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The Christian Mind of Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

The Gospel according to an
Evangelical Congregationalist

by Alan C. Clifford

Mr. Clifford gave this paper at the Congregational Studies Conference held in Westminster Chapel, London, on Saturday, 3rd April, 1982, under the auspices of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. Philip Doddridge was honoured in his day by the award of a D.D. from the University of Aberdeen at the early age of 36; it is a pleasure for an editor who teaches in that institution to publish this tribute to his memory.

I.

Philip Doddridge is usually remembered as a hymnwriter. For the majority of English speaking Christians, their knowledge of him stops there. This lecture is concerned to demonstrate that Doddridge represents all that is best and biblical in the 'evangelical congregationalist' tradition. His evangelicalism is conspicuous in his hymns, and his convictions regarding church order and baptism place him in that denomination of Protestant Dissenters known as 'Congregationalists'.

As a hymnwriter, Philip Doddridge needs no introduction. The hymn-books of many denominations suggest that his name will not be forgotten. 'Hark the glad sound' and 'O happy day' still find a place in worship of God's people. It is no small commendation that 'O God of Bethel' was chosen for the Queen's Silver Jubilee service at St. Paul's Cathedral in June, 1977.

Yet Doddridge's hymns were just a fraction of his vast literary output¹ and an even smaller part of his many and widely creative activities. Apart from Doddridge's regular preaching ministry, the hymns might never have seen the light of day. They were written to supplement the sermon, and given out, line by line, after it had been preached. The hymns were used as a teaching aid, designed to reinforce and apply the preached word. This fact reminds us that Doddridge was primarily a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a calling which he considered 'the most desirable employment in the world'.²

¹ See Erik Routley, *The Hymns of Philip Doddridge*, in *Philip Doddridge, His Contribution to English Religion*, ed. G. F. Nuttall (1951), 46f. Also Ernest Payne, *The Hymns of Philip Doddridge*, in *Philip Doddridge: Nonconformity and Northampton*, ed. R. L. Greenall (1981), 15f.

² Job Orton, *Memoir of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev. P. Doddridge, D.D. of Northampton* (1766), in *Doddridge, Works*, ed. Williams and Parsons (1802-5), Vol.1, 26.

From the time of his settlement in Northampton in December, 1729, to his death in October, 1751, Philip Doddridge served the cause of Christ with intense energy and total dedication. As Charles Stanford wrote in 1880, he 'seemed to live so many lives at a time'.³ In addition to being the pastor of Castle Hill Independent Church — his ordination took place on March 19, 1730 — he was principal tutor of what was to become the most famous of all the Dissenting Academies.⁴

The dual role of pastor and tutor involved Doddridge in a wide range of interests and pursuits. As a tutor, he became an apologist, philosopher and a man of science, besides being a theologian, training young men for the ministry. What Doddridge managed to accomplish in 21 busy years was directed by a single pre-occupation. In the words of Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall, evangelism was 'the thread on which his multi-coloured life was strung. It was for this above all that he wrote, preached, corresponded and educated his students in the Academy'.⁵

Doddridge lived at a time when rationalism was gnawing at the roots of Christianity. Fierce theological controversy was commonplace; it was no easy thing for a young minister to be certain which opinion best reflected 'the mind of God in the Scriptures'. It was a day of extremes, and Doddridge believed with Richard Baxter before him that the Bible demanded a 'middle-way'. That meant avoiding the incipient fatalism of much High Calvinism on one hand, and the implicit humanism of Arian-Arminianism on the other.⁶

Agreeing with Baxter's theological eclecticism, Doddridge was also deeply concerned with Protestant unity. He did all he could to root out bigotry and sectarianism, being a friend to all who 'loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth'. He had fraternal relations with Dissenters and Churchmen alike.⁷

In his Academy lectures⁸ we see how rigorous was the intellectual training Doddridge provided for his students. In his teaching method he was 'liberal' rather than 'dogmatic'; in other words he encouraged free enquiry. He was impatient with any theological system which failed to observe the balance of Biblical truth. Scripture was to be the only

³ Charles Stanford, *Philip Doddridge* (1880), 41.

⁴ See Irene Parker, *The Dissenting Academies in England* (1914), 101.

⁵ Introduction to *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, D.D. (1702-51)*, (1979), xxxv.

⁶ See G. F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A study in a tradition* (1951).

⁷ See G. F. Nuttall, *Chandler, Doddridge and the Archbishop: a study in eighteenth-century ecumenism*, *Journal of the U.R.C. History Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1973), 42f.

