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GILBERT TENNENT:

AN ANALYSIS OF HIS EVANGELISTIC MINISTRY,
METHODS AND MESSAGE DURING THE GREAT AWAKENING

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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ABSTRACT

GILBERT TENNENT: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS EVANGELISTIC MINISTRY,
METHODS AND MESSAGE DURING THE GREAT AWAKENING

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Tennent was a revivalist in the Middle Atlantic and New England colonies. This project examines the ministry methods that Tennent is most known for, that of "preaching the terrors" and "searching preaching", both used to provoke examination of one's spiritual state. Tennent's morphology of conversion is examined. "The Tennent-Rickards Scale of Conversion" is proposed and compared to "The Engel Scale" of the spiritual decision making process. The spiritual problems in the churches of Tennent's day are examined. Several of Tennent's key evangelistic messages are also analyzed.

Abstract length: 86 words

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter demonstrates the relevance to contemporary ministry of the Great Awakening in general and Gilbert Tennent in particular. The method of study is given as well as an overview of the project.

Relevance of the Great Awakening Today

Each person organizes and interprets events according to his own cognitive schema. A military historian may interpret the Great Awakening as a precursor to the American Revolution. An atheist may interpret the Great Awakening as religious hysteria lead by charismatic demagogues. A minister, however, sees the events of the Great Awakening as a massive religious upheaval. This particular minister sees the Great Awakening as an event that can yield relevant information to contemporary ministers, because at the heart of the Great Awakening was the "New Birth". Since the primary focus of contemporary ministry is to bring people into a closer relationship with God (which begins with the New Birth), the Great Awakening

provides an excellent laboratory for studying the process of spiritual conversion, as well as methods that were effective in precipitating such a conversion.

Studies of the Great Awakening generally start with the religious revival of the Moravians in the summer of 1727 who lived in Herrnhut, Saxony. However, at the same time on the other side of the world in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Dutch Reformed began experiencing revival also. This revival quickly spread to the Scottish Presbyterians of central New Jersey (New Brunswick, Staten Island, Freehold) before it reached Northampton, Massachusetts in 1734. Jonathan Edwards' biographer, Ian Murray writes, "The three Tennent brothers had all witnessed awakenings in local congregations a few years previous to the work at Northampton, though it was not until the 1740's that notice of these revivals appeared in print."¹

Despite the fact that the colonial revival in New Jersey preceded the revival in Massachusetts, studies of the Great Awakening in colonial America focus predominantly on New England. There is a good reason for this. Massachusetts was completely civilized while New Jersey was

¹ Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 124.

still a frontier.² Massachusetts had printing presses that enabled the news of the New England revival to reach Europe. Additionally, when historians read of the Great Awakening in the colonies, they are immediately drawn to the copious volumes of Jonathan Edwards, the Massachusetts minister who was the great theologian of the revival. However, when he left Northampton for a well-deserved rest after the Revival of 1734-5, Edwards went to New Jersey to visit with the Tennents,³ which shows the esteem by which he held these men. Probably the main reason why Edwards was able to write so voluminously was that he spent thirteen hours a day in his study.⁴ This was not the habit of Gilbert Tennent. While Edwards expected his church to visit him in his study,⁵ Tennent visited people in their homes to determine their state of grace.⁶ Therefore, just

²When she married and moved to New Jersey, Jonathan Edwards's daughter Esther lamented the uncivilized nature of New Jersey as compared to Boston. (Murray, 401).

³Murray, 124.

⁴Edwards had a lifelong habit of rising at 4:00 AM and going to his study. Edwards' student Stephen Hopkins says that in his study "He commonly spent thirteen hours, every day." Murray, 137.

⁵Spending thirteen hours a day in the study precludes visitation.

⁶In Philadelphia, Tennent visited "so many distressed souls" in their homes that "his feet were actually blistered." E.R. Beadle, *The Old and The New, 1743-1876*:

because Edwards has taken center stage in the Great Awakening is no reason to ignore the contribution of Tennent.

Relevance of Gilbert Tennent Today

Is a study of the eighteenth century revivalist, Gilbert Tennent relevant to contemporary ministry? This project submits that it is. If a spiritual revival is the answer to many of our society's problems, ministers should be preparing for such a sovereign act of God. Tennent shows us how to maximize the effectiveness of one's ministry during times of revival.

A study of his ministry reveals effective leadership of other men. This in turn increased the scope of revival. His ministry also shows fearless persistent leadership in the face of opposition to revival.

A study of his method reveals effective strategies that convinced, convicted and converted sinners. According to eyewitnesses, the strategies that were most effective were his preaching of the "Terrors of the Law" which served to convince and convict sinners, and his "searching

the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia: Its beginnings and Increase (Philadelphia: The Ladies Assn., 1876), 24.

preaching" which served to eradicate the false hopes of those who thought they were secure.

A study of the messages of Gilbert Tennent is also relevant. The purpose of his evangelistic messages was the conversion of sinners. However, his presentation was extraordinarily passionate. This zeal is evident in his written sermons. His literary devices informed the mind, stirred the heart and motivated the will. These are all relevant topics to contemporary ministers.

Method of Study

Research on Gilbert Tennent is scarce. There have been several scholarly dissertations written, but none by ministers focusing on his evangelistic methods. The dissertations include Coalter's 1982 study, "The Life of Gilbert Tennent: A Case Study of Continental Pietism's Influence on the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Univ., Dept. of Religion); Brink's 1942 study, "The Contribution of Gilbert Tennent to American Christianity and the Nation" (Doctor of Sacred Theology dissertation, Temple University, School of Theology); Harper's 1958 study, "Gilbert Tennent: Theologian of the New Light" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke Univ., Dept. of Religion). Dissertations that include a

substantial amount, but are not devoted exclusively to Tennent include Lisa Herb Smith's 1998 study, "The First Great Awakening in American Newspapers, 1739-48" (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Delaware, Dept. of English); Fireoved's 1985 study, "An Anthology of Colonial Sermons" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of English, Univ. of Delaware). The Fireoved study contained one of Tennent's sermons, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry". This is his most frequently mentioned sermon, famous only because it was a direct precipitator of the division in the Presbyterian Church's hierarchy.

Despite the fact of Tennent's contributions to the religious landscape of the colonies, there has been no study of Tennent's evangelistic techniques. No one has attempted to discover his conversion morphology, nor has anyone studied his evangelistic sermons in any detail. This project is an attempt to rectify this deficit through studying the extant primary sources as well as commentary on his life and ministry, his most successful evangelistic techniques, namely "Terrors of the Law" and "searching preaching", and certain of Tennent's early evangelistic sermons that typify these unique methods during the early years of the Great Awakening. An overview of the project follows.

Project Overview

Chapter 2 concerns TENNENT'S LIFE AND MINISTRY. This examines his family history, education, conversion and ministry in New Brunswick. It explores his adaptation of Frelinghuysen's ministry methods, as well as his leadership and direction of young men in the ministry who duplicated his efforts and increased the scope of the religious awakening in New Jersey, Staten Island, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. It also examines Tennent's relationship with George Whitefield, and the impact Tennent made on the people of New England.

Chapter 3 concerns THE MORPHOLOGY OF CONVERSION. This chapter examines Tennent's conversion paradigm and how it differed from the other paradigms of his day. It explains the evolution of Tennent's paradigm as he adapted Frelinghuysen's "sharp law work" to his understanding. This chapter also examines the "Engel Model" of conversion, (a cognitive model), and compares it to the "Tennent-Rickards Model" of conversion (a cognitive, emotional, behavioral model).

Chapter 4 concerns SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH. This examines the chief spiritual problems Tennent faced

when he preached in the Presbyterian as well as the Congregational churches.

Chapter 5 concerns ALARMING THE SECURE: "TERRORS OF THE LAW". This is Tennent's ministry technique that is designed to convince and convict the secure sinner of the danger of his unregenerated state before God.

Chapter 6 describes EVOKING SELF EXAMINATION: "SEARCHING PREACHING". This is Tennent's technique to remove false hopes from those who believe themselves to be converted.

Chapters 7 through 10 are EVANGELISTIC MESSAGES that typify Tennent's unique methods. In order to observe Tennent's evangelistic techniques that lead to a religious awakening, this project presents four of his early evangelistic messages. These messages are among his finest. Each will be analyzed to determine the devices and rhetorical techniques that made it effective. While I have tried to describe the dynamics of each sermon in this analysis, the attention to detail obscures the dynamic propulsion that is evident in Tennent's sermons.

Therefore, after an analysis of each sermon, the actual

sermon is included in its entirety.⁷ I have included four of Tennent's evangelistic messages in this study.

Chapter 7 is the ANALYSIS OF PREFACE TO *SOLEMN WARNING TO A SECURE WORLD FROM THE GOD OF TERRIBLE MAJESTY, OR THE PRESUMPTUOUS SINNER DETECTED, HIS PLEAS CONSIDERED AND HIS DOOM DISPLAY'D* (1734). *Solemn Warning* began as a sermon preached in 1734 to Tennent's congregation in Perth Amboy. It was designed to shake secure sinners free from their false hopes and motivate them to seek salvation. In it, Tennent used fear as a motivator, i.e., "the terrors of the Lord". Tennent was severely criticized for this, and published this sermon in 1735 with the addition of a lengthy preface that defended his use of fear as a motivator. The actual sermon was probably improved before publication, because it exceeds one hundred pages in length. Because of the length of the sermon (which is less like a sermon, and more like a book), it was decided to include only the preface in this project. The preface is valuable because it contains a good defense of the use of fear in evangelism. Additionally, in its few pages, it also contains examples of the use of "terrors" as well as "searching preaching." The sermon (which is not included

⁷Four of Tennent's sermons are located in the Appendix.

because of its length) may have influenced Jonathan Edwards' methods, as is suggested in Chapter 2.

Chapter 8 is an ANALYSIS OF SERMON: *THE SOLEMN SCENE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT*. *Solemn Scene* is Tennent's finest sermon that demonstrates the use of fear as a motivator in conversion. This sermon was delivered to congregations in Maiden-Head and Hopewell in 1737. To continue the evangelistic work among these people, Tennent sent his protégé, John Rowland. As Rowland continued to use Tennent's technique of "terrors", the people of the area experienced an awakening. This demonstrates the effectiveness of this method in conversion.

Chapter 9 is an ANALYSIS OF SERMON: *THE NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN DURABLE HAPPINESS*. *Religious Violence* is a sermon that Tennent preached to his Perth Amboy congregation. While *Solemn Scene* was geared to convince the congregation of their need to be converted, *Religious Violence* exhorts the congregation to urgently and importunately continue in the process of conversion toward assurance.

Chapter 10 is an ANALYSIS OF SERMON: *THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SCRIBES AND PHARISEES*. *The Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees* is a sermon that was delivered to the Boston congregation during Tennent's New England preaching tour.

It is an excellent example of Tennent's method of "searching preaching". Additionally, there is objective, verifiable evidence that this sermon was effective in producing convictions and conversions as reported by several Boston ministers. For these reasons, this is an important sermon to examine.

Chapter 11 is entitled FROM THE GRAVE, TENNENT SPEAKETH. This chapter concludes the project by discussing Tennent's unique contributions to contemporary ministry, and proposes words of advice that he might have for today's ministers.

CHAPTER 2

TENNENT'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

This chapter will explore Tennent's life and ministry. It includes his family history, education, conversion, and ministry in New Brunswick. His illness and the reassessment of the effectiveness of his ministry is shown as the turning point in his ministry when he changed his methods. The effectiveness of this method change is seen in the revival that occurred under his ministry at New Brunswick and on Staten Island. His training of other men in the same techniques increased the scope of the revival. Hearing of the revival, Whitefield was drawn to the central New Jersey area where he and Tennent preached together. Later, at the encouragement of Whitefield and others, Tennent preached for three months in New England where thousands were converted. His later years were spent as a pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, which was comprised of many people who had been converted under Whitefield's ministry. It is suggested that the

methods Tennent used were effective in precipitating revival.

Family History

Gilbert Tennent was born in Armagh County, Ireland on February 5, 1703.¹ He was the first son of William Tennent, Sr. who was a minister in the Episcopal Church of Ireland, and chaplain to an Irish nobleman.² However, because he adhered to his religious principles, William lost his position. Elias Boudinot writes:

He was chaplain to an Irish nobleman, but being conscientiously scrupulous of conforming to the terms imposed on the clergy of that kingdom, he was deprived of his living.³

William married the daughter of Presbyterian minister Gilbert Kennedy. Kennedy was a celebrated evangelical minister in Ireland⁴ who had also been persecuted for his

¹Samuel Finley, "Biography of Rev. Gilbert Tennent," *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* (March 1807), 361.

²Archibald Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Founders and Principle Alumni of the Log College* (Princeton, NJ: J.T. Robinson, 1845), 18.

³Elias Boudinot, "Biography of Rev. William Tennent," *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* (June 1806), 3.

⁴ Alexander states, "In Wodrow's Church History, we have frequent mention of a Mr. Kennedy, a celebrated evangelical minister in Ireland; and also in Reid's *History of the Presbyterian Church, in Ireland*" (Alexander, 19).

religious principles.⁵ As his family size increased and religious persecution showed no signs of abating, in 1716 Tennent moved his family to America. By that time the family consisted of his wife and four sons, Gilbert, William, John and Charles.

In the middle Atlantic colonies, where the Tennent family settled, the spiritual life of the church was diminished. Of this, Cotton Mather wrote in 1711:

If I may without offense extend my intelligence as far as the neighbor colonies. . . . I am credibly informed that in many towns there, they have no minister at all. In the Jersey's particularly, there are at least seven towns that have no public worship of God.⁶

Eighteenth century Presbyterian minister Archibald Alexander agrees: "The state of vital piety was low in the Presbyterian church in America. . . . The ministers composing the Presbyterian Church. . . were sound in faith, and strongly attached to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms."⁷ The spiritual life in that church was dry and formalized. Very little was required for people

⁵Boudinot, 3.

⁶Peter Frelinghuysen, *Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen* (Princeton: Privately printed, 1938), 3.

⁷Alexander, 22.

to acquire membership into the church. "Revivals of religion were nowhere heard of."⁸

In 1718, a year after his arrival in America, William was accepted as a member by the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia after a thorough examination of his doctrinal position.⁹ In 1721, he was called to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and preached to a small congregation there.¹⁰

Conversion and Education

Gilbert was fourteen years old when he came with his family to America. It was at that time that he began to have serious concern for his salvation. This turmoil continued for several years. He began to study medicine because he thought himself unworthy for the ministry. In an effort to help his son through his spiritual turmoil, William Sr. gave him theological works to read. While reading these books, Gilbert became assured of his salvation, and believed that he was called to the ministry. Alexander describes Tennent's conversion as follows.

About this time, it pleased God to reveal himself to him with so much clearness and comfort, that all his doubts and sorrows and fears were dispelled; and

⁸Alexander, 22.

⁹Alexander, 21.

¹⁰Alexander, 22.

the Sun of Righteousness arose upon him with healing under his wings. And no sooner was he satisfied of his saving interest in Christ, than he felt himself called to seek the ministry.¹¹

Gilbert received his education from his father, who was a graduate of the University of Glasgow.¹² The caliber of Gilbert's education was sufficient to impress the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and would have tested his knowledge in the areas of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, logic, philosophy and divinity.¹³ It is said that the Presbytery approved highly of his qualifications, and licensed him to preach in May, 1726.¹⁴ Additionally, the faculty at Yale respected Gilbert's educational achievements sufficiently to have awarded him the degree of Master of Arts (A.M.) in the fall of 1726,¹⁵ when he was only twenty-two years of age.

¹¹Alexander, 36.

¹² Charles Briggs, *American Presbyterianism: Its Origin and Early History, Together with an Appendix of Letters and Documents, many of which have been recently discovered* (New York: Scribner, 1885), 186.

¹³ Charles Maxson, *Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1958), 28.

¹⁴Alexander, 36.

¹⁵ Richard Webster, *A History of the Presbyterian Church in America; From its Origin Until the Year 1760. With Bibliographical Sketches of its Early Ministers* (Philadelphia: J.M. Wilson, 1857), 387.

After being licensed to preach, Gilbert continued to reside with his father and assisted him in teaching young men for the ministry. In 1726, William Sr. had opened a school for the education of such men. Pejoratively called "Log College", this school educated the principle men of the day, including John Rowland, James Campbell, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Beatty, William Robinson, and Samuel Blair.¹⁶ While a tutor at his father's school, Gilbert also accepted invitations to preach in Newcastle on the Delaware. The synod assigned him to pastor that church permanently, but Tennent rejected their directive after being there one month. He decided instead to form a church in New Brunswick, New Jersey in the fall of 1727,¹⁷ where a spiritual awakening had been occurring among the Dutch Reformed under the leadership of Rev. Theodorus Frelinghuysen.

New Brunswick Ministry

When Tennent came to New Brunswick in 1727, he had limited success in seeing people converted under his ministry. A critical illness caused him to rethink his methods, and barter with God for six months more of life to

¹⁶ Boudinot, 4.

¹⁷ Alexander, 37.

accomplish this work. Tennent describes this change in his ministry in a letter to Mr. Prince, the chronicler of revival.

I was then exceedingly grieved that I had done so little for God, and was very desirous to live one half year more if it was His will, that I might stand upon the Stage of the World as it were, and plead more faithfully for His cause, and take more earnest pains for the Conversion of Souls. The secure state of the world appeared to me in a very affecting light, and one thing above others pressed me sore, viz., that I had spent much time in conversing about trifles, which might have been spent in examining people's states towards God, and persuading them to turn unto him. I therefore prayed to God that he would be pleased to give me one half year more, and I was determined to endeavor to promote his Kingdom with all my might at all adventures. The petition God was pleased to grant manifold, and to enable me to keep my resolution in some measure.¹⁸

From this letter, we learn three points that will dominate the rest of Tennent's ministry.

