



ENGRAVED BY JOHN SARTAIN.

REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

HOME,
THE SCHOOL,
AND
THE CHURCH;
OR THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

EDITED BY
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ARTICLE I.

THE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE AND THE APPLIANCES OF THE PARENTAL RELATION.*

BY THE REV. LOYAL YOUNG, OF BEAVER, PA.

JUDGES 13: 12 (last clause),—"How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?"

WHEN Israel took possession of their promised heritage, and drove out the nations of Canaan, they left a people on their southwestern borders, warlike, impetuous, and of prodigious bodily stature. For centuries they were a thorn in the side of God's chosen people. Often were the latter trodden down and crushed by these relentless Philistines. But if their tyranny was grievous, their idolatry was enticing. And this was the true secret of their power. They tempted Israel to worship Dagon and Baalzebub. It was only when Israel yielded to idolatry, that these powerful enemies triumphed, and riveted the chains of their servitude. When Israel repented and cried to God, deliverers were raised up, and the church became free.

One of these deliverers was Samson, whose athletic frame and strength of muscle made him more than a match for the strongest and bravest of his foes. Being set apart by Heaven as the deliverer of his country, he felt religiously bound to fulfil his mission. And when moved by divine impulse, he carried consternation and death into the ranks of the enemy. Neither green withs nor new ropes could bind him; massive city gates were borne aloft on his shoulders to the mountain height; and the firm pillars of Dagon's temple were thrown down by a single impulse.

Introductory to his birth, the angel of the covenant announced to his parents (Manoah and his wife), that they were about to be honoured as the parents of a mighty deliverer of his country. Manoah, impressed with the responsibility of the trust thus to be committed to them, in the education of a child for such a work, and

* This discourse was delivered by appointment before the Synod of Pittsburgh, in the year 1853, and requested for publication.

if we are zealous for the Lord of Hosts, ere long, shine as the stars in the firmament, in the kingdom of our heavenly Father, for ever and ever. To Him, the blessed Jesus and eternal Spirit, be all honour and glory, now, and to all eternity. Amen and amen.

ARTICLE XVI.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF GILBERT TENNENT.

BY THE REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D.

GILBERT TENNENT was a "mighty man of valour" in his day and generation. He was one of the leaders of the Presbyterian Church at a critical period of its history, and has left an influence which has come down with power to the present times.

He was born in the county of Armagh, in the north of Ireland, February 5th, 1702.* His father was the celebrated Wm. Tennent, the founder of the "Log College" at Neshaminy; a man of like precious faith and memory. Gilbert, the oldest son, was about fourteen years of age, when his father emigrated to this country; and the tradition is, that his first religious impressions were received on the voyage.† He pursued his classical studies under the direction of his father, before the Log College was founded. He at first thought of engaging in the medical profession, but experiencing new and comforting views of God's grace toward him, he resolved to devote his life in preaching salvation to his fellow-men. In May, 1725, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.‡ He commenced his labours as a minister at New Castle, Del.; but leaving somewhat abruptly, he incurred the censure of the Synod.§ He was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in the autumn of 1726, and entered upon his pastorate in the Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick, to which he had been called the preceding year. After a laborious and successful ministry of seventeen years, he removed, in 1743, to the city of Philadelphia, to take charge of the Second Presbyterian Church, of which he remained pastor until his death, in 1764.

In giving our impressions of the character and services of Gilbert Tennent, we shall arrange what we have to say under several heads.

* In the "Log College" the date is *April*, 1703; but the inscription on his tomb says, *Nonis Feb. MDCCII*. Dr. Green, in his sketch, in the *Old Assembly's Magazine*, says 1703.

† This receives corroboration from Dr. Finley's remark in his funeral sermon: "He began to be seriously concerned for the salvation of his soul when he was about the age of fourteen."

‡ In this year Gilbert Tennent received the degree of A. M. from Yale College, being the third person on whom that honour was conferred.

§ Records, p. 81.