⁸ See *Lectures on Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity*, in *Works*, Vols. 4 & 5.

ultimate authority. He was concerned that the truth itself, rather than his or any man's opinion, should mould his students' minds.

Doddridge's essentially conservative outlook is best seen in his magnum opus, *The Family Expositor*,⁹ and his *Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament*.¹⁰ His theological foundations being assured, Doddridge was an advocate of the 'good old evangelical way of preaching'.¹¹

In acquainting his students with philosophy and scientific questions, Doddridge wanted them to be thoughtful preachers, who would be able to say *why*, as well as *what* they believed. He believed Christianity was capable of a rational defence. He was therefore concerned with apologetics. Doddridge's reply to Dodwell's *Christianity not founded on argument* was his most ambitious intellectual piece of writing, in which he demonstrates that faith and reason do not necessarily conflict.¹²

Of equal importance to Doddridge was the practical impact of the gospel. He was no armchair theologian. As co-founder of the Northampton Infirmary and promoter of a Charity school in the town, Doddridge demonstrated the power of Christian example. His patriotic activity in connection with the invasion of Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745, when he urged his congregation to join the Northampton Militia and thus helped to decide the invaders to turn back at Derby, reveals his sense of Christian social responsibility.¹³

Nowhere is Doddridge's commitment to evangelism more clearly seen than in the welcome he extended to the infant Methodist movement.¹⁴ His friendship with George Whitefield, John Wesley and others, was typical of his spirit. When older Dissenters, including Isaac Watts, viewed the revival with cool and suspicious detachment, Doddridge was ready to perceive the hand of God at work. He rejoiced that God had raised up such men, in such an ungodly age. The new Dissent turned to the old for guidance: Whitefield asked Doddridge to revise his *Journal*, and John Wesley consulted him for a reading list for his preachers. Doddridge's own lasting contribution to the revival was his most popular

⁹ Many editions were published. See *Works*, Vols.6-10.

¹⁰ *Works*, Vol.4, 168f.

¹¹ Orton, in *Works*, Vol.1, 153.

¹² *Ibid*, 469f.

¹³ See Malcolm Deacon, *Philip Doddridge of Northampton* (1980), 114f., and also Victor A. Hatley, *A Local Dimension: Philip Doddridge and Northampton Politics*, in Greenall (*op. cit.*), 77f.

¹⁴ See my *Philip Doddridge and the Oxford Methodists* in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol.XLII, Part 3 (1979), 75-80. Also Alan Everitt, *Philip Doddridge and the Evangelical Tradition* in Greenall (*op. cit.*), 31f.

book, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. It was to the reading of this book that William Wilberforce traced his own spiritual awakening.¹⁵

As with Mozart in another context, one feels that Doddridge's life was cut short. He died and was buried in Lisbon, whither he had been sent by his congregation in the hope of restoring his health, at the age of 49. One cannot but be amazed at the consistent Christian dedication of a life all too brief. His life and example have bequeathed a rich and lasting legacy to the churches.

II.

Whereas a certain amount of interest in Doddridge has been generated in recent years, more attention has been paid to the man than to his beliefs. This is understandable, since Doddridge was an attractive personality by any standard. However, it is also unfortunate, since for Doddridge personally, his faith and his life were of a piece: what he *was*, was due, in great measure, to what he *believed* and *thought*. At least two reasons can explain the deficiencies in current Doddridge interest. *Firstly*, Doddridge was not an original and profound thinker of the stature of Augustine, or Thomas Aquinas, of Luther, Calvin or Barth, although he was an independent one. *Secondly*, the late twentieth century is little interested in the kind of theological convictions shared by Doddridge and his generation. This was stated quite explicitly in the bicentenary celebrations of Doddridge's death in 1951, when Roger Thomas said, 'The important thing for us, however, is not Doddridge's theological opinions . . .'¹⁶

Renowned as Doddridge was for his gracious and charitable disposition, it has become necessary to dispel the myth that truth and conviction were unimportant to him. His daughter's oft quoted retort to a critic of her father's theological views, 'My father's orthodoxy is charity!'¹⁷ has reinforced the fact that, in his lifetime, Doddridge was accused of being indifferent to theological convictions. The truth, however, is otherwise, although in an ecumenical age, one is not surprised to find that the myth is preferred to the reality. Whilst Doddridge always lectured, preached and wrote according to the apostolic maxim of 'speaking the truth in love', it must never be forgotten that it was undiluted Biblical truth which he attempted to proclaim. We must not allow Doddridge's charm to seduce us into neglecting Doddridge's theology.