1. His concern will be directed towards secure souls. By "secure", Tennent means people who perceive themselves to be secure, but who have no basis for that assessment. As Tennent said in the above anecdote, "The secure state of the world appeared to me in a very affecting light".
2. He will examine people's states towards God and persuade them to turn towards Him. This is known from

¹⁸Gilbert Tennent, "Letter to Mr. Prince", *Christian History* (Boston: Kneeland, 1744,5), 293.

his confession "I had spent much time in conversing about trifles, which might have been spent in examining people's states towards God, and persuading them to turn unto him."

3. He will minister with all the zeal and determination of a man who has six months to live. We know this because Tennent said "(I) was very desirous to live one half year more if it was His will, that I might stand upon the Stage of the World as it were, and plead more faithfully for His cause, and take more earnest pains for the Conversion of Souls."

These three themes will dominate Tennent's ministry. In the following paragraph, Tennent describes the positive results of the implementation of this plan to examine people of the grounds of their hope and warn them of their danger. Note also that he was severely criticized for his methods.

After I was raised up to health, I examined many about the grounds of their hope of salvation, which I found in most to be nothing but as the sand: with such I was enabled to deal faithfully and earnestly, in warning them of their danger and urging them to seek converting grace. By this method were many awakened out of their security, and of those diverse were to all appearance effectually converted.... I did then preach much upon *Original Sin, Repentance, the Nature and Necessity of Conversion*, in a close examinatory and distinguishing Way; labouring in the mean time to sound the Trumpets of God's Judgments, and alarm the

secure by the terrors of the Lord, as well as to affect them with other topics of persuasion, which method was sealed by the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of a considerable number of persons at various times and in different places in that part of the country; as appeared by their acquaintance with experimental religion, and good conversation.¹⁹

In these paragraphs we can see two of Tennent's methods. First, he asks people why they think they are converted. Second, he alarms "secure souls by the terrors of the Lord" in order to convict and convert them. As a result, an awakening occurred in New Brunswick among the Presbyterians.

Presbyterian Awakening in New Brunswick (1727)

The following is Tennent's observation of the New Brunswick awakening, and his attempt at quantifying the results. In this paragraph, Tennent notes that conversions also occurred when he preached on the "Love of God" on days that the sacraments (the Lord's Table) were received.²⁰

I may further observe that frequently at Sacramental seasons in New Brunswick, there have been signal displays of the Divine power and presence. Divers have been convinced of sin by the sermons then preached, some converted, and many affected by the "love of God" in Jesus Christ. O the sweet meltings

¹⁹G. Tennent, *Christian History*, 293-294.

²⁰While the effectiveness of preaching on the topic of God's wrath is one of the main foci of this project, it is important to note that Tennent also saw conversions when he preached on the topic of God's love.

that I have often seen on such occasions among many! New Brunswick did then look like a field the Lord had blessed. It was like a little Jerusalem, to which the scattered tribes with eager haste repaired at Sacramental solemnities; and there they fed on the fatness of God's house, and drunk of the river of his pleasures. But alas! The scene is now altered.

While I lived at the place aforesaid [New Brunswick], I don't remember that there was any great ingathering of Souls at any one time; but through mercy there were pretty frequent gleanings of a few here and there, which in the whole were a considerable number. But having never taken a written account of them, I cannot offer any precise conjecture at their number, and shall therefore leave it to be determined at Judgment Day.²¹

Awakening in Staten Island (1729)

By his own account, Tennent's New Brunswick awakening was small in comparison to the awakening that erupted in Staten Island in 1729.

But at Staten Island, one of the places where I stately labored, there was about fifteen or sixteen years ago, a more general concern about the affairs of salvation, which hopefully issued in the conversion of a pretty many. Once in the time of a sermon upon Amos 6:1, before which the people were generally secure, the Spirit of God was suddenly poured down upon the assembly; the people were generally affected about the state of their souls; and some to that degree, that they fell upon their knees in the time of the sermon, in order to pray to God for pardoning mercy: Many went weeping home from that sermon; and then the general inquiry was, 'What shall I do to be saved?'

I may further observe that some few of those that I trusted were converted in the places aforesaid long since, were compelled to cry out in the public assembly, both under the impressions of Terror and Love.

²¹G. Tennent, *Christian History*, 294.

During the late revival of religion, New Brunswick felt some drops of the spreading Rain, but no general Shower.²²

Tennent Protégés Spread Revival through New Jersey

When they had finished training at their father's school, Tennent brothers John and William Jr. joined their brother Gilbert in New Brunswick where they learned his preaching methods. Later, John accepted the pastorate in Freehold.²³ When John was terminally ill with tuberculosis, William Jr., William Sr., and Gilbert assisted at the Freehold church. As a result, an awakening took place between the years 1730-33. William Jr. recalls that the method used to elicit conversion was the "sharp law-work of conviction", the approach he had learned from his brother Gilbert Tennent:

Such of them as were converted were everyone of them converted by means of sharp-law work of conviction, in discovering to them in a heart affecting manner, their sinfulness both by nature and practice, as well as their liableness to damnation for their original and actual transgressions.²⁴

²²G. Tennent, *Christian History*, 294-295.

²³The town in which his church still stands is today called "Tennent".

²⁴William Tennent, "Letter to Mr. Prince", *Christian History*, 302.

The awakening continued to spread. The Delaware Indians in nearby Cranbury, NJ occurred under the ministry of David Brainerd. According to Whitefield's *Journals*, William Tennent was also effective in supporting and encouraging David Brainerd:

In my way to Philadelphia, I had the pleasure of preaching by way of an interpreter, to some converted Indians, and of seeing near fifty young ones in one school, near Freehold, learning the Assembly's catechism. A blessed awakening had been begun and carried on among the Indians by the instrumentality of David Brainerd, such as has not been heard of since the awakening of New England by the venerable Mr. Eliot, who used to be styled 'The Apostle of the Indians'. His brother followed him. Mr. William Tennent, whose party I found much upon in advance, seemed to encourage his endeavors with all his heart.²⁵

While he was a student at Yale, David Brainerd had heard Gilbert Tennent preach when Tennent itinerated through New England in the spring of 1741.²⁶ It is an interesting "coincidence" that Brainerd's Indian Revival

²⁵John Gillies, *Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield* (Hartford: Edwin Hunt, 1845), 106.

²⁶This is assumed from Samuel Hopkins' diary that says both Hopkins and Brainerd were students at Yale when Tennent ministered there. Although Hopkins was not totally convinced by Tennent, subsequent to Tennent's sermon, Brainerd came to Hopkins' room and respectfully (because Brainerd was a lower classman) asked Hopkins about the state of his soul. This suggests that Brainerd had heard and was impressed by Tennent's message. (Samuel Hopkins, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 16.

(in the mid 1730's) at Cranbury NJ was adjacent to Freehold where the Tennent men (predominantly William) preached.

By the year 1730, Gilbert Tennent and his brothers had spread the revival in an easterly direction, the boundaries of which were Staten Island and Freehold. During the Freehold Revival in 1732, John Cross of Scotland went to Basking Ridge to start a church.²⁷ In 1734, Samuel Blair (another Log College graduate) became the pastor of the church in Shrewsbury.²⁸ In 1735, a Yale graduate and revivalist, Mr. Wales became the pastor of the Kingston church, slightly north of Princeton. By 1735, revivalists were more heavily saturated in what is today central New Jersey than they were in New England. Simultaneously, in 1734, Jonathan Edwards was experiencing revival in New England.

Revival Spreads from New Jersey to New England

As stated previously, Tennent changed his preaching methods in 1727. This change included preaching boldly to awaken and alarm secure sinners ("terrors"), and to cause people to examine their eternal states ("searching

²⁷Frederick W. Brink, "The Contribution of Gilbert Tennent to American Christianity and the American Nation" (Th.D. thesis, Temple University, 1942), 24.

²⁸Brink, 24.

preaching"). Tennent published a book defending this method in 1735 entitled *Solemn Warning to a Secure World*. Despite this, one of Edwards' descendents Sereno Dwight, credits Edwards with this innovation in preaching.²⁹ However, assessments made by descendants are not always historically correct. This seems to be the case with the origin of this preaching style.

From Dwight's perspective (which was written one hundred years after the fact), we read that the general style of preaching was altered as a result of the Northampton Awakening that began in 1734. This is seen in the following paragraph.

By the astonishing work of grace at Northampton, an impulse had been given to the churches of this whole western world, which could not soon be lost. The history of that event, having been extensively circulated, had produced a general conviction in the minds of Christians, that the preaching of the gospel might be attended by effects, not less surprising, than those which followed in gospel times. This conviction produced an important change in the views, and conduct, both of ministers and churches. The style of preaching was altered: it became, extensively, more direct and pungent, and more adapted to awaken the feelings and convince the conscience. The prayers of good men, both in public and private, indicated more intense desires for the prevalence of religion, and a stronger expectation that the word of God would be attended with an immediate blessing. As the natural result of such a change, revivals of religion were witnessed in numerous villages in New

²⁹Sereno Dwight, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol.1, (1834; reprint, Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), li.

Jersey, Connecticut, and the eastern parts of New England.³⁰

This is not exactly true. While I agree that the change in preaching style had a positive effect on the precipitation of revival, I do not agree that Edwards was the leader of this change, since the New Jersey men, Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, and his protégés had been preaching this way since the 1720's, and with remarkable success. *Solemn Warning*, Tennent's book that defended these methods was published in Boston in 1735. In it, he defended what Dwight later called the "direct and pungent style" of preaching that was "adapted to awaken the feelings and convince the conscience". This can be seen in the Preface to *Solemn Warning*.

Candid Reader,

I am sensible that the subject insisted on in the following sheets is none of the most grateful and pleasing to corrupt and degenerate nature, and therefore, if I have aimed at my own honor, I have pursued a wrong method to attain or secure it in choosing this so grating and disgusting a subject, and in treating upon it in such a pointed Stile [*sic*]. But if it is not the most pleasing, I dare be bold to assert that it is one of the most suitable, necessary and profitable; considering the general and lamentable security that prevails so exceedingly among the children of this generation.³¹

³⁰Dwight, li.

³¹ Gilbert Tennent, *Solemn Warning to a Secure World* (Boston, MA: Kneeland & Green, 1735), i.

Later in the Preface, Tennent reemphasizes this same point:

As to the sharpness of the Stile [sic], I shall only offer this brief apology- that the nature of the subject treated of, and the security of the world require it. And instead of retracting it, I could wish it were much more pointed- it falls so far short of my desire this way. And though I freely acknowledge that planting and watering are nothing to purpose that the most solemn matter and acrid stile [sic] will not avail without the divine benediction. Yet in the mean time I believe that God ordinarily uses instruments most suited to the work he designs to accomplish. Blunt instruments (in my opinion) are not suited to pierce hard hearts, or alarm secure souls.³²

It is not clear from Dwight's commentary whether Jonathan Edwards had read Tennent's book. However, evidence suggests that he had. Both Edwards and Tennent used a spider's web as an illustration of the precarious position of the unsaved. Note the reference to a spider's web in Tennent's 1735 sermon, *Solemn Warning to a Secure World from the God of Terrible Majesty*:

A spider's web resembles a hypocrite's hope in four particulars,

1. In respect of its Original: As the spider weaves her web out of her own bowels; so the hypocrite builds his hope upon those frames of heart which are but sparks of his own kindling. . .

2. In respect of the Pleasure he takes in it: The spider is pleased with its web, flies to it as a House of Defense, as well as sports in it as a place of pleasure; and do not presumptuous sinners flatter

³²*Solemn Warning*, ii, iii.

and please themselves with the hopes of heaven and fly to their false confidence, as a secure refuge?

3. In respect of the use he makes of it: Doth not the crafty spider make use of its web as an ensnaring engine to catch any suitable prey which comes within its reach? And thus do not presumptuous hypocrites cheat and impose upon many with their specious pretences?

4. In respect of its weakness: The spider's web tho' it's artfully woven, and consists of a great many threads, it is extremely weak; so is the presumer's hope, notwithstanding the conceit he has of it, it is as insufficient to bear the winnowing of Christ's fan, as the Spider's web is to bear the strokes of a broom; their hopes shall certainly fail and perish, and they with them, when they expect the most comfort from them (emphasis, mine).³³

Note the reference to a spider's web in Jonathan

Edward's 1741 sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*:

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink swifty, descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock

.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the Fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked. . .

O Sinner! Consider the dreadful danger you are in. . . You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder. . .

(emphasis, mine).³⁴

³³*Solemn Warning*, 106-107.

³⁴Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Boston, MA: Kneeland & Green, 1741).

In addition to the use of Tennent's spider's web metaphor, Edwards also uses Tennent's bow and arrow metaphor in his illustration of God's wrath toward the sinner. Note Tennent's 1738 sermon, *The Legal Bow Bent*:

The hardiest sinner that ever breathed must bow when Zion's God and King girds his glittering Sword upon his thigh, or bends his awful Bow, and shoots his barbed arrows at him. And verily it is wonderful to see, how suddenly and unexpectedly, both to themselves and the other, secure sinners are pierced by the threats of the Word, just as with the sudden prick of the arrow, stab of a sword, or blow of a Hammer (emphasis, mine).³⁵

Note Edward's similar use of the bow and arrow imagery in his 1741 sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*:

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the Bow, and it is nothing but the meer pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any premise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood (emphasis, mine).³⁶

The use of similar metaphors to illustrate Biblical truths suggests that one man influenced the other. Since Tennent used the spider's web illustration in his 1735 sermon *Solemn Warning*,³⁷ and used the bow and arrow

³⁵Gilbert Tennent, *Legal Bow Bent* (Boston, MA: Kneeland & Green, 1739), 192.

³⁶*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, 13.

³⁷*Solemn Warning*, 106.

illustration in his 1739 sermon, *The Legal Bow Bent*, it seems logical to conclude that Edwards was influenced by Tennent, since Edwards' sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, was delivered in 1741, after the Tennent sermons were published.

Additionally, we do know that Edwards sought the company of the Tennent brothers in New Jersey at the end of 1735. This indicates that Edwards knew Tennent, either from his book, or from his reputation as a successful revivalist.

Dwight's writings also suggest that Edwards began to change his method of treating sinners who were in the early stages of conviction. He says the following:

Early in the progress of this work of grace, Mr. Edwards seems to have decided for himself, the manner in which he was bound to treat awakened sinners: to urge repentance on every sinner, as his immediate duty; to insist that God is under no obligation to any unrenewed man; and that a man can challenge nothing, either in absolute justice, or by free promise, on account of anything he does before he repents and believes. He was fully convinced that if he had taught those, who came to consult him in their spiritual troubles, any other doctrines, he should have taken the most direct course to have utterly undone them. . . in which he endeavored to show that it would be just with God, forever to reject, and cast off, mere natural men.³⁸

³⁸Dwight, xliii.

The phrase "seems to have decided for himself," suggests Edwards took departure from some norm for treating awakened sinners and began a new tactic. The new method of taking the "most direct course" so that sinners under conviction would be "utterly undone" is exactly the method that was used so effectively by Tennent, the method that he defended in *Solemn Warning*.

While it is certainly possible that God impressed both Edwards and Tennent at different locations, at different times with the same new methods of [1] "direct and pungent style of preaching" as well as [2] of dealing strongly with sinners in the early stages of conviction, it is also possible that God taught one man, and that the other man learned from the first man. I suggest that it was Tennent who demonstrated this method to Edwards.

While his sermon, *Solemn Warning* was published in Boston in 1735, Tennent's Preface was dated June 10, 1734. In this Preface, Tennent writes that he had preached this message earlier.

I profess that when I preached at Amboy the substance of this tract, in the same order and diction, that it now appears in to public view, I had not thoughts of ever letting it see a brighter light, than the audience that first heard it. . . . But some opposition being made against some things I had delivered and being desired to give a copy of what I had preached, while I was transcribing the original paper, the suitableness of the subject, to the present

secure state of the most of the gospelized world, presenting itself to my mind, had some influence upon me; I was inclined to think, that were these heads already proposed, further enlarged upon, with the addition of some others, they might be serviceable in the hand of Christ to awaken and direct some weaker people who were destitute of better helps. Now after having enlarged the discourse, I was induced by the importunity of some friends, to permit its publication.³⁹

This quote shows two important points. First, that the main substance of this message was preached earlier than the June, 1734 date that it was submitted for publication. Second, that Tennent's methods of direct preaching and frightening the secure sinner (which he used in the sermon and later the book) were innovative, and met with resistance. Therefore, it is possible that Edwards had learned of Tennent's methods either by reading *Solemn Warning* in 1735, or by word of mouth. Both Perth Amboy, (where *Solemn Warning* was preached by Tennent prior to June 1734) and Northampton (where Edwards preached) are port cities. Travel between the two cities by boat could certainly have brought important news of a religious controversy or innovation. However, Sereno Dwight's redaction of Edwards' diary does not allude to a connection.

³⁹ *Solemn Warning*, vi.