I. The agency of Gilbert Tennent in promoting the revival of religion in the Presbyterian Church was very influential. At the time he entered public life, religion seems to have been at a low ebb, something like the "Moderatism" of the Church of Scotland prevailing in various parts of our Zion. Too many of the ministers, who came over to America, entertained low views of evangelical activity. The alumni of the Log College, on the other hand, were trained to earnestness in the ministry, and united to old-fashioned orthodoxy the power of spiritual religion. A number of churches were refreshed under the ministry of these men before Whitefield visited this country. In 1739 Whitefield makes this record of his first visit to Gilbert Tennent:—

"God, I find, has been pleased greatly to bless his labours. He and his associates are now the burning and shining lights of this part of America. He recounted to me many remarkable effusions of the blessed Spirit, which have been sent down among them. And one may judge of their being true and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ, because they are everywhere spoken evil of by natural men. The devil and carnal ministers rage horribly against them."

In New York Whitefield heard Mr. Tennent preach, and remarks in his Journal: "*Never before heard I such a searching sermon.*" On Mr. Whitefield's return from Boston, where his preaching had been attended with gracious influences, he persuaded Gilbert Tennent, much against his will, to follow in his path. Whitefield wrote to Governor Belcher, at Boston: "This week Mr. Tennent proposes to set out for Boston to blow up the divine flame recently kindled there. I recommend him to your Excellency as a solid, judicious, and excellent preacher. *He will be ready to preach daily.*" He arrived in Boston just before Christmas, 1740, and preached his first sermon on the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. During the period of more than two months, in which he remained in Boston, the most extraordinary results followed his ministry, greatly exceeding those of Whitefield's. The Rev. Mr. Prince, author of the Christian History, gives the following account:—

"By his arousing and scriptural preaching, deep and pungent convictions were wrought in the minds of many hundreds of persons in that town; and the same effect was produced in several scores of the neighbouring congregations. And now was such a time as we never knew. The Rev. Mr. Cooper was wont to say, that more came to him in one week, in deep concern, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry. I can say also the same, as to the numbers who repaired to me." "By a letter of Mr. Cooper, one of the evangelical ministers of Boston, to a friend in Scotland, it appears he had had about six hundred different persons to visit him on the concerns of their souls, in three months' time. And Mr. Webb, another of the pious Boston ministers, informs me he has had, in the same space, above a thousand."

The following is Mr. Tennent's own account of this visit, which is found in a letter addressed to Mr. Whitefield :—

“VERY DEAR BROTHER,—In my return home, I have been preaching daily; ordinarily three times a day, and sometimes oftener: and through pure grace I have met with success much exceeding my expectations. In the town of Boston there were many hundreds, if not thousands, as some have judged, under soul-concern. When I left the place, many children were deeply affected about their souls, and several had received consolation. Some aged persons in church communion, and some open opposers, were convinced. Divers of young and middle-aged were converted, and several negroes. The concern was rather more general at Charlestown. Multitudes were awakened, and several had received great consolation; especially among the young people, children, and negroes. In Cambridge, also, in the town and in the college, the shaking among the dry bones was general, and several of the students have received consolation.” [He then proceeds to name more than *twenty* towns to which the revival had extended, and in most of which he had preached on his return home.] “In New Haven,” says he, “the concern was general, both in the college and in the town. About thirty students* came on foot ten miles to hear the word of God. And at Milford the concern was general. I believe, by a moderate calculation, *divers thousands have been awakened*. Glory to God on high! I thank you, sir, that you did excite me to this journey.”

Mr. Tennent's success, great as it was in Boston,† was not confined to that section of country. He preached, as extensively as circumstances allowed, within the bounds of his own church; and the revival extended from New England to Georgia. Dr. Alexander, in his history of the Log College, says: “As Mr. Whitefield was doubtless honoured to be the instrument in the conversion of more souls than any other preacher of his age, or perhaps of any age since the Apostle Paul, so Mr. Tennent, among orthodox preachers, undoubtedly deserves to be placed next to him, both in the abundance of his labours and the wonderful success which attended his ministry.”‡ Dr. Alexander further observes, in another place: “We, of the Presbyterian Church, are more indebted to the men of the Log College for our evangelical views, and for our revivals of religion, than we are aware of. By their exertions, and the blessing of God upon

* Dr. Sproat, Mr. Tennent's successor in the Second Church of Philadelphia, dates his conversion from this period.