¹⁵ See R. I. and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (1838), Vol. 1, 76.

¹⁶ Roger Thomas, *Doddridge and Liberalism in Religion in Philip Doddridge*, ed. Nuttall (1951), 134.

¹⁷ See *Philip Doddridge*, ed. Nuttall (1951), 35.

The task before us is to allow Doddridge the theologian to speak to us. It would have been much more *entertaining* to dwell upon the purely biographical and anecdotal details of this godly man's life, but we must be concerned, not so much with entertainment, as with instruction. My desire is to complete the picture, to correct any misconceptions, and to justify a continuing study of the life and work of Dr. Philip Doddridge.

What we are doing needs little justification. Serious Christian people are aware that important issues demand our attention. Ours is the day of such books as *The Myth of God Incarnate*. It is also the day of the Ecumenical movement, the Nationwide Initiative on Evangelism, Liberation theology, the Charismatic movement and the Papal visit. The Christian Church is a restless institution, uncertain of its message, and doubtful of its relevance or place in the modern world.

Whilst Philip Doddridge is no infallible guide, he did at least address himself to issues very similar to those which face us today. Since these issues are of eternal significance, we are not being retrogressive in considering some of his views, although they were uttered 250 years ago.

Doddridge was, pre-eminently, a biblical theologian in the Reformed tradition. He believed in the full Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible. For him, the Bible was the Word of God. In his *Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament*, he tackles the issues which still trouble biblical scholars. His view of inspiration does not lead him to deny that the human instruments employed their own choice of words: he is not therefore committed to the crudely mechanical dictation theory of inspiration. Whilst denying that the original documents had any errors, he does not feel that the cause of truth is lost in admitting the possibility of minor errors in copies. Doddridge emphasizes the relationship between *inspiration and authority*:

Nothing can be more evident, than that a firm and cordial belief of the inspiration of the sacred scripture is of the highest moment; not only to the edification and peace of the church, but in a great measure to its very existence. For if this be given up, the authority of the revelation is enervated, and its use destroyed: The star which is to direct our course, is clouded; our compass is broke to pieces; and we are left to make the voyage of life in sad uncertainty, amidst a thousand rocks, and shelves, and quicksands . . .¹⁸

For Doddridge, the Bible itself is above theology. It tests and regulates our thinking:

Let us therefore always remember that . . . we are indispensably obliged to receive with calm and reverend submission all the dictates of scripture; to make

¹⁸ *Dissertation on the New Testament, Works, Vol.4, 168.*

it our oracle; and, in this respect, to set it at a due distance from all other writings whatsoever; as it is certain, there in no other book in the world, that can pretend to equal authority, and to produce equal or comparable proofs to support such a pretention. Let us measure the truth of our own sentiments, or those of others, in the great things which scripture teaches, by their conformity to it. And O that the powerful charm of this blessed book might prevail to draw all that do sincerely regard it, into this centre of unity!¹⁹

On so basic a doctrine as the Trinity, Doddridge honestly faced the problems we all have in making rational sense of our faith. He was afraid of giving the impression that there are three gods — a misunderstanding which the Athanasian creed might suggest — and equally he was at pains to avoid the idea that the names of the three persons are but mere names of *one* person — the Sabellian heresy. His statement of the Trinity in his *Divinity Lectures* is simple and straightforward:

The Scripture represents the Divine being as appearing in, and manifesting himself by the distinct persons of *Father, Son* and *Holy Ghost*; each of which has his peculiar province in accomplishing the work of our redemption and salvation, and to each of which we owe an unlimited veneration, love and obedience.²⁰

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The fundamental difficulty reason poses for faith is met by a quotation from Jeremy Taylor, the famous seventeenth century bishop:

Dr. Jeremiah Taylor says, 'that he who goes about to speak of the mystery of the trinity, and does it by words and names of man's invention, talking of essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, priorities in co-equalities, &c, and unity in pluralities, may amuse himself and build a tabernacle in his head, and talk something he knows not what; but the good man, that feels the power of the Father, and to whom the Son is become wisdom, sanctification and redemption, in whose heart the love of the Spirit of God is shed abroad, this man, though he understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he alone truly understands the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.'²¹

It is surely wise to settle the matter thus!