What we do know is that Tennent and Edwards used the same preaching and conversion methods. As noted previously, Dwight said that Edwards' "style of preaching. . . . became, extensively, more direct and pungent, and more adapted to awaken the feelings and convince the conscience."⁴⁰ We know that this was the same method used by Tennent, and that this was effective. We also have a connection between the two men. That is, Tennent's book of these methods was published in Boston in 1735, and therefore was available to Edwards. Additionally, the fact that Edwards knew of Tennent is proven by his visit to the Tennents in late 1735. While it cannot be stated dogmatically that Edwards learned these methods from Tennent, it can be stated categorically that Tennent used them before Edwards did, because he had adapted them from Frelinghuysen in 1727 after seeing the revival success that the Dutch reformed minister had. Edwards did not use these methods until the latter portion of the Northampton revival of 1734-5.

Returning to Dwight's original assessment of the revival, however, we can glean these important facts.

1. The style of preaching had altered. It became "more direct and pungent".

⁴⁰Dwight, li.

2. The goal of preaching had altered. Its design was to "awaken the feelings and convince the conscience".
3. The product of preaching had altered. As a result of preaching, "the prayers of good men, both in public and private, indicated more intense desires for the prevalence of religion".
4. The expectation of preaching had altered. There was a "stronger expectation that the word of God would be attended with an immediate blessing". As the natural result of such a change, revivals of religion were witnessed in numerous villages in New Jersey, Connecticut, and the eastern parts of New England.

Split from Presbytery of Philadelphia

In 1738, the Presbytery of New Brunswick, led by Gilbert Tennent split from the Presbytery of Philadelphia with five ministers, William Tennent Jr., John Cross, Samuel Blair, Mr. Wales, and Gilbert Tennent (John Tennent had died). According to Gilbert Tennent, New Brunswick was compelled to withdraw because of Philadelphia's opposition to the licensure and ordination of ministers who were sympathetic to the revival. Tennent writes:

[The Philadelphia Presbytery] could not come into a state of settled constant Communion with such [men] as had protested against them until they received competent satisfaction, especially concerning their

oppositions to and reflections upon the Work of God's Grace and Success of the Gospel in the Land.⁴¹

Concerning this matter, Gewehr writes:

One of the greatest complaints against Gilbert Tennent and his "New Light" brethren was that they passed beyond the limits of their own Presbytery and intruded into congregations under the care of other ministers.⁴²

With this split, Tennent's sphere of revival influence increased, and his leadership of men with an evangelical fervor became more pronounced. It was the New Brunswick Presbytery led by Gilbert Tennent that was the driving force of evangelism and itineracy in this region.⁴³

Gilbert Tennent's protégé, John Rowland was a young minister whose preaching favorably impressed Whitefield.⁴⁴ With New Brunswick Presbytery's authorization, Rowland

⁴¹According to Tennent, it was because of Philadelphia's anti-revival sentiments that the new presbytery was formed. He writes "They could not come into a state of settled constant Communion with such as had protested against them until they received competent satisfaction, especially concerning their oppositions to and reflections upon the Work of God's Grace and Success of the Gospel in the Land." G. Tennent, *Christian History*, 292.

⁴²Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790*, (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1930), 13.

⁴³Charles H. Maxson, *The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1920), 63.

⁴⁴Gillies, *Memoirs of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 43.

ministered in Maidenhead (now Lawrenceville), Amwell and Hopewell. Through his efforts, these three areas experienced an awakening in July, 1740.⁴⁵

By 1740, Gilbert Tennent's sphere of influence extended in a parallelogram, with Staten Island and Freehold as its eastern borders, and Pennington (west of Hopewell) near the Delaware River in the southwest, with Basking Ridge in the Northwest. The center of this revival area, both geographically and motivationally was New Brunswick.⁴⁶

Whitefield's Arrival

When Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia in the spring of 1740, he found himself unwelcome in the Presbyterian churches that were 'anti-revival'. Undaunted, Whitefield preached to eager listeners in the area's fields. The people received him with gladness and gave a substantial offering (one hundred and ten pounds sterling) for Whitefield's Orphan House in Savannah. Societies for praying and singing were begun, and "in every part of the

⁴⁵John Gillies, *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival* (Kelso: John Rutherford, 1754; reprint, Fairfield, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 338.

⁴⁶Martin E. Lodge, "The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1964), 107.

town, many were concerned about their salvation. Many negroes came, pitifully asking Whitefield 'Have I a soul?'⁴⁷ Gilbert Tennent later conserved this group of awakened and revived individuals by organizing them into a church.

Whitefield Comes to New Brunswick (April 27, 1740)

George Whitefield was probably drawn to New Brunswick because it was the center of revival activity. When he arrived on April 27, 1740, Whitefield preached to a great gathering of people, and Tennent preached between Whitefield's sermons. The Philadelphia newspaper described the event:

On Sunday last the Reverend Mr. Whitefield preached twice at *New-Brunswick* to about 7000 people, and collected 42 (pounds) 10 (shillings) Currency, which is about 26 (pounds) *Sterling* for the Orphans in *Georgia*; Mr. [Gilbert] Tennent also preached between the Sermons, and there was [sic] great Meltings in the Congregations.⁴⁸

From New Brunswick, Whitefield and Tennent traveled together. It is unclear where they parted company, but it is reasonable to assume that Tennent accompanied Whitefield to Woodbridge and Elizabeth-Town where Tennent introduced Whitefield to Jonathan Dickinson, as well as to Staten

⁴⁷Gillies, *Memoirs*, 46.

⁴⁸*American Weekly Mercury*, May 1, 1740.

Island and Perth Amboy where Tennent also preached regularly, as well as to his brother's congregation in Freehold. A newspaper details their itinerary.

On Monday, Mr. *Whitefield* was to preach at *Woodbridge and Elizabeth-Town*. On Sunday he is to preach at 7 in the Morning and at 5 in the Evening at *New-York*, when Collections are to be made for the Orphan House aforesaid. On Monday Morning at 10 o'clock he is to preach at the Meeting House on *Stratten-Island*⁴⁹ South side, and in the Evening at 5 at *Amboy*: On Tuesday Morning at 10 o'clock at Mr. *William Tennent's* new meeting House at *Freehold*, where a collection is to be made for the Orphan House aforesaid; the same day at 5 in the evening at *Allens-Town*.⁵⁰

At this point, *Whitefield* departed for the southern colonies, followed by his New England journey.

Tennent Preaches in Philadelphia

Tennent took advantage of the time he had in Philadelphia while the Presbyterian Synod was meeting. On the basis of the following newspaper report, it seems that Tennent and his protégés preached tirelessly at this time of religious revival. The final comment notes that Tennent preached to a congregation of 8,000.

During the Session of the *Presbyterian Synod*, which began on the 28th of the last Month, and continued to the third of this Instant, there were no

⁴⁹Note: This is probably a typesetter's error. The area is "Staten Island".

⁵⁰*American Weekly Mercury*, May 1, 1740.

less than 14 Sermons preached on *Society-Hill* to large Audiences, by the Rev. Messrs. the *Tennents*, Mr. *Davenport*, Mr. *Rowland* and Mr. *Blair*, besides what were deliver'd at the *Presbyterian* and *Baptist* Meetings and Expoundings and Exhortations in private Houses. The Alteration in the Face of Religion here is altogether surprising. Never did people show so great a Willingness to attend Sermons, not the Preachers greater Zeal and Diligence in performing the Duties of their Function. Religion is become the subject of most Conversations. No books are in Request but those of Piety and Devotion; and instead of idle Songs and Ballads, the People are every where entertaining themselves with Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. All which, under God is owing to the successful Labours of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield.

On Sunday last, the Rev. Mr. *Gilbert Tennent*, preached four times, viz. at Seven in the Morning on *Society Hill*, at 10 in the *Presbyterian* Meeting House, at 3 again; at which last Sermon 'tis thought there were near 8,000 People.⁵¹

Tennent's Ministry: Late Summer-Early Fall, 1740

When Tennent and Whitefield parted company, Gilbert Tennent also went on an evangelism crusade to the destitute regions of West Jersey (part of which is South Jersey today),⁵² and as far south as Maryland. From Gloucester, West Jersey (near Philadelphia) to the southern most point of the Jerseys in Cape May, there were only two ministers, both of whom were hostile to revival. During this time, Tennent had particular success in the south Jersey area of

⁵¹*Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 12, 1740.

⁵²Geographically, this is in south Jersey. However, Whitefield refers to it as 'West Jersey', as it had been properly called before East Jersey and West Jersey were united as New-Jersey.

Cohansey and Salem.⁵³ When he met with Whitefield in Staten Island on Whitefield's return tour from New England, Tennent relayed the revival news. Whitefield describes his meeting:

Tuesday, Nov. 4. Preached at Staten Island to about three or four hundred people. The Lord came amongst them. . . . My soul was very much refreshed with the sight of dear Mr. Gilbert Tennent and Mr. Cross. Mr. Tennent has been in the West Jerseys and Maryland, and told me how God has remarkably worked by his ministry in many places. Mr. Cross has also seen great and wonderful things in his congregations.⁵⁴

Tennent in New England

George Whitefield had made a successful revival tour through New England during the months of September and October, 1740. Upon Whitefield's return from New England, he spent several days ministering with Tennent and Cross in Newark and Basking Ridge. It was at this time that Whitefield asked William Tennent whether his brother Gilbert might consider preaching in New England.⁵⁵ Daniel Rogers, a tutor at Harvard College and recent convert who accompanied Whitefield, requested that Tennent accept an invitation from several prominent ministers of New England

⁵³Maxson, 64.

⁵⁴Gillies, *Historical Accounts*, 332.

⁵⁵Maxson, 64.

to visit Boston and New England in order to further the religious interest that had been recently awakened under the ministry of Whitefield.⁵⁶

Tennent spoke of his burden for a preaching tour through New England.

I was informed before I left home by divers Persons worthy of Credit, that there has been in most places of *New England*, for some considerable tract of Time, a lamentable Decay of the Power of Godliness, both among Ministers and People; so that there has been little to be heard, of a Work of Conviction and Conversion carrying on in them: And this divers worthy Persons among the Ministry as well as the Laity of *New England* have acknowledged in my hearing, to be a Truth bitterly to be bewail'd! . . .

The Occasion of my Travels, was not a Notion of any superior Qualifications in me, for the carrying on of that good Work, which GOD has more remarkably begun of late in this Land. . . .

Having been thro' much Importunity prevail'd with, to travel some Journeys to the Southward, having seen much of the Divine Power in those Travels, to the awakening of a great number of Persons; and hearing of the Success of the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield's* Labours in *New England*, and being much urged by him, and divers other Ministers in those Parts where I live, to come this way, as well as earnestly invited by several pious Ministers of *New England*, to come over to their *Macedonia* and help them. After I had been tossed up and down on the Billows of distrustful Fears, Reluctance, and contrary Reasonings, thro' frequent Supplications to the Father of Lights, both my Self and with others for Direction; I found a willingness notwithstanding of my mean Qualifications of Mind, and cold Constitution of Body, to face the Northern Gusts, and commit myself into the Hands of the great GOD, in

⁵⁶*New England Weekly Journal*, January 27, 1741.

order to make an Attempt for the promoting of his Kingdom by traveling.⁵⁷

Archibald Alexander emphasizes Tennent's burden for the people of New England:

Mr. Tennent must have been inflamed with a very ardent zeal, situated as he was, the pastor of a church, and the father of a family, to set off in the depth of winter to preach to a strange people, among whom he probably had not a single acquaintance, either among the clergy or the laity. But invincible resolution was a prominent trait in his character.⁵⁸

Accompanied by Daniel Rogers, Gilbert Tennent labored in New England for three months to "carry on the work of God" which had been started under Whitefield's ministry.⁵⁹ Tennent's arrival intensified this awakening. The Rev. Mr. Cooper of Boston declared "more came to him in one week in deep concern about their souls than in the whole twenty four years of his preceding ministry."⁶⁰ Similar stories of Tennent's ministry were told throughout New England.⁶¹

⁵⁷Gilbert Tennent. "Response to the Author of the Letter in the Post-Boy, of the 28th of December last". *The New England Weekly Journal*, Tuesday, January 27, 1741, Numb. 719.

⁵⁸Alexander, 46.

⁵⁹Gillies, *Historical Accounts*, 333.

⁶⁰Prince, *Christian History*, 1744,5, 391.

⁶¹*Christian History*, sections 5,7,11,14.

Samuel Hopkins, a student at Yale College, was also impressed by Tennent's preaching. He noted that Whitefield's message focused primarily on inappropriate behavior. The students reaction to it was mixed.

I heard [Whitefield] when he preached in public, and when he expounded in private, but did not in the least call in question my own good estate, that I remember. He preached against mixed dancing and frolicking of males and females together; which practice was then very common in New England. This offended some, especially young people. But I remember I justified him in this in my own mind, and in conversation with those who were disposed to condemn him.⁶²

However, according to Hopkins, Tennent's sermons to the same students were significantly different and had far greater results. Tennent did not focus on external behavior. His message focused on the requirements of an internal spiritual change in order to escape God's wrath. As a result, Hopkins says "Thousands. . . were awakened":

Early in the next spring, in March, Mr. Gilbert Tennent, who had been itinerating in New England, in Boston and other places in the winter, came to New Haven from Boston, in his way southward. He was a remarkably plain and rousing preacher, and a remarkable awakening had been produced by his preaching, and many hopeful conversions had taken place under his preaching, where he had itinerated.

On his coming to New Haven, the people appeared to be almost universally aroused, and flocked to hear him. He staid about a week in New Haven, and preached seventeen sermons, most of them in the meeting-house two or three in the college hall. His preaching

⁶²Hopkins, 15.

appeared to be attended with a remarkable and mighty power.

Thousands, I believe, were awakened; and many cried out with distress and horror of mind, under a conviction of God's anger, and their constant exposedness to fall into endless destruction. Many professors of religion received conviction that they were not real Christians, and never were born again; which numbers publicly confessed, and put up notes, without mentioning their names, but their number, desiring prayers for them as unconverted, and under this conviction. The members of college appeared to be universally awakened.⁶³

This anecdote of Hopkins shows vividly the contrasting nature of Tennent and Whitefield's preaching. To the New Haven audience of ministerial students, Whitefield preached about the externals of religion such as "mixed dancing and frolicking of males and females together", probably presuming that the students had experienced conversion, and needed their behavior to be in accord with all piety and dignity. However, Tennent had no such allusions to the conversion and piety of ministers. One year prior, in March 1740, he had given a scathing sermon entitled *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*. His opening lines were:

As a faithful ministry is a great ornament, blessing, and comfort, to the church of God (even the feet of such messengers are beautiful), so, on the contrary, an ungodly ministry is a great curse and judgment. These caterpillars labor to devour every green thing. There is nothing that may more justly call forth our saddest sorrows, and make all our powers and passions mourn in the most doleful accents,

⁶³Hopkins, 15,16.

the most incessant, insatiable, and deploring agonies, than the melancholy case of such who have no faithful ministry!⁶⁴

These lines demonstrate the burden and sorrow Tennent felt for people whose ministers had not experienced conversion. Therefore, when faced with the ministry students at Yale, he preached pointedly and explicitly about how close they were to destruction. As Hopkins reported, the result was that many "cried out with distress and horror of mind, under a conviction of God's anger, and their constant exposedness to fall into endless destruction". Hopkins was less impressed with Whitefield's preaching than with Tennent's. In fact, at one point, Hopkins considered studying for the ministry with Tennent ('the greatest and best man, and the best preacher').⁶⁵

Upon his return to New Brunswick, Tennent wrote Whitefield to inform him of the success in New England,

⁶⁴Gilbert Tennent, *Danger of an Unconverted Ministry, Considered in a Sermon On Mark VI.43. Preached at Nottingham, in Pennsylvania, March 8. ANNO 1739,40.* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, In Market Street, 1740).

⁶⁵After Edwards visited New Haven, Hopkins says "I altered my former plans with respect to Mr. Tennent, and concluded I should go and live with Mr. Edwards as soon as I should have opportunity." (Samuel Hopkins, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, Vol. I*, Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 23,24).

saying "multitudes had been awakened". In Boston, "there were many hundreds if not thousands under soul concern". In Charlestown, "multitudes were awakened". In Cambridge, "the shaking among the dry bones was general and several of the students have received consolation." In New Haven, "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."⁶⁶ According to Rev. Mr. Prince, the revival continued for about one and a half years.

Return to New Brunswick

Upon his return to New Brunswick in 1741, Tennent was seriously ill due to the strain of the extreme New England winter. During his lengthy recuperation in the New Brunswick parsonage, Tennent was reduced to being an observer of what had become an inter colonial revival,⁶⁷ largely effected through the efforts of Whitefield and himself. By this time, a revival was evident in every colony north of Virginia, and in the absence of Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent was perceived to be its leader.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Alexander, 49.

⁶⁷Lodge, 258.

⁶⁸Lodge, 258.

Tennent's Philadelphia Pastorate

In 1744,⁶⁹ Tennent left New Brunswick to become the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia where he remained for nineteen years. The members of this congregation had been converted under the preaching of Whitefield, Tennent and others in 1740. Hodge records this in her memoirs, "In 1743, the Second Church was founded by Gilbert Tennent and the converts of Whitefield, one hundred and forty being received as members."⁷⁰

The sermons of these later years were more doctrinal in nature, probably because he was preaching to a converted congregation whose needs were edification, as opposed to evangelization. His preaching style changed at this point to a more logical and less emotional style. One book of these sermons was published in 1744.⁷¹ All twenty-three of these sermons (which presumably were preached in the months prior to its publication) were doctrinal in nature. The subjects concerned *"The Chief End of Man"*, *"The Divine*

⁶⁹Ezra Hall Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publications, 1864), 95.

⁷⁰Hugh Hodge, *Memoranda of Family History* (Philadelphia: s.n., 1903), 128.