† The Rev. Dr. Cutler, Episcopal Missionary at Boston, makes a lamentation to the Venerable Society, that “Gilbert Tennent afflicted us more than the most intense cold and snow. [The winter was very cold, Long Island Sound being frozen over.] Though he was vulgar, rude, and boisterous, yet tender and delicate persons were not deterred from hearing him at every opportunity. The ill effects of Whitefield's visit might have worn off, if his followers could have been preserved from writing, but they carried on his design with too great success.”

‡ Log College, p. 33.

their preaching, a new spirit was infused into the Presbyterian Church; and their views and sentiments respecting evangelical religion have prevailed more and more, until at last opposition to genuine revivals of religion is almost unknown in our Church."*

II. Gilbert Tennent's name stands connected with the *schism in the Church*, which commenced in 1741, and also with the *pacification of 1758*, which resulted in her highest good. It is impossible to go into details on this subject. The immediate causes of the schism were, on the part of the Old Side, a distrust of the Log College as an instrument of ministerial education, and, as a consequence of this distrust, an injunction of the Synod that no Presbytery should receive a candidate without his undergoing a Synodical examination; and, on the part of the Log College men, their intrusion into other congregations, and their harsh denunciation of the other party for loose views of practical religion and want of care in licensing candidates for the ministry. The contest waxed sharp. Both sides were undoubtedly to be blamed; and perhaps no single person so much as Gilbert Tennent. Inasmuch as no doctrinal differences existed, it only took time to heal the division. The parties came together in 1758, Gilbert Tennent being prominent in the pacification; and as a token of good will towards him, he was elected Moderator of the first meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

During the division, the Revival, or Tennent party, increased rapidly. At the beginning of the schism, or rather at its full consummation in 1745, the two parties stood twenty-two to twenty-one; but at the union of the Synods, the Old Side numbered only twenty-two, or the same number as at the division, whilst the Tennent party had increased to seventy-two. Thus did the Providence of God set its seal upon animated orthodoxy.

III. Gilbert Tennent had an important influence in *establishing the College of New Jersey, and in promoting its best interests*. He had always been the friend of education, both from principle and policy, and was zealous for the right training of the young. His father's "Log College" had done a great work, but its founder being now infirm through years, and the demands of the country having multiplied, a new institution in a better location was naturally thought of. William Tennent, Sen., died in May, 1746, and by an interesting coincidence of true Christian succession, the new institution, under the name of the "College of New Jersey," was chartered in October of the same year. The friends of the Log College were the originators of the new one. Gilbert Tennent was one of the original trustees. He objected to some of the provisions in the first charter, which were not generally satisfactory; and he was not entirely pleased with the charter finally obtained.† He was, however,

* Log College. p. 40.

† One of the difficulties was, that Governor Belcher insisted that the Governor and four of his Majesty's Council for the province should always be members of the Board of Trustees. Jonathan Edwards, in writing to Mr. Erskine, in 1749, says that "Mr.

a warm and devoted friend of the institution from the beginning. When it became necessary to obtain funds, Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies were appointed in 1753, by the trustees and by the Synod jointly, to visit Great Britain for the purpose of procuring aid. The result of this agency was the collection of about \$12,000 from the churches in Scotland, besides liberal sums from friends in England and Ireland. Mr. Tennent identified himself with the college, and greatly assisted in advancing its prosperity, notwithstanding his early disaffection, connected with the charter.

IV. Gilbert Tennent, as a pastor, was the instrument in the hands of God, in *founding two of the most influential and important churches in our communion*, besides setting other enterprises in train. He went to New Brunswick in 1725 or 1726, and was installed pastor in the autumn, 1726. The Rev. Mr. Frelinghuysen, the Dutch minister who had settled there about 1720, took the young preacher by the hand and kindly aided him. For a year and a half his ministry, however, seemed barren. It was during an attack of sickness that his mind became more deeply impressed than ever with the excellence and reality of spiritual things; and on his recovery he commenced searching examinations of the professors of religion, and gave earnest exhortations to the impenitent. His ministry was an effective one. "Although," he says, "there was not any great ingathering of souls at any one time, yet through the divine mercy there were frequently gleanings of a few here and there, which in the whole were a considerable number." "Frequently, at sacramental seasons in New Brunswick, there have been signal displays of the divine power and presence." *Dr. Finley*, President of the College, affirms "that the seals of his ministry in New Brunswick and parts adjacent, where he first exercised his ministry, were numerous."