The early eighteenth century debates about the doctrine of the Trinity centred on the person of Christ. The most urgent question of the day was, 'What think ye of Christ; whose son is he?' Arianism denied the full Deity of Christ, insisting that He was created rather than begotten, and, in his early years, Doddridge admits to leaning towards this view. By the time he commenced his ministry, his views were thoroughly orthodox. In the *Family Expositor* we read:

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁰ *Works*, Vol.5, 187.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

(*I am Alpha and Omega.*) That these titles should be repeated so soon, in a connection which demonstrates they are given to Christ, will appear very remarkable . . . And I cannot forbear recording it, that *this text* has done more than any other in the Bible, toward preventing me from giving in to *that scheme*, which would make our Lord Jesus Christ no more than a *deified creature*.²² (Note on Rev. 1:11).

I am deeply sensible of the sublime and mysterious nature of the doctrine of Christ's deity, as here declared; but it would be quite foreign to my purpose to enter into a large discussion of that great foundation of our faith; it has often been done by much abler hands. It was, however, matter of conscience with me, on the one hand, thus strongly to declare my belief of it; and, on the other, to leave it as far as I could in the simplicity of scripture expressions.²³ (Note on John 1:1).

Justly hath our Redeemer said, *Blessed is the man that is not offended in me*: and we may peculiarly apply the words to that great and glorious doctrine of the *deity of Christ*, which is here before us. A thousand high and curious thoughts will naturally arise in our corrupt hearts on this view of it; but may divine grace subdue them all to the obedience of an humble faith; so that, with Thomas, we may each of us fall down at his feet, and cry out with sincere and unreserved devotion, *My Lord and my God*.²⁴ (Comment on John 1:1-14).

When such foundational truths of the Bible were discarded, it was common for many to preach a *gospel of morality*, rather than a *gospel of Grace*. When 'evangelical doctrines' were under threat, Doddridge made his unequivocal response in his two sermons on *Salvation by Grace*:

Salvation by grace is not a subject which grows out of date in a few months. This glorious doctrine has been the joy of the church in all ages on earth; and it will be the song of all that have received it in truth throughout the ages of eternity, and be pursued in the heavenly regions with evergrowing admiration and delight.²⁵

At the very heart of the Gospel was the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Doddridge, there was no salvation, but through the precious blood of Christ. It was a substitutionary atonement. In his sermon *Christ's Invitation to Thirsty Souls*, he declares:

The tears of our blessed Redeemer must needs be convincing and affecting, if the mind be not sunk into an almost incredible stupidity; but his blood is still more so. View him, my brethren, not only in the previous scenes of his abasement, his descent from heaven, and his abode on earth; but view him on mount Calvary, extended on the cross, torn with thorns, wounded with nails, pierced

²² Works, Vol.10, 431.

²³ Works, Vol.6, 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Works, Vol.2, 553.

with a spear; and then say, whether there be not a voice in each of these sacred wounds, which loudly proclaims the tenderness of his heart, and demonstrates, beyond all possibility of dispute or suspicion, his readiness to relieve the distressed soul, that cries to him for the blessings of the gospel. He died to purchase them, not for himself, but for us; and can it be thought he will be unwilling to bestow them? We may well conclude that he *loved us*, since he shed *his blood to wash us from our sins* (Rev. 1:5): *For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13); *but he hath commended his love toward us*, hath set it off by this illustrious and surprising circumstance, *that while we were strangers and enemies he hath died for us* (Romans 5:8).²⁶

That our salvation was in the hands of God, and that the initiative of redemption was with Him led Doddridge to embrace two other great Bible truths which were under attack in his day — Predestination and Election. In the *Family Expositor* we read:

... let us go back with unutterable pleasure to the *gracious purpose* which he was pleased to form in his own compassionate breast, when he *chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world*, when he *predestinated us through him to the adoption of children*. Let us acknowledge the freedom of his grace in it, that we are thus *predestinated according to the purpose of him* who, with proper regard to the nature of his intelligent and free creatures, *worketh all things agreeably to the good pleasure of his will*, and *maketh us accepted in the beloved*, that we may be *to the praise of the glory of his grace*.²⁷ (*Comment on Eph. 1:1-14*).

In short, grace was the saving work of a sovereign God. In his *Divinity Lectures* we read:

From hence it will further appear, that the reason of God's predestinating some to everlasting life, was not fetched from a foresight of their faith and obedience, considered as independent upon any communication of grace from him, but that it is to be referred into his sovereign mercy and free grace; which is also the language of many other scriptures, Titus 3:4, 5; Ephesians 2:8, 9.²⁸

Therefore, as a concomitant to the natural unbelief of the human heart, Doddridge — with Calvin and Baxter — resolves the difference between the believer and unbeliever in terms of *Common and Special Grace*. In *Christ's Invitation to Thirsty Souls* he says:

I know, there is a great deal of difference between the common operations of the Spirit on the minds of those who continue obstinate and impenitent, and

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 601-2.