⁷¹Gilbert Tennent, *Twenty Three Sermons Upon the Chief End of Man, The Divine Authority of the Sacred Scriptures, the Being and Attributes of God, and the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1744).

Authority of the Sacred Scriptures", *"The Being and Attributes of God"*, and *"The Doctrine of the Trinity"*. His method was to first define the doctrine, then its effect on the individual. He then carefully delineated personal applications of the doctrine, and concluded with a plea for the listeners to apply this doctrine to their lives in order to effect their conversion to God.

It was during his time in Philadelphia that the main body of Tennent's sermons was published. The presses of Benjamin Franklin and William Bradford printed most of Tennent's works. It was through his relationship with Franklin that Tennent became interested in civil welfare as pertains to matters of national defense.⁷² In 1753, Tennent and Samuel Davies went to England to raise money for Princeton, the legacy of his father's Log College.⁷³ It was because of the money raised by Tennent and Davies that Nassau Hall now stands.⁷⁴

Because of illness, Tennent resigned from the pastorate two years prior to his death on July 23, 1764. He was originally buried in the front aisle of the Second

⁷²Brink, 12.

⁷³Brink, 12.

⁷⁴Brink, 12.

Philadelphia Presbyterian Church, but is now interred "in the same cemetery as his friend Benjamin Franklin."⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Tennent was an effective revivalist, as well as an effective leader of men who spread revival. Tennent learned his theology from his able father, William, Sr., and was drawn to New Brunswick where he observed a revival of the Dutch Reformed people under the ministry of Theodore Frelinghuysen. An illness caused Tennent to reassess his methods and changed his techniques to "preaching terrors" and "searching evangelism". He taught this to his brothers as well as to his protégés from the New Brunswick Presbytery.

Through the efforts of these men, revival cut a wide swath through central New Jersey, the highly populated area that extended from New York to Philadelphia. Both Frelinghuysen as well as the Tennent men used these methods before Jonathan Edwards, who may have learned them either indirectly by word of mouth, or directly by reading Tennent's *Solemn Warning to a Secure World*.

⁷⁵Brink, 14.

Tennent was respected by Whitefield, and followed his wake in a preaching journey through New England. As a result, thousands were converted in New England alone.

Tennent's later years were focused less on evangelism and more on a pastoral ministry. Archibald Alexander had these words to say about Gilbert Tennent.

As Mr. Whitefield was doubtless honoured to be the instrument of 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.⁷⁶

Tennent is a role model for contemporary ministers. Were his methods effective because it was a time of God's supernatural outpouring, or did God providentially supply an outpouring as a result of his methods? The fact that not every minister was experiencing an awakening in his congregation suggests the latter. Rev. Duncan Campbell, a key minister of the Hebrides Revival of 1949 said "I personally believe in the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men, but I do not believe in any concept of revival that eliminates man's responsibility."⁷⁷ Olford has said "We cannot do anything to make the wind blow. But we can learn

⁷⁶Alexander, 45-46.

⁷⁷Stephen Olford, *Heart Cry for Revival* (Memphis, TN: EMI Books, 1980), 19.

how to set our sails in order to take advantage of it."⁷⁸

The following chapters will discuss Tennent's methods of "setting sails", so that contemporary ministers can learn how to be fully equipped when the winds of revival blow.

⁷⁸Stephen Olford, "Lecture Notes", *Essentials of Expository Preaching* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

THE MORPHOLOGY OF CONVERSION

This chapter discusses Tennent's conversion morphology and how it differed from the other paradigm of his day. It is important to understand this because it is his morphology of conversion that drives Tennent's evangelistic methods. It will describe Tennent's adaptation of Frelinghuysen's "sharp law work of conversion" into his existing paradigm. It will further describe the stages of conversion, and Tennent's method of eliciting and accelerating this process. It will compare the "Engel Conversion Scale" of the spiritual decision making process (a cognitive model) to the Tennent-Rickards Scale which is a cognitive, emotional behavioral model.

Schools of Thought on Conversion

By the time Gilbert Tennent began his ministry, there were two schools of thought about conversion. The first believed that regeneration was a gradual and nearly imperceptible process occurring in the hearts of the elect. Historian Martin Lodge writes, "[Conversion] could not be

perceived directly, but it was manifested outwardly by a gradual growth in holiness: by an increased seriousness about religious matters and by greater efforts of obedience to God's Word."¹

The second school of thought was that conversion involved internal suffering resulting from conviction of sin. This could also be a lengthy process. The Tennent family adhered to this school of thought. Gilbert's personal conversion lasted several years. In an effort to assist his son through the humiliations of conviction, Gilbert's father gave him theological texts to read. Alexander says when God finally revealed himself to Tennent, it was "with so much clearness and comfort, that all his doubts and sorrows and fears were dispelled; and the Sun of Righteousness arose upon him with healing under his wings."² As a result of this *experiential* encounter with God, Tennent became assured of his salvation.

These conversion paradigms are similar in that they both view conversion as a process. They are different in that the Tennent conversion paradigm involves internal suffering (from conviction of sin) and concludes with an

¹Lodge, 109,110.

²Alexander, 36.

experience of assurance, whereas the first paradigm is a gradual and imperceptible process with no experience of assurance.

When Tennent began the church in New Brunswick, it is reasonable to assume that he expected his congregation to mirror the conversion paradigm that was a part of his own experience. Unfortunately, he was displeased with their lack of compliance. When he became seriously ill, Tennent had time to analyze his lack of success and compare it with the awakening that Frelinghuysen's churches had been experiencing in the very same region. We know this, because after his illness, Tennent began to use one of Frelinghuysen's methods.³ By means of focusing on the Law that the sinner had broken and the damnation that was deserved, Frelinghuysen and Tennent were able to elicit and accelerate conviction and conversion. This has been called conversion by "sharp-law work."

³ Martin E. Lodge says "Frelinghuysen scorned this emphasis on gradualism and outward appearance, and preached the necessity of a single experience of renewal. His revivalism was unique only in its insistence that no claim to election is complete without the stamp of a violent experience of conversion" (Lodge, 109,110).

Tennent's Morphology of Conversion

Tennent wrote no theological text describing his morphology of conversion. However, his understanding of this subject is clearly evident in his published sermons. In the following excerpt, Tennent shows that "sharp law work" involves convincing men of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come (with the agency of the Holy Spirit) by the use of terrifying subjects, such as Judgment Day, "that Terrible Day of God."

Seeing it is the first work of the Spirit to convince men of Sin, of Righteousness, and the Judgment to come, then by Consequence, discoursing and meditating upon that *terrible Day of God*, must necessarily [coincide] with the Design and Agency of the *Holy Ghost*; and so prove peculiarly suitable to the Case of the Secure and Convinc'd, to the first to alarm them, and to the latter to fix Convictions in them; both which are necessary Preparatives to a true and vital Goodness, *Jer. 4.3. John 16.8,9. Rom. 7.9.*⁴

Note that Tennent calls the unsaved "the secure". Because such a person is unconvinced and unconvicted, he is a "secure" sinner. In order to convince and convict, Tennent preaches on judgment and damnation in order to inform and alarm the congregation, and to affix convictions in order to ensure conversion. He explains this method saying:

⁴*Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment*, 213.

To the convinc'd, I would observe, that there is no subject so suitable as this of the last Judgment, to fix and rivet their Convictions in their hearts, as a nail in a sure place. For God's sake, do not think it is enough to be convinc'd of Sin, unless you be converted from it in Heart and Life.⁵

Conviction

The secure sinner needs to be convinced of his sin and unrighteousness and then convicted. There is a difference between being *convinced* and being *convicted*. A murderer may be *convinced* that killing is wrong, but commits murder nevertheless because *he does not care* that it is wrong. A murderer is *convicted* (not legally, but spiritually) when he feels distress in his heart.

In the following excerpt, Tennent explains that repentance is a necessary part of conviction. Repentance is not to be confused with being sorry because one was caught, nor is repentance merely a shallow feeling of sorrow or regret. To show the ineffectiveness of such feelings, Tennent uses the examples of Judas and Ahab. Neither of these men truly repented of their deeds, but both exhibited feelings of sorrow or regret. Instead, the mourning of true repentance must be based on love, and then followed by a "thorough reformation".

⁵*Solemn Scene*, 215.

Of Repentance: Which many take to be a legal sorrow, with some care after reformation. But had not Judas and Ahab a slavish mercenary sorrow? Some people think that if they do but mourn (whatever principle it be from) when they have committed some gross crime, and take some care afterwards for a while to avoid it, that they are true penitents. But O Friend, this is far from true repentance! Thy mourning must be from *Love* (Psalm 51). Thy *hatred* must be universal and implacable (2 Cor. 7:11). And there must be a thorough reformation after it. For it is he that confesseth and forsaketh sin, that shall find Mercy. Without this, you may go on sinning and repenting alternately, or by turns, and notwithstanding be damned at last eternally (Rev. 21:8, 22:15).⁶

Conviction is not shallow, nor does it consist merely of a guilty conscience. In the next excerpt, Tennent says such pangs of conscience are as transitory as "sea sickness". Instead, one who has true conviction is in distress not merely about actual sins, but also of their predisposition to sin (iniquity), or "heart corruptions".

[Conviction does not consist of] *Qualms of Conscience*. Some trouble and fear about some gross actual offences, which like sea sickness soon goes over, and wears off by degrees, then they are easy; and some of them will wallow in the same lusts again, like a dog licking up his vomit (2 Peter 2: 21,22). But true conviction must be of the *state and heart corruptions*, as well as of *actual sins*, occasioning great perplexity and distress; *What shall I do?* As a man stabbed with a spear asketh for a remedy (Acts 2: 37). "Those that have been often convicted, have never been convicted", says Mr. Stoddard.⁷

⁶*Solemn Warning*, 20.

⁷*Solemn Warning*, 19.

Conviction is an admission that one is presently in "a bad and damnable state", and of this condition, one must be "sensible" before one can come to Christ for salvation. In other words, before one can accept Christ as Savior, one must admit that one NEEDS to be saved! Note Tennent's words in the following:

Some take [conviction] to be only a conviction of the Judgment, or assent of the mind, to the doctrine of Truths of Religion. So they will confess we are born in a bad State by nature, but they won't own that they are in a bad and damnable state at present, and that thou must be sensible of before you come to Christ savingly.⁸

Conversion

Conversion does not consist of a mere outward reformation. Conversion is "a universal efficacious and internal change which spreads through all the powers and passions of the soul." Note in the following excerpt the total transformation that is associated with conversion.

Of Conversion: Which many take to be only some trouble of conscience, and an outward reformation following it, both which may be without a spark of saving and converting grace (Acts 24:25; 2 Peter 2:20; Romans 2:17-20). Conversion is a universal efficacious and internal change, which spreads through all the powers and passions of the soul; the understanding is illuminated with a beam of heavenly

⁸Solemn Warning, 19.

light (Acts 26:18). What high thoughts of God, what sweet meditations of Christ, what humble thoughts of themselves, have these enlightened souls? (Gen 18:27; Phil. 3:8). What pliability in their wills to the Will of God. *He will make His people willing in the Day of His Power* (Psalm 110:3). *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* said convinced Saul. What strong proneness in their affections towards God and Heaven (Psalm 73:25). How tender are their consciences, easily sensible of the least offence, as the eye of smallest dust (Heb. 9. 14). How holy and heavenly their lives! (Rom. 6:14; Col. 3:1-3)⁹

From this excerpt, it can be seen that Tennent believes conversion is a total transformation that affects the mind (logic), the will (behavior), and the emotions (heart). First, conversion transforms the mind in that "the understanding is illuminated with a beam of heavenly light." Such illumination yields "high thoughts of God. . . sweet meditations of Christ. . . (and) humble thoughts of themselves." Second, conversion transforms the will, making it submissive to God, so like Saul, the converted person asks "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" Third, conversion transforms the emotions, turning the converted person's affections "towards God and Heaven", and making his conscience sensitive to "the least offence, as the eye of smallest dust."

⁹*Solemn Warning*, 20.

Assurance

Tennent believed that an individual must cultivate feelings of conviction in himself until he receives assurance of his conversion from God. In the following excerpt, Tennent exhorts the congregation not to rest "till Jesus be discovered". The method he recommends to cultivate conviction is to think of "the dreadful consequences of expiring convictions before conversion", i.e., to use fear as a motivator:

I am jealous of you, *my dear Brethren*, with a godly jealousy, lest your Convictions die away of their own Accord, or be slightly heal'd. O don't rest, for Christ's Sake, till Jesus be discover'd and apply'd to your Souls! Think often upon the Uncertainty of the Spirit's Strivings, and the dreadful Consequences of expiring Convictions, before Conversion. When the Blossoms are nipp'd, what Expectation is there of fruit?¹⁰

Tennent clarifies the faith or assurance that is associated with conversion. Faith is not a mental assent to the truths of Christianity. As Tennent says, "*the devils believe also and tremble*" (James 2:9). Instead, a person with faith should be able to articulate how they received it, how they keep it, and what effect it has on his life. Therefore, Tennent expects a converted person to be able to articulate a "conversion narrative" (personal

¹⁰*Righteousness of Scribes*, 18.

testimony) which describes when and how a person received faith, and what effect it has on his or her life.¹¹

Sanctification

Some believe that they are sanctified because they experience an "inward combat" with sin. But Tennent says this is false. There are many reasons why one might have an inward struggle with sin that has no bearing on sanctification.

First, the danger of a sin might act as a restrainer. For example, one may feel restrained not to commit murder. However, this restraint is NOT because murder is wrong, but because of the potential danger of being killed in the altercation.

Second, one's natural temperament may create an aversion to a certain type of sin. For example, a mild tempered person is naturally indisposed to outbursts of anger.

Third, one might have an aversion to a certain sin because it is in direct opposition to another sin. For example, covetousness (hoarding) opposes bad stewardship

¹¹*Solemn Warning*, 20.

(excessive spending). None of these restrainers to sin are evidences of sanctification.¹²

Sanctification is evidenced by obedience to Christ. Such obedience springs from love, according to Tennent. With a love for Christ, one can overcome the temptations of the world to sin. When obedience springs from selfish reasons, such as from fear of punishment or loss of self-esteem (instead of from love to Christ), it is "rotten at the core", says Tennent.

All this *outward* Obedience, inasmuch as it springs not from *Love to God* for himself, as its main Principle, but from *selfish Respects*, is mean and sordid, and though it has a fair Sun, yet it is, upon the aforesaid Account, rotten at the Core.¹³

To underscore the coexistence of sanctification as obedience arising from a love of God, Tennent says, "If your faith doesn't work by love, and overcome the world, it is but a fiction of your own brain, or a delusion of the Devil."¹⁴

¹²*Solemn Warning*, 21, 22.

¹³*Righteousness of Scribes*, 13.

¹⁴*Solemn Warning*, 20.

Summary

In summary, there were two major schools of thought regarding conversion. One school believed that conversion was gradual and imperceptible, but externally evidenced by a gradual growth in holiness. The other believed that conversion was gradual, but difficult and experiential. Tennent used a method that elicited and accelerated conviction and conversion. This method has been called the "sharp law work of conversion."

The goal of Tennent's evangelistic sermons was to convince, convict and convert. In order to convince and convict, Tennent preaches about judgment and damnation in order to inform and alarm the congregation, and to affix convictions in order to ensure conversion. Tennent calls the unsaved, "secure sinners". They must be convinced and convicted. To convince is different than to convict, because a convinced person is aware that he has done something wrong, but does not care. To explain further, conviction does not consist merely of a guilty conscience, nor is it shallow. Conviction is an admission that one is presently in "a bad and damnable state". An awareness of this is necessary before one can come to Christ for salvation. Repentance is a necessary part of conviction.

It is not a shallow sense of "feeling sorry". Instead, the mourning of true repentance must be based on love and followed by a thorough reformation.

Conversion is a total transformation that affects the mind (logic), the will (behavior), and the emotions (heart), giving illuminations, sweet meditations, and submissive affirmations to the will of God. Conversion is not complete until it results in assurance. Therefore, the change involved in conversion is sensible and experiential. Because conversion is experiential, it can be described in a personal testimony or "conversion narrative".

Application of Tennent's Conversion Morphology to Contemporary Ministry

The Tripartite Nature of the Conversion "Decision"

Tennent's writings suggest that he believed in the tripartite nature of the conversion process. He believed that conversion was a total transformation that affected the mind (logic), the will (behavior), and the emotions (heart).

This three-part conversion requires a three-part approach in evangelization that is not always understood by contemporary ministers. Some evangelistic appeals are based on emotion alone. A person may respond to this type

of appeal. However, since emotions are transitory, there is a great likelihood that when the emotion abates, the emotion based conversion "decision" will abate as well. Other evangelistic appeals are based on logic. For example, it is logical to accept Christ as Savior if doing so will yield eternal life. However, when trials and tribulations associated with Christianity occur, there is a great likelihood that this logic-based decision will abate as well.

In *Anointed Expository Preaching*, authors Stephen and David Olford stress the importance of the evangelistic message appealing to the mind (perception), the 'heart' (emotion), and the will (volition). "For a true evangelistic decision to be made, the mind must be satisfied, the heart must be stirred, and the will must be strengthened to respond to Christ"¹⁵ [emphasis, mine].

This tripartite appeal to the mind, heart, and will is seen in the Olfords' exegesis of Revelation 3:20, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.*"

¹⁵Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 264.

Let us notice first of all, that the appeal is to the faculty of perception- "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock*" (Rev. 3:20). Men and women are invited to focus on Christ and to see in Him, and Him alone, their Savior and Lord.