In May, 1743, Mr. Tennent was called to Philadelphia, to take charge of the Second Presbyterian Church, just organized, and composed principally of converts under Whitefield's preaching. This was a great move for the Revival party. The division in the Synod had commenced at the meeting in Philadelphia only two years before; and although ejected from that body, their great leader was now placed over a large church in the very city where his opponents had hitherto been in the ascendant. The church numbered at the beginning 140 members. The house of worship was built almost exclusively by Mr. Tennent's labours in securing funds. When consulting Benjamin Franklin as to the best mode of proceeding, the philosopher advised him to apply to everybody, which he accordingly did. The result was complete success. Mr. Tennent's preaching, however, was not as much blessed after he came to Philadelphia as before—a change ascribed in part to the practice of writing his

Gilbert Tennent in particular" objected to any connection with the State. The Governor alone was finally allowed to be a member of the Board.

discourses after this period. But his ministry was not without seals; and his church was increased and edified in the faith. Few ministers have, on the whole, left more enduring memorials of a useful ministerial career.

V. The *writings* of Gilbert Tennent were numerous.* They indicate the thorough theologian and skilful casuist. Dr. Alexander says: "Throughout the whole the doctrines inculcated are rigidly orthodox, according to the Westminster Confession. In his didactic discourses he shows himself not only a profound thinker, but a well-read theologian; and often quotes the standard Latin writers of systematic theology, as one who had been accustomed to read them. While he manifests an ardent zeal for the doctrines of grace, he never loses sight of the importance of experimental religion and practical godliness." Elegance of style did not particularly belong to him. As he was a son of thunder in his preaching, so he was straight-forward and unpretending in his writings. If not always smooth in his expressions, he was generally clear in his thoughts. He published much, especially considering the period in which he lived; and it is truly surprising that there has been no republication of any of his writings for the benefit of the present generation.

VI. A few *general remarks* of a personal nature are added to this imperfect sketch. Mr. Tennent was above the common stature; of a prepossessing personal appearance, with a voice clear and commanding. An undisguised and open honesty and sincerity marked his manly face; his manner in the pulpit was earnest and impressive, and his presence filled his hearers with awe. He was a man of great firmness of purpose; endowed with an energy that called out his whole soul in whatever he undertook; abundant in labours; impulsive perhaps in disposition, but magnanimous; born to lead rather than to follow; and greatest in times of emergency and public excitement. He was eminently a man of prayer, deeply conversant with the inward experiences of spiritual religion. In social qualities, he was affable and condescending among his friends, although to strangers his grave and dignified demeanour indicated reserve. He was a man of true public spirit, and his influence was great with all classes, rich and poor, black and white. One of his contemporaries in Philadelphia happily said respecting his declining years and death: "There was a dignity and grandeur in his old age. Wisdom bloomed upon his silver locks; and while the cold hand of time snowed upon his locks, his heart glowed with redoubled love for the church. . . . Nor more dreadful to the man of ease in his possessions is the approach of the king of terrors, than he was welcome to this eminent servant of God. Every symptom of his approaching dissolution, instead of filling his soul with alarms, rather filled him with comfort, and made him impatiently long for the kind stroke that should dismiss his soul. After having borne a long and tedious illness with

* A list may be seen in Dr. Alexander's "Log College," pp. 65-6.

the most invincible fortitude and resignation, the friendly messenger at last came with the joyful summons. . . . And with full confidence in the merits and atonement of his dear Redeemer, he gently fell asleep." Dr. Finley, in speaking of his death, remarks: "He said his assurance of salvation was built upon the Scriptures, and was more firm than the sun and moon."