²⁷ *Works*, Vol.9, 328.

²⁸ *Works*, Vol.5, 259.

those special influences by which he sweetly but powerfully subdues the hearts of those, who are *chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world*. Yet I am persuaded, that none to whom the Gospel comes are utterly neglected by that sacred agent.²⁹

As a theological tutor, Doddridge was aware of the danger of pushing logic too far: it must be kept under a tight rein. As with Richard Baxter before him, Doddridge resisted the temptation to deduce from election that Christ only died for the elect. There were too many 'alls' in Scripture. So, in his *Divinity Lectures*, Doddridge says:

It is plain . . . that there is a sense, in which Christ may be said to have died for all, *i.e.* as he has procured an offer of pardon to all, provided they sincerely embrace the Gospel. Cf. John 3:16; 6:50, 51; Romans 5:18; 8:32; 1 Corinthians 8:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 19; 1 Timothy 2:4, 6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2.³⁰

It is interesting to observe at this point, that Doddridge refers his students to John Calvin's views on the extent of the atonement. What Dr. R. T. Kendall³¹ has stunned the Reformed Evangelical world with in recent days was known to Baxter and Doddridge — that Calvin believed Christ died for *all men*.³² The doctrine of limited atonement was an instance of logic going beyond Scripture. Thus Dr. John Owen, whose view Baxter opposed, was called the 'over-orthodox doctor',³³ because of his work on the atonement, *The Death of death, in the death of Christ*. Owen's position was embryonic hyper-Calvinism — what Doddridge called 'High Calvinism'. He, like Baxter, was known as a 'moderate' (or 'true') Calvinist.

²⁹ Works, Vol.2, 600.

³⁰ Works, Vol.5, 214.

³¹ See *Calvin and English Calvinism* (1979), 13f.

³² *Calvin on the extent of the Atonement*:

(a). It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world . . . Hence, we conclude that, though reconciliation is offered to all through Him; yet the benefit is peculiar to the elect . . . God reconciles the world to Himself, reaches to all, but that it is not sealed indiscriminately on the hearts of all to whom it comes so as to be effectual. (*Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, tr. J. K. S. Reid (1961), 148-9).

(b). Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of all to whom it is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive Him. (*Commentary on Romans* (5:18), tr. Ross Mackenzie (1961), 117-118).

(c). Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world but effectively only for the elect . . . I allow the truth of this. *Commentary on St. John and 1 John*, (1 Jn. 2:2) tr. T. H. L. Parker (1961), Vol.2, 244.

³³ See Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge*, 10.

However, the efficacy of the atonement was guaranteed by election, and this was where 'moderate' Calvinism differed from the universalist view of the Arminians. So, with Baxter and Calvin, Doddridge says in his *Lectures*:

. . . there (is) a sense, in which Christ might be said to die for all; as all men partake of some benefit by his death, and such provision is made for their salvation, as lays the blame of their ruin, if they miscarry, entirely upon themselves: but it was in a very peculiar and much nobler sense, that he died for the elect, intending evidently to secure for them, and only for them, the everlasting blessings of his Gospel . . . John 10:15, 16, 26; 17:2, 9, 16.³⁴

Doddridge had no inhibitions about being evangelistic as a result of the Bible's teaching about election. To say that God's sovereignty makes humans mere automatons, or that evangelism is unnecessary, and that strivings for holiness are pointless, is to abuse the doctrine of election and fly in the face of God's Word. Therefore, Doddridge shows us the biblical basis for human activity. In the *Family Expositor*, he says:

(Will have all men to be saved) It is far from being my design, in any of these notes, to enter deep into controversy, but I must confess I have never been satisfied with that interpretation which explains all men here merely as signifying some of all sorts and ranks of men; since I fear it might also be said, on the principles of those who are fondest of this gloss, that he also wills all men to be condemned. On the other hand, if many are not saved, it is certain the words must be taken with some limitation, which the following clause, he wills their coming to the knowledge of the truth, must also prove. The meaning therefore seems to be, that God has made sufficient provision for the salvation of all, and that it is to be considered as the general declaration of his will, that all who know the truth themselves, should publish it to all around them, so far as their influence can extend.³⁵ (Note on 1 Tim. 2:4).