Then there is the faculty of emotion. "*If anyone hears my voice.*" There is no power on earth calculated to stir the heart like the voice of Christ. "*Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ*" (Rom. 10:17 NIV, emphasis ours). God's final message to a sin cursed race is, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!*" (Matt. 17:5, emphasis, ours).

This leads to the faculty of volition. "*If anyone. . . opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*" In his inscrutable wisdom and sovereignty, God has given us the freedom to choose. We can open the door, or we can shut the door of our lives to Him. . . .

So in calling for a decision, we must remember these three essential elements of perception, emotion and volition (or mind, heart, and will).¹⁶

An evangelistic invitation should call for a decision. "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). However, this should be an informed decision that involves perception, emotion and will. This tripartite appeal to the mind, heart, and will underscores the complex nature of the evangelistic decision. While the decisive act of conversion may be instantaneous, the decision making process that leads up to that decisive act may take time.

¹⁶Stephen Olford, 265.

The Process Of Conversion

One of the most salient characteristics of Tennent's conversion morphology is his understanding of conversion as a process. Today's conversion paradigm sees conversion more in terms of a decisive event that begins the process of sanctification.

The fact that salvation is a process is evidenced by Scripture references regarding justification¹⁷, sanctification¹⁸ and glorification¹⁹. Justification is the judicial process that occurs when a person receives Christ as Savior and Lord. Justification yields "positional righteousness", as it refers to one's righteous position in Christ. Positional righteousness is instantaneous, as God's judicial decision is instantaneous. Positional righteousness does not imply "practical righteousness"

¹⁷ (Romans 4:24,25 KJV) "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

¹⁸ (1 Thessalonians 4:3 KJV) "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Also, (1 Peter 1:2) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

¹⁹ (Romans 8:30) "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

(righteous living), however. Sanctification is a process that occurs subsequent to justification whereby man cooperates with the Holy Spirit to live a godly life. Glorification occurs when we leave this mortal body.

These three phases of salvation show the process of conversion from the moment the conversion decision is made. However, few people examine the pre-salvation process of conversion and the events that lead up to a quality decision to accept Christ as Savior. This is an important topic of study if one is to be effective in evangelism.

The conversion process could be examined as a continuum with several stages. These stages include the pre-conversion stage, conversion stage, and post conversion stage. It is the "conversion stage" that I would like to highlight.

The "conversion stage" may be short or protracted. Tennent had a protracted conversion experience. He believed that a deep emotional experience would expedite the conversion process, and marked the evidence of conversion as the point in which the individual felt assurance by the Holy Spirit.

Contemporary ministry seems to regard conversion more as a decision (decisive event) than a process. Conversion

is marked when people "decide" to follow Christ. There are two problems with this paradigm of evangelistic harvest.

1. Harvesting young fruit prematurely. This occurs when a person responds to an altar call, but does not exactly know why. The Holy Spirit stirs the individual, who responds appropriately. The problem occurs when the person affirms a prayer that he does not really understand, and then is proclaimed to be saved. It would be far better to call this person an "inquirer" instead of a "convert", then shepherd him in a discipleship class, and await the Holy Spirit's personal affirmation that he is saved.

Evangelistic crusade teams are beginning to understand that not everyone who responds to an altar call can truly be called a "convert". Because of this, when reporting the results of evangelistic crusades, some crusade statisticians many are now referring to those who respond to altar calls as "inquirers" instead of "converts".²⁰

I counseled a lady who was "harvested prematurely" from an altar call. She came to my office wondering why she continued to sin, and why she did not 'feel' saved. The only assurance she had of her salvation was from the

²⁰C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 121.

minister who prayed the "sinner's prayer" with her. She was never disciplined in an educational program, nor was she paired with a spiritual mentor. She did not understand the importance of prayer, Bible study and having a daily quiet time with the Lord for spiritual growth and development.

When this lady responded to the altar call, she was probably in the early stage in the decision-making process of conversion. She never received assurance of her conversion from the Holy Spirit, because the well-meaning minister's assurances. The next mistake was when the minister neglected her spiritual growth by not channeling her into a discipleship class. The premature harvest of this lady's spiritual fruit caused her spiritual growth to be stunted. As a result of the ministry she received, this woman thought she was a "second class Christian".

2. Neglecting young fruit. The writer knows a lady who attended Billy Graham's New York Crusade in 1957. When the invitation was given to "accept Christ", this lady wanted to go forward. However, she restrained herself because she did not understand what would be required of her. If an invitation had been given for "inquirers", i.e., for people who were not ready to make a "decision", but who wanted to know more, she says that she would have

responded. This person was in an early stage of the conversion process, and was missed entirely by Graham's invitation which called only for 'decisions.'

Implications of Process Conversion to Contemporary Ministry

If we see the actual conversion stage more as a decision making process than a decisive event, we will allow more time for the decision making process to occur. Unfortunately, the most important portion of the service, the invitation to respond to the Word of God is often given the least amount of planning in the service.

The writer has observed a church service in which the standard procedure is for one minister to give a sermon, and another minister give the invitation for salvation. There was no connection between what was preached and the evangelistic invitation. The opportunity for the congregation to respond to the evangelistic invitation was brief. Although two people responded to the invitation, the writer was left with the impression that many more might have been reached if a proper foundation had been laid for evangelism in the message, and if an opportunity had been given for people to have a private consultation to answer any of their questions or concerns. Instead, the writer believes that the opportunity to reach souls (other

than the ones who were ready to make the decision for Christ), was lost.

When one makes a quality decision to accept Christ, a spiritual battle takes place. No doubt, demonic entities make their best attempt to dissuade the person from his decision. The spiritual and the carnal struggle against each other. There is a battle against the thoughts, feelings and actions within a person. A resolution to this battle may take time.

Keeping this in mind, the minister must make every effort to maximize the time he has with the people so as to effect the appropriate change. There are several means by which this can be achieved.

1. Purposeful preaching: Know what you want to say in your sermon, and know what your desired response to the message is. In other words, what is the Scripture's dominating theme, integrating thoughts and motivating thrust? Additionally, do not leave the application of the message to the end of the sermon. Instead, use relevant examples to illustrate the meaning of the text and highlight the applications of the text throughout the message. If we give more than just a few brief moments at the end of a sermon to allow the person to respond, the

person will have more time to think about the message's relevance to his life.

2. Invitation to Inquirers: In addition to an evangelistic invitation for people who have made decisions, it is recommended that an invitation be given for "inquirers." This assists people who are in the early stage of the conversion decision to make a quality, informed decision by diffusing doubts and dispelling ignorance and error. It also affords the opportunity to engage the people in Bible study or discipleship training. Olford recommends the minister personally conduct an "after meeting" in which the key points of the message are reiterated, and the points of salvation are discussed.²¹

In order to assist "inquirers" in their decision, the opportunity for private consultation should be given as well. However, people who are socially reticent may be afraid to respond to an invitation of any type. For such people, a "response card" may be needed. This way, they can respond to the invitation by filling out a card. Later, a minister can contact them privately. All these

²¹Stephen Olford, *Expository Preaching and Spiritual Growth Institute* (Memphis, TN: Olford Ministries International, April 2-5, 2003).

activities allow time for a quality evangelistic decision to be made.

3. Conservation of Decisions: Discipleship classes should be available to both new converts as well as inquirers. The people need to understand the importance of Bible study, prayer and daily quiet time with the Lord in order to receive assurance of their conversion.

Additionally, people could be paired with mature Christian mentors. This discipleship helps to mature the new convert, as well as assist in dispelling uncertainties in the person who has not fully made the conversion decision.

The Engel Conversion Scale vs.

The Tennent-Rickards Conversion Scale

James Engel has developed a paradigm depicting decision-making that occurs in the process of conversion.

In this model, there are eight steps.²² Note below:

The Engle Conversion Scale

-8 Awareness of a supreme Being, but no effective knowledge of the gospel (General revelation)

²²James Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), 225.

- 7 Initial awareness of the gospel (conviction stage begins)
- 6 Awareness of the fundamentals of the gospel
- 5 Grasp of the implications of the gospel
- 4 Positive attitude toward gospel
- 3 Personal problem recognition
- 2 Decision to act
- 1 Repentance and faith in Christ.

THE PERSON IS REGENERATED AND BECOMES A NEW CREATURE

- 1 Post-decision evaluation
- 2 Incorporation into the Body
- 3 A lifetime of conceptual and behavioral growth in Christ.

C. Peter Wagner sees the "Engel Scale" as effective in determining what he calls "persuasion evangelism" by helping to measure the level of progress of a person in the evangelistic process.²³ However, this is a model that focuses entirely on cognitions. Is such a model adequate to describe the conversion process? Since conversion involves a total transformation of a person's thoughts, emotions and actions, a model based on Tennent's conversion

²³C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 124,125.

morphology seems to grasp the conversion process more fully. Note the following:

The Tennent-Rickards Conversion Scale²⁴

Stage 1. The "Secure Sinner":

- A. He has an awareness of God.
- B. He has an innate, moral understanding that is common to man.

Romans 1:18-20 shows that God has been revealed to all mankind through nature:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Stage 2. The "Convinced":

- A. He is convinced of personal sin and unrighteousness. This is a cognitive understanding of sinfulness.

²⁴The writer has named this the "Tennent-Rickards Conversion Scale" because it is a scale that was developed based on Tennent's conversion paradigm.

- B. This is a mark of the effects of the Holy Spirit on the MIND of the unregenerate.

Stage 3. The "Convicted":

- A. He is convicted of personal sinfulness and unrighteousness.
- B. This is a mark of the effects of the Holy Spirit on the EMOTIONS of the unregenerate.
- C. Conviction results in emotional distress, which acts as a motivator to seek relief. (EMOTIONS)
- D. He admits that he is in a bad and damnable state. (COGNITIONS)
- E. He humbles himself and repents of his sins, with the intention of never returning to them. (EMOTIONS, ACTIONS)
- F. He prays for Christ to forgive his sins and to be his Savior and Lord. (EMOTIONS, ACTIONS)
- G. He preserves this focus on God until he experiences assurance from the Holy Spirit. (EMOTIONS, ACTIONS)
- H. He experiences assurance from the Holy Spirit of his conversion.

Stage 4. The "Converted":

- A. This person is totally transformed, i.e., a 'new creation'. (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV) "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."
- B. His mind is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.
- C. His will is submissive to God's will.
- D. His emotions are marked by affections toward God.
- E. His conscience is sensitive to sin.

Stage 5. The Process of Sanctification

The converted person is not totally free from sin, but his lifestyle shows evidence of increasing godliness.

Similarities and Differences Between the Two Conversion Scales

The "Engel Model" and the "Tennent-Rickards Model" both view conversion as a process that includes a conversion decision. In his book *Evangelism and Church Growth*, author Elmer Towns says,

The Engle Scale attempts to plot the progress of an individual coming to Christ as Savior and beginning the Christian life. The scale assumes that the conversion experience is an extended spiritual experience that includes an event similar to what Moody called "sudden conversion." Engle views the conversion experience as the next logical step in an

experience in which the individual may have been involved for some time.²⁵

The Tennent-Rickards Conversion Scale differs from the Engel Conversion Scale in that it sees the conversion process as more than a series of rational decisions. Conversion encompasses the whole person, including his thoughts, emotions and actions. Another critical difference is that the Engel Scale focuses on the 'good news' (gospel) without any reference to the person's understanding of the "bad news", i.e., his depraved state and God's righteous anger. In the Tennent-Rickards Scale, the understanding of both the "bad news" as well as the "good news" acts as a motivator to seek a solution to the problem, which is the Savior.

Summary

If we regard conversion as a decision making process that encompasses the totality of the person in terms of his cognitions, emotions and volitions, it will be easier to determine ways to facilitate this decision. For example, the sermon should be structured toward effecting an appropriate life changing decision in the listeners through

²⁵Elmer Towns, *Evangelism and Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 197.

the use of expository preaching with appropriate illustrations, applications, and motivations. The invitation to respond to the message should be clear and understandable, and afford an opportunity for people to ask questions or receive counsel ("inquirers" in the early stage of conversion), and accept Christ as Savior and Lord. All people who respond to such an evangelistic invitation should be disciplined in an educational program to encourage spiritual growth and development.

Assurance of salvation by the Holy Spirit should be expected. Scriptural support for this is found in Paul's writings in which he says, "*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children*" (Romans 8:16). Such assurance is not always immediate. Despite this, well meaning ministers should refrain from giving such assurance, but instead should encourage a deeper experience with God through prayer, Bible study and quiet time. The writer further submits that a personal testimony of a conversion experience be the basis on which conversion is determined by the minister (in Christian charity), as well as the basis for church membership.

Conclusions

The Engel Model of Conversion is insufficient to explain the total conversion process because it deals primarily with the cognitive process of conversion, and conversion involves a total transformation of the thoughts, emotions and actions. The "Tennent-Rickards" conversion paradigm takes these three aspects of personality into consideration, and is a cognitive-emotional-behavioral model. Tennent accelerated the process of conversion with "sharp law work", which essentially means to make one aware of their damnable estate in the most convincing and intense fashion (bad news). An understanding of the bad news as well as the good news (gospel) is an important antecedent to the desired behavior, i.e., acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.

The "Tennent-Rickards" paradigm is Biblical. It expects the converted person to experience assurance of his conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit instead of the decree of the minister.²⁶ There is a problem in contemporary ministry of prematurely declaring someone to be saved on the basis of an affirmation made at an altar call. This affirmation may have been as a result of high-pressure evangelism, or as a result of the stirrings of the

²⁶"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16).

Holy Spirit, which are not totally understood by the person.

The Tennent-Rickards paradigm is a process model of conversion that culminates in an informed evangelistic decision. Because the conversion decision is a process, the need for discipleship is underscored, since altar call responders may not fully understand why they responded.

Tennent expected people to be able to describe the experience of their conversion. It is suggested such a personal testimony be required as evidence of conversion and church membership.

CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH

The following will examine the spiritual climate that Tennent faced when he preached to the Presbyterians of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware as well as the Congregationalists of New England.

Presbyterian Churches

When Tennent began his ministry, the spiritual state of the Presbyterian Church was poor. Both the ministers and people were loyal to the Westminster Confession, but knew nothing of the experiential dimension of conversion. Presbyterian minister Archibald Alexander describes the problems in this church as follows:

The state of vital piety was low in the Presbyterian Church in America... The ministers composing the Presbyterian church...were sound in faith, and strongly attached to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as were also their people; and there were no diversities or contentions among them respecting the doctrines of the gospel; but as to the vital power of godliness, there is reason to believe, that it was little known or spoken of.¹

¹Alexander, 22.

The spiritual life of those in the Presbyterian Churches was dry and formalized. According to Alexander, very little was required for people to acquire church membership:

Revivals of religion were nowhere heard of, and an orthodox creed and a decent external conduct were the only points on which inquiry was made, when persons were admitted to the communion of the church. Indeed, it was very much a matter of course for all who had been baptized in infancy, to be received into full communion at the proper age, without exhibiting or possessing any satisfactory evidence or change of heart by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit.²

One requirement necessary for church membership was the belief in the orthodox creed. However, as already discussed, Tennent says that this is not proof of conversion. Faith is not a mental "assent to the truths of historical Christianity. . . . 'The devils believe and tremble (James 2:19).'"³ The other requirement for membership, according to Alexander was a "decent external conduct". However Tennent asserted that this is also insufficient evidence of conversion. Conversion is "a universal efficacious and internal change" that is evidenced by a transformation of the mind, will and

²Alexander, 22.

³*Solemn Warning*, 20,21.

emotions. The Presbyterian Church required no evidence of such an inner transformation.

Tennent believed that a person of faith should be able to present a "conversion narrative" (personal testimony), which is an articulation of when and how they received their faith, and the effect conversion has on their behavior, which would be an indicator of internal changes associated with conversion. Such a narrative was not required for membership by the Presbyterian churches.

Congregational Churches

Tennent's belief that the experience of conversion should be able to be articulated by an individual was not unique. This idea had been embraced by the colony of New England in order to restrict church membership to those who possessed saving grace. Historian Eugene E. White describes this policy.

Restriction of church membership was not practiced by the English Puritans or Separatists, nor by the Pilgrims or Puritans in New England during the very earliest years of the settlement. Instead, this exclusionary policy began in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the mid-1630's and spread from there to Plymouth and Old England. . . . During the first half dozen years of settlement, Winthrop's company apparently accepted into full membership all supplicants who professed faith and led exemplary lives. By 1636, however, the church covenant was interpreted to apply only to those who could relate a convincing experience with saving grace. This critically important change of interpretation came

about partly because of changing theological concepts within the colony- for instance, John Cotton arrived in 1633 and soon endorsed restrictive church membership- and partly because of political necessity: Following the extension in 1631 of citizenship to all church members, the great number of immigrants, many of them less than saints, threatened to overwhelm the original company.⁴

By the mid 1600's, the public profession of a conversion experience was a requirement for church membership, and this concept had spread back to England⁵. The following is a conversion narrative written by an English woman, Mrs. Elizabeth White, dated December 5, 1669:

Once when I was in great fear lest my heart should grow dead, and when I was with Child, I was much dejected, having a Sense of my approaching danger and wanting an Assurance of my everlasting Happiness. . . . But whilst I was considering of these Things, I had this Scripture set home with abundance of sweetness, Psal. 53:15, "*Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*". . . . But as I lay in Bed, I thought I saw three men before me, and it was presently suggested to me that those were the three persons of the Trinity. . . . But as I lay, I thought Satan stood before me. . . . but I have cast myself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him only is my hope, and here will I Rest, and if I perish, I perish, but sure I am such will not perish, for Christ hath promised them eternal life. Thus being assisted by the Lord, I vanquished for that Time: And being thus at Peace, I

⁴ Eugene E. White, "Puritan Preaching and the Authority of God", *Preaching in American History*, DeWitte Holland, ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 52.

