING CHRISTIAN WORLD.—
Bishop Jebb.

DODDRIDGE'S HEART WAS MADE UP OF ALL THE KINDLIER FEELINGS OF OUR NATURE, AND WAS WHOLLY DEVOTED TO THE SALVATION OF MEN'S SOULS. WHATEVER HE DID, HE APPEARS TO HAVE DONE TO THE GLORY OF GOD.—*Dr. Diddin.*

DODDRIDGE IS NOW MY PRIME FAVORITE AMONG DIVINES.—
Robert Hall.

HIS THOUGHTS HAVE A DEW STILL ON THEM, LIKE FLOWERS FRESH GATHERED IN THE FIELDS OF HOLY MEDITATION.—*Rev. Dr. Hamilton*