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With the advent of the Methodist revival, attention became focused on the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit. Doddridge made plain his view of the Holy Spirit's work in the new birth through his *Discourses on Regeneration*.³⁶ As regards what is known today as the 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', Doddridge believed a distinction was to be drawn between the new birth and the baptism of the Spirit. In the *Family Expositor*, he comments on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost thus:

Thus did the blessed Jesus accomplish what had been foretold concerning him (Matthew 3:11), that he should baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost and

³⁴ *Works*, Vol.5, 263.

³⁵ *Works*, Vol.9, 581.

³⁶ *Works*, Vol.2, 371f.

with fire. And surely the *sacred flame* did not only illuminate *their minds* with celestial brightness, but did also cause *their whole hearts* to glow with love to God and zeal for his gospel. To this purpose, may he still be *imparted to us*, whether we hold public or private stations in the *church*; and may our regards to him be ever most dutifully maintained. Especially may he be *poured out* upon the *ministers* of it, to direct them how they should *speak the wonderful things of God*; and may their *hearers*, under his gracious energy, *gladly receive the word*.³⁷ (*Comment on Acts 2:1-21*).

Doddridge understood the 'sealing' or 'witness' of the Holy Spirit in the context of the pentecostal blessing. He expounds Romans 8:16 as 'some inward impression of God's Spirit upon the believer's mind, assuring them that they are Christians indeed'.³⁸ For this blessing Doddridge urges the doubting believer to 'Plead hard . . . at the throne of grace. Lay hold on God by faith; and say, 'Lord, I will not let Thee go till Thou bless me . . .'.³⁹ However, Doddridge also distinguished between the Baptism of the Spirit and the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. Now that the canon of Scripture was complete, the latter were not necessary. He was at one with the Reformers, Puritans and Methodists when he said that:

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Many things may be said of the *charismata*, or the extraordinary gifts and powers of the apostles and primitive (early) Christians, which were so peculiar to that age, that we have no personal concern in them at all.⁴⁰

Doddridge also shared Baxter's passion for Christian Unity, what we would regard today as *evangelical unity*. He was grieved at the Christian 'fragmentation' of his day. In his comment on John 17:21, he says:

(That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.) This plainly intimates that dissensions among Christians would not only be uncomfortable to themselves, but would be a means of bringing the truth and excellence of the Christian religion into question: and he must be a stranger to what hath passed, and is daily passing, in the world, who does not see what fatal advantage they have given to infidels to misrepresent it as a calamity, rather than to regard it as a blessing to mankind. May we be so wise as to take the warning, before we are quite *destroyed one of another!* (Galatians 5:15)⁴¹ (*Note on John 17:21*).

Doddridge was impatient with denominationalism, which he called 'party spirit'. He did all he could to bring Christian people together,

³⁷ *Works*, Vol.7, 514.

³⁸ *The Witness of the Spirit in Sermons* (1826), Vol.2, 381.

³⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.3, 15.

⁴⁰ *Works*, Vol.1, 554.

⁴¹ *Family Expositor, Works*, Vol.7, 339.

believing that what was agreed upon was much greater than what divided them. Listen to his rebuke of our divisions:

In the mean while, let us avoid, as much as possible, a *party spirit*; and not be fond of listing ourselves under the *name* of this, or that man, how wise, how good, how great soever, for surely, if the names of *Peter* and *Paul* were in this view to be declined, much more are those, which, in these latter days, have so unhappily crumbled the *Christian* and *Protestant* interest, and have given such sad occasion to our enemies to reproach us. *Christ is not divided*: nor were *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or even *Peter*, or *Paul*, crucified for us; nor were we baptized into any of their names.⁴² (*Comment on 1 Cor. 1:10-17*).

Christian re-union did not mean the sinking of differences, or that our sincere convictions were to be suppressed. It was a case of 'speaking the truth in love', as he explained in a sermon:

Truth is indeed too sacred a thing ever to be denied on any consideration; and so far as we are in our own consciences persuaded that any particular truth is important, neither honour or charity will allow us to give it up, as a point of mere indifferent speculation. Let us therefore ever be ready, when properly called out to the service, to plead its cause in the name of the God of truth; but let it be in a manner worthy of him, a manner which may not offend him as the God of love. And let us be greatly upon our guard that we do not condemn our brethren, as having forfeited all title to the name of Christians, because their creeds or confessions of faith do not come up to the standard of our own.⁴³

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Doddridge possessed what was called a 'catholic' spirit. His concern for unity brought him a wide acquaintance. He had discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Herring, as well as Baptist Pastors; he was a friend of Methodist revivalists as well as more traditional Dissenters. However, it is obvious from his correspondence and writings that he was concerned with *PROTESTANT Unity*, in days when no one doubted that the Church of England was a Protestant Church.