⁵ Ralph J. Coffman, *Solomon Stoddard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 60.

quickly fell asleep and dreamed there was a Ladder set upon the Earth, whose top reached to Heaven, and I thought I was to go up that Ladder into Heaven. . . . I thought something from Heaven drew me by the Arms. . . . I thought I was in Heaven. . . . I was filled with Rejoycing. . . but when I did awake I was filled with inexpressible joy, earnestly being Dissolved and to be with Christ which is best of all.⁶

Over time, the policy of delivering a conversion narrative in order to secure church membership became less important in New England. There are two reasons for this. Calvin never required it, and the "Half Way Covenant" for church membership never demanded it.

First, the public profession of a supernatural experience had never been accepted universally. John Calvin did not require such a test for church membership, nor did Luther. Eugene White describes this attitude:

In their attempts to reform Christianity, neither Luther nor Calvin went beyond Augustine to strive toward purity in the visible church by excluding the unrepentant and open sinners. Both assumed that inasmuch as only an indeterminate few had been elected by God, and inasmuch as a majority of those professing faith had been denied saving grace and had been excluded from the invisible church, the earthly church could not be spotlessly pure. . . . Luther and Calvin rejected such perfectionism, believing it was impossible to identify with certainty those who possess saving grace. Calvin was content to offer three general tests for church membership: Does one

⁶ Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 11-13.

profess faith? Does one lead a righteous life? Does one participate in the sacraments?⁷

Therefore, there were followers of Calvin who never sought to determine one's personal experience with God. Obviously, the litmus test that Calvin proposed is focused entirely on the external manifestations of religion, and is not a reliable gauge of one's heart or spiritual state.

Another reason why delivering a public profession of a supernatural experience in order to secure church membership lost its importance was because of the acceptance in some churches of the "Half Way Covenant." Richard Mather, one of the original New England settlers who arrived in 1635, originally proposed a "Half-Way Covenant" for church membership. A problem had arisen in that many of the second-generation pilgrims did not have an *experiential* conversion, and consequently did not join the church. Because they did not join the church, their children could not be baptized. Mather proposed the "Half-Way Covenant" so that the founders' grandchildren could be baptized. All that was necessary for "half-way" church membership was for the parents "to assent to the church's historical faith in the hope that it would become their

⁷ Eugene E. White, "Puritan Preaching and the Authority of God", *Preaching in American History*, DeWitte Holland, ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), 51,52.

personal saving faith. . . and they had to live lives of outward conformity to God's Word."⁸ Again, we see the focus is entirely on the external manifestation of religion.

By the mid 1650's when the number of church memberships was at low ebb, many ministers began to reconsider the controversial "Half-Way Covenant", and in 1662 the synod recommended its acceptance, although it was by no means popular.⁹ However, it was universally agreed that "Half-Way Members" could NOT receive the Lord's Supper. Solomon Stoddard challenged that premise.

Solomon Stoddard, a Harvard librarian, had been called to the pastorate at Northampton despite his lack of a personal experience with God. His wife enlisted the prayers of other townswomen for his conversion, and Stoddard had such an epiphany while he was preaching the Lord's Supper. Historian I.N. Tarbox described this as follows:

One Sabbath as he was at the table administering the Lord's Supper, he had a new and wonderful revelation of the Gospel scheme. He caught such a full and glorious view of Christ and his great love for men as shown in his redemptive work, that he was almost overpowered with emotion, and with difficulty went forward with the communion service. By reason of

⁸ Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 58.

⁹Stout, 58,59.

this peculiar experience of his, he was led to think, that the place where the soul was likely to receive spiritual light and understanding was at the Lord's table, - that there, in a special manner, Christ would be present to reveal himself, in all his fullness of love to the soul of men.¹⁰

Stoddard marks this partaking of the Lord's Supper as the time of his conversion. Murray disagrees, and says that this event "had more to do with assurance than with conversion itself."¹¹ However, Murray misunderstands Stoddard's (and Tennent's) concept of conversion, i.e., one could not consider oneself converted unless one had a conversion experience that could be articulated.

As a result of this experience, Stoddard believed that the Lord's Supper was a means of effectuating conversion, and should not be withheld from the unconverted. Therefore, he allowed the "Half-Way Covenant" to be practiced in his congregation with one crucial change. In his church, "Half-way" church members COULD receive the Lord's Supper "as a converting ordinance."¹² The only requirement for this reduced membership was that a person

¹⁰Ralph J. Coffman, *Solomon Stoddard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, Div. of D.H. Hall & Co., 1978), 60.

¹¹I. H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards* (Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 79.

¹²Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 99.

must possess Christian knowledge and live an upright life.¹³ Stoddard was criticized for this policy in 1707. But by 1727, the exclusion of a public profession had become widely (though not totally) accepted in the churches.¹⁴ When Jonathan Edwards assumed the pastorate of his grandfather Stoddard's church, the "Half Way" Covenant was still practiced. Later, in an effort to achieve a regenerate church membership, Edwards tried to abolish the Half- Way covenant in his church in Northampton, and was rewarded for this by being fired from his position.

Removing the requirement of a conversion narrative for church membership, as well as the Lord's Table and focusing merely on external behavior as the requirement for a quasi-membership meant that there was less of a demand on the congregation for an inner transformation of conversion. People desire to be accepted. However, when membership as well as the Lord's Table became easily available, the aversive stimulus to change (i.e., the embarrassment of being excluded from the group) was effectively removed.

¹³ Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of Religion and Redemption in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield* (Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 4.

¹⁴ Ian Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlyle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 89.

When Tennent preached in Boston, he criticized the practices of easy access to membership and communion, and pointed to these practices as the principle cause of the "decay of religion":

Many who have not a Righteousness exceeding that of Scribes and Pharisees, are too easily admitted as members of the visible Church.

The lax Method of Admission to sacred Communion, which has too generally obtained among the Protestant churches, more especially of late, has been, I believe, the great Cause of the lamentable Decay of Religion in them! This, the first Fathers of this Country, who had much of the Simplicity and Power of the Religion of Christ, were very sensible of, as appeared by their Practice respecting Church Fellowship.¹⁵

Summary of Spiritual Problems in Tennent's Churches

In summary, the spiritual problems which Tennent faced in both the Presbyterian and Congregational churches were their lack of an insistence on the inner transformation of conversion, with a greater emphasis on appropriate external behavior, and an intellectual assent to the tenets of doctrine.

¹⁵Tennent, *The Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees Considered, in a Sermon on Matthew 5:20. Preach'd at the Evening Lecture in Boston, January 27, 1740, 1.* (Boston: J. Draper for D. Henchman, in Cornhill, 1741) 3,4.

CHAPTER 5

ALARMING THE SECURE: "TERRORS OF THE LAW"

One of Tennent's greatest talents was his ability to convince and convict the unsaved of their sin and unrighteousness and of their need to be wholly dependent on the Lord for their salvation through a technique called "sharp law work." Because this method involves making people aware of their sin, unrighteousness, judgment and damnation, others have referred to this method "preaching the terrors" or "hellfire and damnation preaching."

The Use of Fear as an Antecedent in the Conversion Decision Making Process

Behavior psychologists have observed that antecedents (A), precede behavior (B), which precede consequences (C). We can apply this to the science of conversion. The minister wishes to evoke a certain behavior (B), i.e., repentance and conversion. The appropriate behavior yields forgiveness of sins and eternal life (consequences). He can choose from two antecedents in order to elicit this behavior:

1. He could tell the person the good news, which is the fact that he can have his sins forgiven and go to heaven. This is a positive stimulus.
2. He could tell the person the bad news first, and then the good news. The person is in a bad situation, and is on his way to hell (bad news). However, Jesus has provided a way out of this situation (good news). This sets up an approach-avoidance conflict whereby the person seeks to avoid an aversive stimulus, in favor of a positive stimulus/reward.

There are several problems with the first method (good news only). First, the good news alone may not be a sufficient motivator. For example, when the writer asked a certain lady if she wanted to go to heaven, the lady rejected it by saying, "I don't mind going to hell. That's where all my friends will be." Clearly, the good news of heaven did not motivate this woman.

There is another problem with the "good news only" method. People who accept the good news without understanding the bad news may not persevere during times of tribulation. They may not understand WHY they need salvation. For example, a salesman may have a difficult time selling life preservers on a ship that is not equipped

with them because the ship is well under way, and everyone is having a good time. Life preservers are costly and uncomfortable. However, if the salesman told the same people that the ship was going to sink before it reached its destination (bad news), the people would not only buy life preservers (good news), they would wear them, and strongly tell their family to wear them also. Therefore, the writer submits that informing the people of their damnable state (bad news) along with the gospel message (good news) is a necessary antecedent (A) to accepting Christ as Savior (B) and forgiveness of sins and eternal life (C).

Criticism of "Preaching the Terrors"

As stated in Chapter 3, Tennent's method of "preaching the terrors" both elicited and accelerated the process of conviction and conversion. It is the ministry method for which he was most famous. Tennent's friend, Samuel Finley, described his observation of Tennent as he sought to "alarm the secure sinner":

Did [Tennent] set himself to alarm the secure sinner? Hell from beneath was laid open before him, and destruction hath no covering; while the heavens above gathered blackness, and a tempest of wrath seemed ready to be hurled on the guilty head. Many a sinner has trembled, the visage of his countenance changed, and his knees have smitten one against the

other, while this man of God reasoned of righteousness, temperance and the judgment to come.¹

Not only was "preaching the terrors" the method for which Tennent was most *famous*, it was also the method for which he was most *notorious*. Tennent critic, Timothy Cutler observed him during the New England revival.

[Tennent] told them all they were *damn'd, damn'd, damn'd!* This charmed them! And in the dreadfulest winter that I ever saw, people wallowed in the snow night & day for the benefit of his beastly brayings.²

Tennent defended both the subject of his preaching ("terrors"), as well as the intensity of his preaching, and stated that whatever he said on the subject fell far short of the truth.

The truth is, such be the miseries of presumptuous and impenitent sinners, in this, and especially in the next world, that what I have offered comes far short of an equal, much less of an excessive description of them. It is a just and received maxim that heaven and hell don't admit a hyperbole. Indeed, a cherub's tongue or quill could scarce expand or display them sufficiently. Conceive of God perfectly, and then you may perfectly conceive of and describe His anger. But this is impossible for a finite understanding as Zophar informs us (Job 11:7,8,9). Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as

¹This quote is ascribed to Dr. Finley, "an intimate friend" of Tennent, who was also one of the Presidents of New-Jersey College. ("Memoirs of Gilbert Tennent" *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, April 1807, vol. IV, no.11, 402).

²Eugene E. White, *Puritan Rhetoric: The Issue of Emotion in Religion* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 52.

heaven. What canst thou do? It is deeper than Hell. What canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea! Friend, thou shalt know by experience, either by a sound conviction here, or by a dreadful condemnation hereafter, that I have not equaled, much less exceeded the sorrows and pains of the damned state, in the description I have given of them.³

Tennent's Defense of the "Terrors"

Tennent believed that jolting "secure sinners" was the only effective method to remove their false security. In Tennent's words, "(Alarming secure sinners) is one of the most suitable, necessary and profitable; considering the general and lamentable security that prevails so exceedingly among the children of this generation."⁴

Tennent uses both Scripture and the commentaries of other respected theologians to solidify his position on the necessity to alarm secure sinners. The cover of *Solemn Warning to Secure Sinners* has the following Scripture reference from the prophet Joel. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion. Sound the alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble" (Joel 2:1).

³Gilbert Tennent, *Solemn Warning to the Secure World, From the God of Terrible Majesty. OR, The Presumptuous Sinner Detected, His Pleas Consider'd and His Doom Display'd*. (Cornhill: Kneeland & Green for Henschman, 1735), ii.

⁴*Solemn Warning*, i.

Tennent quotes noted theologians who support his position. Dr. Stillingfleet, a respected minister who spoke on 2 Corinthians 6:11 says "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men". Stillingfleet demonstrated the importance of frightening men when reason does not work.

That if this reason does not persuade men, there is no reason to expect any other should, if almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite justice cannot affright us, if a judgment to come can't make us tremble, and eternal misery leave no impression upon us, what arguments or methods can we imagine would reclaim us from our sins?⁵

Tennent also cites Bishop Hopkins, who compares the effectiveness of love and fear as behavior incentives. Hopkins believes that people respond more to fear than to love. Hopkins further believes that, the love of God is not always effective as a behavior incentive because sinners focus on God's free grace.

Bishop Hopkins, in his sermon upon Hebrews 10:30⁶ has these very memorable expressions, page 367, 8. "There are two principle attributes of God, which the Scripture propounds to us as the most powerful and efficacious motives to refrain us from sin, and they are His mercy and His justice. Mercy, though it be a soft, yet it is a strong argument to encourage us to

⁵ *Solemn Warning*, iii.

⁶ (Hebrews 10:30) "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

purity and holiness, Romans 2:4.⁷ He that can encourage himself in his wickedness, upon the consideration of the infinite free grace of God, doth spurn these very bowels that yearn towards him, and strikes at God with His golden scepter; yea, tears abroad those wounds that were at first opened for him, and casts the blood of the Savior back again in His face. But because ingenuity is perished from off the Earth, and men are more generally apt to be wrought upon by arguments drawn from fear than love.⁸

Hopkins argues his point from Scripture:

(Because) men are more generally apt to be wrought upon by arguments drawn from fear than love, therefore the Scripture propounds to us the dreadful consideration of the justice of God, arrayed in all the terrible circumstances of it-- that if mercy won't allure us, justice may affright us from our sins.⁹

Hopkins argues his point from logic. First, he compares using fear to deter sinners from their path of destruction with the use of fire to deter ravenous beasts:

As those who are to travel through wilderness and deserts carry fire with them to terrify wild and ravenous beasts to secure themselves from their assaults, so doth the great God who hath to deal with brutish men- men more savage than the wild beasts-- He kindles a fire about Him, and appears to them in flames and fury, so that he might fright them from their bold attempts, who otherwise would be ready to run upon his neck, and "*the thick bosses of his bucklers*" (Job 15:26).¹⁰

⁷ (Romans 2:4) "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

⁸ *Solemn Warning*, iii.

⁹ *Solemn Warning*, iii.

¹⁰ *Solemn Warning*, iii.

Next, Hopkins compares "using fear" to awaken those who slumber in false spiritual security to using heating agents to awaken the mentally ill from their despondency, which was medical practice used in his day.

There is a strange dullness and stupor seized us that we can no longer keep waking when we are shook, and therefore, as we used to apply fire and burning coals to lethargic persons to awaken them, so we have need to heap coals of fire upon men's heads, to speak with fiery tongues, and thunder woe and wrath, and judgments against them, that we may rouse the secure and stupid world, and scorch them into life and sense.¹¹

Next, Tennent cites the words of "learned Mr. Boyle."¹² In the following paragraph, Boyle defends the practice of preaching upon the torments of hell. In his opinion, "the forethoughts of future punishments are the most likely means to excite our endeavors to prevent it." Arguments based on "divine love", the possibilities of "spiritual joy" and the "glories of heaven" are ineffective. Therefore, the subject of the "Torments of Hell" is the only suitable alternative.

For (the argument on the basis of future punishments) is an argument suited to one of the strongest passions of human nature, our fears. Nay, its almost the only argument that sensual and secure

¹¹*Solemn Warning*, iv.

¹²Note: A penciled notation in the margin of the 1735 Mss corrects the spelling of this name to "Boyse".

sinners seem at first capable of being affected and moved by. If we endeavor to reclaim them to their duty, by setting before them the endearing obligations of divine love— This is an argument that may indeed touch an ingenuous mind, but it is unlikely to make little impression upon an unthankful and stupid heart. If we would entice them to the paths of holiness, by proposing to them the spiritual joys that attend them, alas they neither understand nor relish them. If we would win and attract them by displaying the glories of heaven before their eyes, the objects are too sublime and spiritual for their gross affections to aspire to: so that we have no argument so proper as this, to set before them the Torments of Hell.¹³

Boyle believes that people are motivated to respond to such preaching because of the "Principle of Self Preservation." He explains this as follows:

We have no argument so proper as this, to set before them the Torments of Hell. For these are the most easily understood and conceived, and if seriously believed and considered, they carry the most irresistible force to awaken the consciences of the most stupid sinners, and convince them the necessity of flying from the wrath to come. For who can dwell with devouring fire? For who can dwell with everlasting burnings? This is an argument that reaches the Principle of Self Preservation, so deeply rooted in our natures, that strongly prompts us to flee with all possible speed, from what we apprehend to be the greatest and most certain evil. So that if any argument can make impression on an obdurate sinner, it must be this drawn from the prospect of the eternal vengeance, as hardest metals are soonest melted by the fire.¹⁴

The essential argument among these theologians is that "preaching the terrors" is an effective change

¹³*Solemn Warning*, iv.

¹⁴*Solemn Warning*, iv.

agent because fear is a more effective motivator than love. They argue on the basis of logic as well as Scripture.

Strategy for "Alarming the Secure"

Appropriate Subject Matter

Tennent uses several means for alarming the secure sinner. First is the subject matter he chooses. The resources which Tennent has cited (Scripture, Stillingfleet, Hopkins, etc.) suggest that the most effective subject matter for evoking change are those designed to cause fear, i.e., the wrath of God, eternal damnation, the torments of hell.