Mr. Tennent was married three times, but had no children except by his last wife. His second wife was Mrs. Cornelia Clarkson, widow of a merchant in New York. His third wife was Mrs. Sarah Spafford, widow of Mr. Spafford, of New Jersey, by whom he had three children. Of these, his son Gilbert was lost at sea, and one of the daughters died; the other daughter, Cornelia, married Dr. Wm. Smith, of Southampton, L. I., who was a successful physician in Philadelphia. Mrs. Smith had two children, of whom one survives, Miss Elizabeth Tennent Smith, of Philadelphia, the last of a noble lineage.*

Ministers and candidates may derive useful hints from the character and life of the Rev. GILBERT TENNENT—such as these:—

1. Fervent piety is in all generations the source, under God, of ministerial usefulness.
2. The ministerial office descending from father to son is an event always to be admired in Divine providence.
3. The Presbyterian Church is indebted to Scotch-Irish ancestry for some of its best and most faithful ministers.
4. Great influence in the Church may be perverted to do much harm as well as good.
5. The infirmities of great men invite us to praise the grace of God, which so "much more abounds."
6. Ministers should be willing "to spend and be spent" in the service of God.
7. Ministers, who lay "the foundations" in new countries, or in missionary districts, ought to be men of a high order.
8. The use of the press for the publication of sermons and other productions, is sometimes for the edification of thousands, from generation to generation.
9. Educational labours, like those which distinguished the Tenents, will commonly leave their mark.
10. Pacification is better than divisions.
11. Revivals, although often attended with evil, are characteristic of a flourishing condition of the Church.
12. A faithful servant of God "being dead, yet speaketh."

* We are indebted to Miss Smith, for the use of the portrait from which the engraving in the Magazine was made. The *original* portrait, taken at the request of Mrs. Yates, wife of the Hon. Judge Yates, who was a member of the Second Church, is now in the possession of the Misses Yates, nieces of the late Judge, who reside in Lancaster, Penn. The copy is said to be a very correct one. We only heard of the original portrait within a few days.

The preceding sermon on "Walking with God" was selected for publication on account of its practical character, and its suitability to the purposes of our Educational Annual. It was first published in the year 1746.

ARTICLE XVII.

REVIVAL IN CENTRE COLLEGE, KENTUCKY, IN 1852.

BY THE REV. JOHN C. YOUNG, D.D., PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.*

MR. EDITOR:—You have several times recently alluded, in your paper, to a revival reported to be in progress in the Presbyterian Church, in Danville. Your readers may probably desire to have some short account of this work of grace, as it is known that the effects of such a work, in a church which embraces in its congregation the students of a college, are not confined to a particular town or neighbourhood. Its most important and permanent effects are often, indeed, felt in distant places and in future years. Unless, then, you shall have received some other notice of the facts, you can publish the following brief and hasty sketch:—

From the latter part of January there appeared to be an increase of interest in hearing the Gospel—an increase scarcely perceptible perhaps, except by a preacher, and manifested only in the countenances of the hearers. Coincident with this was an increased sense of duty on the part of some of the pious students to converse with others on the subject of religion. A weekly prayer-meeting was commenced on Thursday night, in the college, besides the one held on Sabbath afternoon. The day appointed for fasting and prayer for colleges, on the last Thursday in February, was observed much more generally by the church here than in former years. But, although the public exercises, both, in the morning and at night, were attended by an unusually large number of the people as well as the students, and there was more than ordinary seriousness, still, there was no marked evidence of God's gracious visitation. On the night of the second Sabbath of March there seemed to be a deep and solemn impression, and a considerable number subsequently referred to the services of that night, as the occasion of their first feeling the influence of God's truth and Spirit in convincing them of their guilt and danger. Arrangements having been made a month before to commence services, preparatory to the Communion, on Thursday, the eleventh of March, we began by holding on that night a meeting for prayer; on Friday and Saturday there was preaching, morning and

* This article originally appeared in the Presbyterian Herald, in 1852. DR. YOUNG, at the time, was Pastor of the First Church in Danville, as well as President of the College.—EDITOR.