If he could not justify perpetual divisions between the Protestant bodies, he had no doubts about the duty of separation from the *Roman Catholic Church*. In his sermon on the *The Iniquity of Persecution*, he starts with this forthright statement:

If Popery be considered in a religious view, it must appear the just object of our contempt, as well as our abhorrence.⁴⁴

In another sermon, he explains his position very clearly:

My brethren, pardon the freedom of my speech. I should have thought it my

⁴² *Family Expositor, Works*, Vol. 8, 564.

⁴³ *Christian Candour and Unanimity* (1750), *Works*, Vol. 3, 267.

⁴⁴ *Works*, Vol. 3, 119.

duty to have separated from the Church of Rome, had she pretended only to determine those things which Christ has left indifferent: How much more when she requires a compliance with those, which he hath expressly forbid? . . . You shall not only bow at the venerable name of our common Lord, but you shall worship an image: You shall not only kneel at the communion, but kneel in adoration of a piece of bread: You shall not only pronounce, or at least appear to pronounce, those accursed, who do not believe what is acknowledged to be incomprehensible, but those who do not believe what is most contrary to our reason and senses. When these are the terms of our continued communion, *the Lord judge between us and them!* Had nothing but indifferent things been in dispute, we should have done, as we do by our brethren of the Church of England, taken our leave of them with decency and respect: We should have loved them as *our brethren*, while we could not have owned them as *our Lords*. But when they require us to purchase our peace, by violating our consciences and endangering our souls, it is no wonder that we escape as for our lives.⁴⁵

For Doddridge, the position and power of the Pope, the doctrine of the Mass and transubstantiation, and worship of the Virgin Mary were major issues at stake. On papal power and influence, he says:

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(*Above all that is called God; &c.*) The usurpation of the *papacy* in Divine things is so unequalled, that if these words are not applicable to it, it is difficult to say, who there ever has been, or can be, to whom they should belong. The manner in which the Pope has exalted himself above magistrates (civil governments) is equally remarkable and detestable; . . .⁴⁶ (*Note on 2 Thess. 2:4*).

The scandalous and extravagant pretences which the followers of the *papacy* have made to *miracles*, exceeding in number, and some of them in marvellous circumstances, those of *Christ* and his *apostles*, plainly display the *energy of Satan*, that father of frauds, pious and impious. And the most incredible lies, which they have, by solemn and irrevocable acts, made essential to their faith, *shew the strength of delusion* . . .⁴⁷ (*Comment on 2 Thess. 2:1-12*).

For Doddridge, the doctrine of transubstantiation was as ridiculous as it is unbiblical:

(*This is my body*) When I consider that (as a thousand writers have observed) on the same foundation on which the papists argue for *transubstantiation* from these words, they might prove, from Ezekiel 5:1-5, that the prophet's *hair* was the city of Jerusalem; from John 10:9 and 15:1 that Christ was literally *a door* and *a vine*; and from Matthew 26:27, 28, and from 1 Corinthians 11:25, that *the cup* was *his blood*, and that Christ commanded his disciples to *drink* and

⁴⁵ *Lectures on Popery*, qu. in Orton's *Memoir, Works*, Vol.1, 123.

⁴⁶ *Family Expositor, Works*, Vol.9, 551.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 554.

swallow the *cup*; I cannot but be astonished at the inference they would deduce from hence.⁴⁸ (*Note on Matt. 26:26*).

Prayers to the Virgin Mary were a failure to grasp the nature of our Lord's authority as well as a denial of the direct access we have the throne of grace:

If *his mother* met with so just a rebuke for attempting to *direct* his ministrations in the days of his flesh, how absurd is it for any to address her as if she had a right to *command him* on the throne of his glory?⁴⁹ (*Comment on John 2:1-11*).

It is plainly true, therefore, after the survey we have made of some of Doddridge's convictions, that he was far from indifferent to doctrine. Indeed, it was clearly of the greatest importance to him.