Appropriate Delivery Style

Even the most terrifying subjects can be treated with cold objectivity. The appropriate delivery style is necessary to convey the severity and importance of the message. No mode would suffice to convey terrors except the most direct mode of expression. Therefore, the second means for alarming the secure is a zealous sermon delivery. Tennent defends his delivery style in the following.

As to the sharpness of the style, I shall only offer this brief apology- that the nature of the subject treated of, and the security of the world require it. And instead of retracting it, I could wish it were much more pointed- it falls so far short

of my desire this way. And though I freely acknowledge that planting and watering are nothing to purpose that the most solemn matter and acrid stile (sp), will not avail without the divine benediction. Yet in the mean time I believe that God ordinarily uses instruments most suited to the work he designs to accomplish. Blunt instruments (in my opinion) are not suited to pierce hard hearts, or alarm secure souls.¹⁵

A stronger defense of Tennent's fear-inducing preaching comes from an eyewitness who spoke in defense of him to a minister. The witness notes that Tennent's fear inducing preaching was only directed to those who led licentious lives, and those who contented themselves with "dead works of righteousness", and defends this on the basis of Scripture:

The Grounds of your uneasiness were represented to be [Tennent] consigning so many over to *Damnation*; and his sounding *Damnation* in their Ears, with so much *Vehemence* and *Repetition*.

As to the *first*, it is certain that he denounc'd the Wrath of God only upon licentious Livers; and those who content themselves with a *round of Duties*, and think to please God by the *dead Works of Righteousness which they do*, while they are strangers to a Life of Grace, being conformed to this World, and not transformed from it by the renewing of their Minds. And did not his and our great Master authorize him to pronounce his curse upon these; *doth not the Wrath of God [rest] upon them?* Yes, my Friend, as sure as that there is [¹⁶] in Heaven, or Men upon Earth.¹⁷

¹⁵*Solemn Warning*, ii-iii.

¹⁶Manuscript unreadable.

¹⁷*New England Journal*, 3,24,1741.

The witness defends Tennent's zealous style of delivery on the basis of Scripture (Isaiah 58:1).

And as Mr. *Tennent's Matter was sound Speech that cannot be condemned; so was his Manner, such as become God's Heralds, who being his Mouth, must cry aloud and spare not, but lift up their Voices like Trumpets, while they shew the House of Jacob their Sins, and the infinite Danger of them.*

The witness acknowledges that the loudness of a message is not necessarily indicative of a prophet, since God has been known to speak in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). However, he notes that Tennent's vehement delivery had all the marks of a genuine delivery in the "sight of God." Note this in the following:

I know that all the Sons of the Prophets, are not Sons of Thunder; and that there is oftentimes more of God in a still small Voice, than in the most tempestuous Hallowings; and therefore I am very far from judging of the Grace that is in the Preacher's Heart, by the Strength of his Lungs. But then, (as Cicero somewhere observes) an attentive Hearer may discern, whether the loudness and fervency of the Speaker, be genuine, and from the Heart, or only fictitious, to move the Audience. And therefore as I abominate that Preacher, whose Noise & Confidence are fitly emblem'd by sounding Brass; so it is a singular Pleasure to me to hear any Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, deliver his Message with Vehemence, Importunity & Thunder, if it appears at the same Time, that his very Soul is in the Sound. And was not this the Case, with Regard to Mr. Tennent in all his Thundrings and Lightnings? Did he not pour out his Soul before the Lord? Did he not speak as in the Sight of God? Did it not seem as if the Heavens were opened to his View, as if he saw the face of God; the Glories of the Blessed, and the Torments of the Damned; which made

him so *passionate* after the Salvation of Sinners, and even to scream out to them, not to fall into the fearful Gulph that was just before them.¹⁸

This witness defends Tennent's dramatic delivery by comparing it with the urgency with which one would warn a child who was "groping towards the fire."

Supposing, that you your self, Sir, saw a Child or a blind person groping towards the Fire, & ready to fall into it, would you tell them their danger, and bid them *Stop*, with the same tone of Voice with which you read a *News Paper*? Or speak to them but *once* or *twice* lest you should be clamorous, and uncivil? No, you would not be so little of a *Christian*, so little of a *Man*: but would lift up your Voice very high, and think you could not say (nor do) too much to keep them from the Flames. Now so great, nay much greater is the Danger of the unregenerate Persons; they are, as it were upon the *Brink of unquenchable Fire*; and knows it not. And shall the man who sees it, and tells them of it, be blam'd because he is not *moderate enough*, but begs, prays and entreats them, as if it were for his own Life, not to *run into everlasting Burnings*.¹⁹

The witness believes that a lackluster sermon delivery on the torments of hell is worse than no sermon at all, because such a delivery suggests that the minister has no appropriate fear of hell.

For my Part I am fully of Mr. *Baxter's* Mind in this Matter; viz. That *for Ministers to speak of the amazing Wrath of God in an unfeeling Manner, is almost as bad as to say nothing about it*. Nay, I am persuaded, that when a poor Congregation are entertained with a Discourse upon Hell Torments, and the Minister speaks of *Devouring Fire*, as if he was

¹⁸*New England Journal*, March 24, 1741.

¹⁹*New England Journal*, March 24, 1741.

not in the least afraid that himself, or one Soul of his Hearers should ever be *cast into it*: it had been good for that People if that Meeting (like some of the Quakers) had been *silent*, and the preacher *had been dumb, and not open'd his Mouth*. And yet, it is undeniably evident, of most of your pretendedly polite Preachers; that as they speak but seldom upon this *ungrateful* (tho' very necessary) Subject; so whenever they *do*, it is with very *little Reverence and godly Fear*. *Wrath from the Almighty is not a Terror to them*. Neither *their Flesh*, nor the *Flesh of their Hearers*, tremble for fear of God or his Judgments; 'tis well if [a] great Part of them are not in a sound sleep.²⁰

It is clear from the excerpts of this eyewitness that Tennent spoke with "Thundrings and Lightnings." George Whitefield must have been referring to Tennent's sermon style when he called Tennent "a Son of Thunder"²¹. Although the witness probably neither conferred with Whitefield, nor read his *Journals*, he must have had a similar impression of Tennent, because he used similar words when (in the previous excerpt) he said, "I know that all the Sons of the Prophets, are not Sons of Thunder." Since two independent witnesses use similar phrases to describe Tennent's delivery, we must assume that his delivery was dynamic and forceful to the degree suggestive of thunder and lightning. This is an important point, because Tennent's sermons are

²⁰*New England Journal*, March 24, 1741.

²¹George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (1738-1741; reprint, Guilford: Billing and Sons, for Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 348.

now reduced to the printed word, and while the literary style suggests a zealous, forceful delivery, it is good to have eyewitnesses to corroborate this fact.

Supportive Rhetorical Devices

In addition to fearful subject matter and a thunderous delivery, Tennent's delivery is supported by the implementation of effective rhetorical devices. These include direct address, antithetical parallelism, vivid imagery, rhetorical questions, and repetition of a key word. He also conveys the urgent need for an immediate response. This plea to the logic and emotions is undergirded by a genuine concern for the congregation as well. The combined use of these techniques makes an effective vehicle to engage the listener's mind as well as emotions in order to effect change.

Public Outcries and Fainting

The emotional delivery of a highly distressing subject must have increased the effectiveness of Tennent's sermon delivery. An effect of this, which was associated with the preaching of both Tennent as well as his protégés, was public outcries and fainting in the congregation.²² Tennent

²²Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival*

reports that this occurred both when he preached "terrors" as well as "love":

I may further observe that some few of those that I trusted were converted in the places aforesaid long since, were compelled to cry out in the public assembly, both under the impressions of Terror and Love.²³

"Balm of Gilead"

Tennent preached "the terrors" to the spiritually secure. However, a congregation is often a mixed multitude, consisting of both the unsaved as well as the spiritually convicted. To those who were burdened by their sins he offered the "balm of Gilead" which is the hope and consolation of Christ. This is clearly seen in the following excerpt from Tennent's sermon, *The Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees*.

One Word I must say to those who are *deeply convinc'd* of their Want of Righteousness. Dear Creatures! There is a Balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there; the Lord Jesus has come to seek and save those that are lost. He has received a Commission from his father, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort the Mourners; He invites you that labour and are heavy laden to come to him, and he says he will give them Rest.²⁴

(Great Britain: The Bath Press, for Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 488.

²³G. Tennent, *Christian History*, 294-295.

²⁴G. Tennent, *The Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees*. In a Sermon on Matth.V.20. Preached at the

At one point, Tennent had to publicly correct the preaching of John Rowland (his protégé) because the congregation was in great distress as a result of "the terrors", and needed to be offered relief. Note this in Whitefield's observations:

Rowland, being invited to preach in a Baptist Church, proclaimed the terrors of the Divine law with such energy to those whose souls were already sinking under them, that a few fainted away. His error, however, was publicly corrected by the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, who, standing at the foot of the pulpit and seeing the effect produced on the assembly, interrupted the preacher with this address, 'Brother Rowland, is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?' Mr. Rowland, on this, changed immediately the tenor of his address and sought to direct to the Savior those who were overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt; but before this had taken place, numbers were carried out of the church in a state of insensibility.²⁵

Tennent was just as effective in offering "the Balm of Gilead" (hope and love) as he was in evoking fear and guilt. Biographer Archibald Alexander states:

The thunderings and mighty vociferations of Mount Sinai seemed to roar from the sacred desk, when he denounced the wrath of God against him that transgressed but once God's law, which he knew to be spiritual, and that nothing but a perfect obedience—which man in his fallen state is unable to perform—would satisfy its demands. Hence, he made it his

Evening-Lecture in Boston, January 27, 1740, 1 (Boston: J. Draper for D. Henchman, 1740, 1), 18.

²⁵Gillies, *Memoirs*, 43.

constant practice to sound the alarm of God's curse abiding on the whole human race; and that to doom man to everlasting misery would be highly consistent with the mercy and justice of JEHOVAH. But while he enforced the truth of inspiration, 'that in Adam all die,' he was no less warm in proclaiming, 'that in Christ all shall be made alive.' And as he knew how to wound, so he knew how to pour the oil of consolation on the bleeding conscience. The blood of Jesus, that sacred healing balm, was his great *catholicon* for sin-sick souls. This only was what he recommended as sufficient to procure ease to the trembling sinner; with the love of God to man, in pouring so much Deity on Guilty Dust- in sending his darling Son into the world, to redeem a race of rebel sinners, by bearing on the accursed tree, the heavy punishment due to man's enormous crimes, in order to translate him to the regions of eternal joy.²⁶

Demonstration of "Alarming the Secure"

Several sermonic illustrations of this method will be given in this project, including an analysis of *Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment*. However, only rarely can one find a narrative of this method with a description of the subject's reaction to it. Tennent has given such a narration of his brother John's conversion. This also shows how Tennent administered this method in a one-on-one basis.

Tennent intervened in the beginning of John's conversion, in order to amplify John's convictions so that

²⁶Alexander, 87,88.

they would not "languish." To do this, Tennent used fear as a motivator.

At the beginning of his *Conviction*, I endeavored to heighten it, by representing to him the particular and heinous Aggravations of those Sins, I knew or suspected him to be guilty of, in a Dress of *Horror*; least his *Conviction* should *languish*, and he *relapse* into a dangerous *Security*.²⁷

In response to this, John's convictions became extreme, despite the fact that his life was free from "gross enormities" of sin:

His *Conviction* of Sin, and the Danger and Misery he was brought into by it, was the most violent in Degree, of any I ever saw: For several Days and Nights together, he was made to cry out in a most dolorous and affecting Manner, almost every Moment; the Words that he frequently used in his Soul-Agony were these, "O my poor Soul! O my bloody lost Soul! What shall I do? Have Mercy upon me, O God, for *Christ's* sake!" Sometimes he was brought to the very Brink of *Despair* (sp), and would include, surely God would never have Mercy upon such a great Sinner as he was; and yet in the mean time, *observe* Reader! That his Life was unstained with those scandalous Extravagancies, which too many (alas for it!) in the Bloom of their Youth are ensnared by. . . .

Indeed his *Distress* was such, as forced him to make an open *Confession* of his Sins, to almost all that came near him; as also beg their Prayers at God's *Throne* in his Behalf; and this he did in such a piteous Manner, with such a dejected frightened Countenance, like that of a Man going to be put on a rack. . . with such dolorous *Groans*, and vehement *Importunity*, did he implore *Heaven* for *Relief* and *Pardon*, that even some Strangers who came to see him,

²⁷*Expostulatory Address*, iii.

were much affected therewith; the *Tears* trickling down their *Cheeks* like *Hail*.²⁸

Because John's convictions became excessive, Tennent changed his approach, and sought to abbreviate his humiliations before Christ, and console his ailing soul.

But when I perceived that it increased to a great *Degree*, and was attended with vehement longing after Christ, and a Willingness to forsake all for him; I altered the former method. . . . Now when I perceived such plain *Signs* of a deep *Conviction*, great *Humiliation*, and earnest *Desire*, I altered the former Method. . . and offered all the encouraging Supports I could gather from every promissory Part of the sacred *Scriptures*, that I thought related to his Case, that I might minister Comfort to his sick Soul, but in *vain*. . . . The truth is, his Wound was so deep, that none but God's own Arm could heal it. But it pleased the Almighty after four Days and four Nights, enduring the utmost agony of Soul *Distress*. . . to make his *Consolations* as conspicuous and eminent as his *Conviction* had been.²⁹

It is difficult to determine from a printed sermon the point in time when Tennent adapted his preaching to the responses from the congregation. This narrative shows clearly why Tennent tried to intensify John's convictions (so they did not languish), how he did it (through alarm),

²⁸Gilbert Tennent, *An Expostulatory Address to Saints and Sinners Added as an Appendix*, to a sermon by John Tennent, *The Nature of Regeneration Open'd and its Absolute Necessity In order to Salvation Demonstrated in a Sermon from John III:3* (Boston, NE, 1735), ii-iv.

²⁹*Expostulatory Address*, iv.

and when he offered consolation (after he deemed the conviction was overwhelming).

Effectiveness of "Alarming the Secure"

Archibald Alexander reported that he knew of a woman (Mary Hanna) who was converted, not in Tennent's presence, but after merely reading one of Tennent's sermons and by the conviction that it caused within her. Because of this, Alexander sought similar means to effect his own conversion.

A young woman of my acquaintance, who, with others, had gone over to Bedford, appeared more solemnly impressed than most of the company. All believed that if any had experienced divine renewal, it was Mary Hanna. One afternoon, while reading a sermon of Tennent's, on the need of a legal work preparatory to conversion, she was seized with such an apprehension of her danger, that she began to tremble, and in attempting to reach the house, which was distant only a few steps, fell prostrate, and was taken up in a state of terrible convulsion. The news quickly spread. . . . I mention this for the purpose of adding that I was at once struck with the conviction that I had received an irreparable injury from the clergyman who had persuaded me that no such conviction as this was necessary. I determined to have no hope until I should have the like experience.³⁰

Implications for Contemporary Ministry

The effectiveness of "the terrors of the Law" as a technique to elicit conversion should send a message to

³⁰James Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander* (New York: Scribner, 1854), 69.

contemporary ministers. Unfortunately, it is a message that many of today's ministers refuse to hear.

Preaching on the subject of God's wrath is not popular today. On a recent television interview, a popular minister who is known for his "seeker-friendly church," said that he did not preach on such subjects because they did not attract people to church. In fact, this minister believed that instead of preaching a sermon such as Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, it would be more appropriate to preach *I Went on Vacation and Returned Feeling Empty*.

I submit that this premise is grotesquely wrong. It is wrong to omit the preaching of a certain doctrine because it is unpleasant. It is wrong to withhold information that could determine people's eternal fate. It is wrong to allow people to continue in sin by withholding information about punishment. It is wrong to determine the subject of preaching by what the people would like to hear, instead of what the Bible says. Most of all, it is wrong to offend a holy and righteous God by allowing sin to continue.

Tennent vigorously opposed those who preached "soft and smooth" messages in order to gain popularity, and

compared them to false prophets. He explains this as follows:

By their *Soft and Smooth* Way of Preaching; some Ministers being what God witnesseth of the false Prophets of old; *Foxes in the Deserts*, Ezek. 13.4. Crafty and covetous Creatures; they know the Way to insinuate themselves into the People's Affections, and thereby obtain *Honour and Gain* of them, is to suit their Sermons to their Humours; now the general Inclinations of poor ignorant graceless People, is to hear of nothing but Love, Peace, Promises, Comforts, Isai. 30.18. *Speak to us smooth Things*. They want Preachers only to *Scratch* the *Itch* of their *Curiosity* with quaint Notions, and smooth Stories, 2 Tim. 4. 3. And such *Chapmen* they too often meet with through the Iniquity of the Times, (*O Tempora, O Mores*) who by feigned Words make Merchandize out of them; there has been too many such in all Ages, Ezek. 13. 10 to 17. Those Prophets that Jehovah complains of in places of Scripture now quoted, with so solemn an Emphasis, "They gave out, *Lana Vaticinia et Verba Lactis*, comfortable Words and milky Words," as Mr. *Greenhill* terms it in his Paraphrase; They cryed Peace, Peace; the Downy pillows of the false Prophetesses were soft enough to make Sinners sleep in *utramuis Aurem*, on both sides of the Head. But will not the jealous holy God tear down such deceitful *Daubings*, with their Authors and Abettors, by the *Storms* of his inflamed Vengeance!³¹

I submit that people must be made aware of the sufferings of eternal damnation, if for no other reason than it is a Biblical doctrine. Additionally, if reason and God's love are insufficient to turn people to Christ, we have no other alternative than to sound the alarm of God's judgment and wrath. The effectiveness of this method

³¹ *Solemn Warning*, 99.

is demonstrated in the Great Awakening that resulted from it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tennent "alarms the secure" for the purpose of convincing and convicting the unsaved person of his sin and unrighteousness in order to evoke a change of heart and redirection of the person's life toward a loving God who is the only remedy for his guilt. Tennent accomplishes this through the use of an appeal to the mind as well as the emotions. To elicit this, Tennent uses a fear inducing subject matter, a thunderous delivery, and supportive rhetorical techniques. He also conveys the urgent need for an immediate response. This plea to the logic and emotions is undergirded by a genuine concern for the congregation as well. The combined use of these techniques makes an effective vehicle to engage the listener's mind as well as emotions in order to cause change.