However, Doddridge also made it clear that there was more to being a Christian than doctrinal exactness and precision. He makes this judicious observation in the *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*:

The exercise of our rational faculties upon the evidences of divine revelation, and upon the declaration of it as contained in Scripture, may furnish a very wicked man with a well-digested body of orthodox divinity in his head, when not one single doctrine of it has ever reached his heart.⁵⁰

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Doddridge's views on Roman Catholicism may cause disappointment to some who have viewed him as an ecumenical prophet, and yet reassurance for others. It must be said in all truth that he clearly drew a distinction between *Roman Catholicism* and *Roman Catholics*, between the *system* and its *blind devotees*. Nowhere is this more perfectly illustrated than in the 'Connell Affair'. One Bryan Connell was found guilty of murdering a man at Weedon, near Northampton. Doddridge befriended the poor man, who pleaded innocence, and Doddridge believed that he was not guilty. Despite an appeal, Connell was executed on April 3rd, 1741. Now Connell was a Roman Catholic, and Doddridge's concern for him even led many to suggest that the Reformed pastor had inclinations towards Roman Catholicism. In a letter to Connell, written only two days before the execution took place, Doddridge pleads with the condemned man to seek salvation in Christ. The letter also tells us a great deal about Doddridge — the Protestant, the Evangelical, the spiritual and truly Christian man that he was:

I beseech you by the worth of your precious and immortal soul that in these

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Works, Vol.7, 296.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Works, Vol.6, 135.

⁵⁰ Works, Vol.1, 422.

solemn moments, you guard against every false dependence. You well remember how frequently and how earnestly I have repeated this caution. I rejoice in finding you so often declare, that you put no confidence in the power of a Priest to forgive sin; nor in the efficacy of sacraments to save an impenitent sinner; nor in the intercession of saints and angels; nor in the value of your own blood, supposing it, in this respect innocent, to make satisfaction to God for the sins of your life; but that you desire to trust in the mercy of God, through the blood and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. Whatever your opinion of the church of Rome may be, which this is not a time to debate, you are in all these things a very good Protestant in your notions; but let me remind you, Sir, that we cannot be saved by the soundest notions, but must feel their power to change our hearts; and must *act* upon them. I do therefore again, that I may deliver your soul and my own, solemnly exhort you most earnestly to seek the renewing influences of Divine grace, to change your sinful heart, and to fit you for the presence of God. Pray that God may give you repentance unto life; not merely a grief for temporal ruin, and a dread of that future punishment which the worst of men must desire to escape; but a repentance arising from the *love* of God, attended with a filial ingenuous sorrow for the indignity and dishonour which your sins have offered to so excellent and so gracious a Being. Oh! while there is yet hope fly to the blood and the righteousness of Christ, and to the free grace of God in the Gospel, which is manifested to the greatest of sinners, and shall be manifested in you, if you sincerely believe. I am glad I have seen no cruxifix near you, but in a spiritual sense to lie at the foot of the cross, and to look by faith unto him that died upon it, is the safest and best thing you can do. Pardon and grace, help and happiness must be sought here, not only by you, my friend, but by the most upright and virtuous man upon the earth, or he will appear a condemned sinner before God. God is my witness that this is my refuge: let it be yours! and we may have a happier meeting than we have known upon earth.⁵¹

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For Doddridge, his Protestant, Reformed and evangelical orthodoxy was no negative thing. For him, the truth of God should lead to the God of truth; the written word should lead us to the Incarnate Word, and Gospel of Christ should lead us to the Christ of the Gospel:

Would to God that all the *party-names*, and *unscriptural phrases* and *forms*, which have divided the *Christian world* were forgot; and that we might agree to sit down together, as humble, loving *disciples*, at the feet of our *common Master*, to hear *his word*, to imbibe *his spirit*, and transcribe *his life* in our own!⁵²

⁵¹ *Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, D.D.*, ed. J. D. Humphreys (1829-30), Vol.3, 556f. (*Calendar*, ed. Nuttall, Letter 667). It seems that Connell was not converted. *Op. cit.* Vol.5, 425.

⁵² Preface to the *Family Expositor, Works*, Vol.6, 13.

This was the main spring of Doddridge's Christianity — without which, it is impossible to arrive at a correct estimate of the man. He summed up the blessed secret of his life — a secret all may share, in his own epigram on the family motto *DUM VIVIMUS VIVAMUS* (In living, LIVE); described by Dr. Samuel Johnson as one of the finest in the English language:

'Live, while you live, the epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the passing day,
Live, while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my life let both united be;
I live in pleasure, when I live to Thee.'⁵³

⁵³ G. F. Nuttall, *Doddridge's Life and Times*, in *Philip Doddridge*, ed. Nuttall, 21, and other places.