When Tennent perceived that his listeners had responded appropriately to the message, he changed his tactic by offering the remedy for the listener's dangerous situation. The remedy consisted of turning to God "who will rejoice . . . with joy." This application of 'the

balm of Gilead' to 'sin-sick souls' was effective in reducing public outcries and fainting as was evidenced by Whitefield's observation of Rowland. The effectiveness of "the terrors of the Law" in producing conversion is seen in his brother's conversion. The "terrors" were effective even apart from a thunderous sermonic delivery, as seen from Alexander's observation of the conversion of a woman who had simply read a Tennent sermon. It is suggested that the use of "terrors" to awaken sinners is an appropriate ministry tool when love and reason are ineffective.

CHAPTER 6

EVOKING SELF EXAMINATION: "SEARCHING PREACHING"

Tennent was known for his effectiveness in "preaching the terrors", but he was also successful in what has been described as "searching preaching", or what could be called an "intensive application" of the message that is designed to evoke self-examination in the congregation. This chapter will discuss this ministry method.

Effectiveness of Searching Preaching

As you will see in the following excerpt, Rev. Mr. Prince, one of the pastors of South Church in Boston describes Tennent's preaching as both "terrible" (i.e., terrifying) and "searching", and notes that it was the "searching nature of [Tennent's] ministry that was the principle means of their conviction."

As to Mr. Tennent's preaching, it was frequently both terrible and searching. It was often for Matter justly terrible, as he, according to the inspired Oracles exhibited the dreadful Holiness, Justice, Law, Threatenings, Truth, Power, Majesty of God; and his Anger with rebellious, impenitent, unbelieving and Christless Sinners; the awful Danger they were every Moment in, of being struck down to hell and damned forever; with amazing Miseries of that Place of

Torment. Such were the convictions wrought in many hundreds in this town by Mr. Tennent's searching ministry; and such was the case of many scores of several other congregations as well as mine, who came to me and others for direction under them. And indeed, by all their converse I found, it was not so much the terror as the searching nature of his ministry, that was the principle means of their conviction.¹

Rev. Mr. Prince observed that "preaching the terrors" is not effective if the people do not believe that *they personally* are in any immediate danger.

It was not merely, nor so much in his laying open the terrors of the law, and the wrath of God, or damnation of hell (for this they could pretty well bear, as long as they hoped these belonged not to them, or they could easily avoid them), as his laying open their many vain and secret shifts and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes, their utter impotence and impending danger of destruction.²

In other words, all the terrifying images in the world would not affect people who believed they were already converted. However, Tennent was able to disturb their psychological defense mechanisms, or what Prince calls "their many vain and secret shifts and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes" which gave them a false sense of security.

¹Prince, *Christian History*, 390.

²Prince, *Christian History*, 390.

Methods of Evoking Self Examination

Although Tennent never described "searching preaching", we can discern what he meant from his criticism of the techniques of other ministers:

The application of their discourses is either short, or indistinct and general. They difference not the precious from the vile, and divide not to every man his portion, according to the apostolic direction to Timothy. No! They carelessly offer a common mess to their people, and leave it to them to divide it among themselves, as they see fit. This is indeed the general practice, which is bad enough. But sometimes they do worse, by misapplying the Word, through ignorance or anger. They often strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life. They comfort people before they convince them; sow before they plow; and are busy in raising a fabrick [sic] before they lay a foundation. These foolish builders do but strengthen men's carnal security by their soft, selfish, cowardly discourses. They have not the courage, or honesty, to thrust the nail of terror into sleeping souls!³

In the previous excerpt, Tennent criticized sermon applications that are too brief, too indistinct and general. Therefore, his goal is to apply the text of his sermon not briefly, but deliberately; not indistinctly but clearly; not generally, but specifically. This is the essence of 'searching preaching'.

³*Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*, 9-10.

Sermon Structure

Searching preaching begins with the sermon structure, itself. In Tennent's sermons, application of the text comprises the last half the sermon. This is anything but a brief application.

Additionally, the order of the sermon is important. In the previous excerpt, Tennent says "[Other ministers] comfort people before they convince them; sow before they plow; and are busy in raising a fabrick [sic] before they lay a foundation."

Tennent's sermons do not "comfort before they convince". They do just the opposite. Tennent begins with a logical exegesis of the target scripture verse, i.e., "the text says". Next, he discusses the implications of the text, i.e., "the text means". Then, he intensely applies the text, i.e., "Does your life agree with the text? Do you do these specific things?" Finally, he exhorts people to comply with the text, i.e., "I urge you to do these things." The following is an example of this technique in his sermon *The Necessity of Religious Violence*.⁴

⁴Gilbert Tennent, *The Necessity of Religious Violence in Order to Obtain Durable Happiness* (New York, 1735).

1. Scripture text- "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt. 11:12).⁵
2. Implications of the text- "Those who are truly convinc'd of sin, of Righteousness and of Judgment labour to take heaven by storm and will not stick at any cost to obtain it."⁶
3. Application of the text- "Do you use Violence with God by praying to him fervently, affectionately, believingly, argumentatively, and importunately?"⁷
4. Exhortation to comply with the text- "Be entreated, Friends and Brethren, in the name of God to use Violence, in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven."⁸

The reason for the effectiveness of this type of sermon structure is as follows. The sermon structure begins in a non-threatening manner, which becomes increasingly threatening, as the listener understands that his life is not in concordance with his accepted beliefs.

⁵*Religious Violence*, 1.

⁶*Religious Violence*, 2.

⁷*Religious Violence*, 33.

⁸*Religious Violence*, 41.

The Scripture verse is not threatening because it is cold, objective truth. The person cognitively processes the truth of Scripture and accepts it into his mind as fact. The sermon becomes increasingly threatening as the listener hears and understands the implication of the text, if his behavior does not correspond to the objective truth that he has accepted. A state of cognitive dissonance will exist if his behavior does not agree with his cognitions (thoughts). Finally, an opportunity for relief from the crisis is afforded in the sermon's exhortation.

Application to Specific Groups

From Tennent's comments, we note that a non-specific application of Scripture, or what he calls a "common mess" was a problem in his day. He says "[Ministers] carelessly offer a common mess to their people, and leave it to them to divide it among themselves, as they see fit." As Tennent sees it, when the application is not specific, people may misunderstand and assume falsely that they are in a good state when in fact they are not. Tennent says that such a practice strengthens "the hands of the wicked by promising him life."

Tennent's sermons display specific applications to several groups of people within the congregation. In

Righteousness of Scribes for example, Tennent exhorts the following groups of people: The 'secure sinner', 'formalists', 'slightly convinc'd', 'deeply convinc'd', 'aged persons', 'middle aged persons', 'younger brethren', and 'little children.'⁹ Such a specific appeal is less likely to be misunderstood than a general appeal.

In addition, Tennent assists people in determining to which group they belong. He does this by refuting common misconceptions. For example, in the following excerpt taken from *The Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees*, Tennent strives to show people their insecure state by challenging their beliefs of righteousness.

But perhaps you say, in your Excuse, I do exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, for I believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, which they did not; I am sincere, thank God, but they were gross Hypocrites: Therefore, I scorn your Comparison! Answer: You say, you believe and trust in Christ; Well! But what is faith? You can't tell. I suppose, you never saw you [were] without Faith; never felt the Effects of Faith on Heart or Life; it's probable your Faith never had so much Influence upon you, as the Faith of the Devils upon them, for they believe and tremble. You needn't boast of your dead, hypocritical Faith; you'll surely go to the Devil with it, if you get no better.¹⁰

⁹*Righteousness of Scribes*, 15-18.

¹⁰*Righteousness of Scribes*, 15.

In the above example, the misconception was that salvation could be achieved on the basis of belief and trust in the Lord Jesus. Tennent refuted this as proof of salvation because devils also "believe and tremble". By specifically addressing such misconceptions or objections to his sermon, Tennent was able to evoke self examination and efface people's false of perceptions of their own salvation.

Supportive Rhetorical Devices

The effectiveness of Tennent's "searching preaching" is also facilitated by his use of rhetorical devices. One very effective device which assists his goal of self-examination is his use of interrogatives. In the following example from *The Necessity of Religious Violence* demonstrates this device. Its effectiveness is facilitated by another rhetorical device, that of repetition. Note how the use of these devices increases the intensity of his address.

Pray Heaven, **do you** use that Violence to obtain Heaven which I describ'd in the Doctrinal part of this Discourse? How is it with you? poor Sinners? **Do you** seek after Happiness with such early endeavor, eager Desire, earnest labour, and persevering Diligence?

Do you use Violence with God by praying to him fervently, affectionately, believingly, argumentatively, and importunately?

Do you also use Violence with your selves in opposing your sloth and in a consistent performance of

all known Duty? As also in opposing the Temptations of Satan and of Sin, in faithfully resisting its inward Motions and carefully shunning outward Incentives to it?

Do ye also conscientiously oppose the Temptations of the World in the Business of it, yea, pleasures of it, and People of it? Again,

Do ye use Violence in the performance of these following Duties of Religion?

1. In reading the Word of God with such Frequency, Order, Seriousness, Belief, Application and Practice? as was before hinted?

2. In hearing the Word, **do you** labour and prepare for it, by Meditation and Prayer? and **do you** Solemnly attend to what you hear, as in the presence of God? **Do you** closely apply your proper Portion, and Evangelically practice it? And,

3. Do you Examine your selves with such impartiality, and regularly as has been spoken? And,

4. Do you judge your selves deliberately, and decisively, and habitually Practice the great Duty of solemn and affecting Consideration?¹¹

The intensity of this application pauses briefly as Tennent encourages those who have responded, "yes" to the above inquiry:

1. Bless God for exciting you to it, and affecting you in it: Without his preventing influence you would have been as secure and sloathful (sp) as others are.

2. Rejoice in his distinguishing Goodness, for this conscientious evangelical Violence, is a sure presage of eternal Happiness. Our Text informs us, that the Kingdom of heaven suffers Violence, and that the Violent take it by Force: Ye shall reap if ye faint not; he that perseveres to the end shall obtain a Crown of Life that fadeth not away. This may encourage, animate, and content you in all the labours and sufferings of Life; for what are these in

¹¹Religious Violence, 33.

Comparison of that weight of Glory which shall be revealed^s).¹²

After that brief pause for encouragement, Tennent resumes his intense application. In the first interrogatory, Tennent asked "Do you perform a certain religious duty?" In the following excerpt, Tennent attacks the same duties again with a different question, 'Is it not true that you do the opposite?' Note the proliferation of the words "instead of", as Tennent continues to use both interrogatory and repetition effectively:

But Alas! what reason is there to fear that a great Number of you have the very contrary qualities to these now mention'd!

Are there not some who **instead of** seeking Heaven early, delay that grand pursuit, one Month and Year after another, who **Instead of** being eager in Desire, or earnest in Labour that way, are secure and lukewarm Laodicean-like, inconstant as the Wind that blows in the Affairs of Religion. Don't the Aims. Desires and Labours of most of you bend to an opposite Mark, and run in a quite contrary Vein? How vehement are your desires, how early, earnest, & persevering are your Labours about the enjoyments of this dying Life! while in the mean Time the great concerns of your Souls, and eternity are sadly neglected! Doesn't your common vein of Speech betray your Worldly Hearts? they are

^s 2 Cor. []17. Note: This probably refers to 2 Cor. 4:17 "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." [Note: Tennent used letters to designate footnotes. These have been duplicated as he wrote them.]

¹²Religious Violence, 33.

(saith St. *John*) of the World; therefore speak they of the World, and the World heareth them, (^t)

Instead of praying fervently, affectionately, believingly, argumentatively, importunately, don't you pray coldly, stupidly, presumptuously indifferently, abruptly; and offer Violence to your own Reason and Consciences, in sinning against God, by knowingly, and habitually, breaking his blessed Laws, and slighting his rich Love: (^u) and thereby prove your selves to be the Children of your Father the Devil, (^w) Are there not many, who **instead of** using Violence with their Corrupt Nature, in opposing sloath, do Violence to their Consciences by indulging it?

Are there not many, who **instead of** opposing Violence in opposing the Temptations of Satan, and the World's Business, People Pleasures, do run knowingly into the Way of Temptation? tempt the Devil to tempt them, as if he was too slow in his Work, embarrass themselves in needless, worldly Business, or employ their thoughts and cares inordinately about that which is Necessary, and who court and cover needless Conversation with wicked People, and thereby discover their damnable Hypocrisy, and themselves to be the very Sons and Daughters of Death, notwithstanding all their fair pretences?

Are there not many, who **instead of** using Violence against sinful Motions, secretly indulge them, and thereby prove themselves to be but whited Sepulchres? and who **instead of** withdrawing the Fuel of Sin, *make provision for the Flesh to fulfill the Lusts thereof,* (^x)

And how few among us use such Violence in reading of the Word, as I described? Are not our Bibles almost moulded in our Chests, or upon our Shelves? **Who is there** that reads that blessed Book with Solemnity and close Application? **Who is there** among

^t1 John 4.5.

^uMatt. 22.5.

^wJohn 8.44. John 3.8.

^x Rom.13.14

you that hears the Word with such previous Preparation, close Attention, and believing Application, and evangelical Obedience? Don't you hear it with indifferency and unconcernedness, as the Words of a Man, rather than of God? And forget it as fast as you hear it! Don't I saw upon hard Rocks! Where are the effects of a preached Gospel? Where is there one convinced humble Soul among you at present that Labours to take Heaven by Violence.

Again, **Instead of** examining and judging your selves, as I before described, don't some of you Studiously avoid the knowledge of your State, and are still in suspense between a groundless Hope and a just Fear, and will not come to a conclusive Judgment about your Condition, for fear of the necessary pain that it would Occasion? And to this end, don't you *carefully* ward off all the Strokes, and Arrows of the Word which would wound or awake you? And,

As to the Duty of solemn Consideration upon terrible Subjects, don't you keep your selves as great Strangers to it as you can, lest your present false Peace should be disturbed? Arn't you rushing along, *poor Sinners*, to a vast Eternity in a thoughtless inconsiderate course of Action? In which you will be quickly plung'd? (So continuing) and brought to your Senses with a Vengeance, and made to roar out eternally without hope or help of your present Madness and Folly!¹³

The previous excerpts show that Tennent's intense application of Scripture is thorough, detailed and specific. The intensity is assisted by the effective use of supportive rhetorical devices, in this case with repetition and interrogatives.

¹³*Religious Violence*, 35-38.

A Witness Compares Tennent with Whitefield

The unique effectiveness of "searching preaching" is evident from the eyewitness account of Rev. Mr. Prince, who compared Tennent with Whitefield. Prince tells us that Tennent's ministry was the means by which "hundreds" fell under convictions.¹⁴ His observations of Whitefield (who preached months BEFORE Tennent) are different, however. Note that the effects of Whitefield's preaching was temporary:

As to Mr. Whitefield's preaching, it was, in the Manner, moving, earnest, winning, melting. But the mechanical Influence of this, according to the usual Operations of mechanical Powers, in two or three days expired, with many in two or three hours; and I believe with the most as soon as the Sound was over, or they got our of the [Meeting] House, or in the first Conversation they fell into.¹⁵

The effects of Whitefield's preaching dissipated quickly in Boston. This was not the case with Tennent. Note the Rev. Mr. Prince observes, "Upon the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent's coming and preaching here, the People appear'd to be yet much more awaken'd about their Souls than before".¹⁶ Prince gives an excellent view of Tennent's sermon and its effects on the congregation. Note first

¹⁴Prince, *Christian History*, 390.

¹⁵Prince, *Christian History*, 384.

¹⁶Prince, *Christian History*, 384.

that Tennent used "searching preaching" to efface their spiritual security.

He seem'd to have no Regard to please the Eyes of His Hearers with agreeable Gesture, nor their Ears with Delivery; nor their Fancy with Language; but to aim directly at their *Hearts* and *Consciences*, to lay open their ruinous Delusions, shew them their numerous, secret Shifts in Religion, and drive them out of every deceitful Refuge wherein they made themselves easy, with the form of Godliness without the Power. And many who were pleased in a good Conceit of themselves before, now found, to their great Distress, they were only self-deceived Hypocrites.¹⁷

Note in the next excerpt that Tennent's preaching angered some at first (probably as an internal crisis began to brew within them), but when the "power of God" broke them as a result of Tennent's preaching, these same people had a change of heart and desired to hear more:

And tho' while the Discovery was making, some at first raged, as they owned to me and others; yet in the Progress of the Discovery many were forced to submit; and then the Power of God so broke and humbled them, that they wanted a further and even a thorough Discovery; they went to hear him, that the secret Corruptions and Delusions of their Hearts might be discovered; and the more *searching* the Sermon, the more acceptable it was to their anxious minds.¹⁸

Unlike Whitefield's results which dissipated quickly, Tennent's preaching caused convictions that lasted several months. Mr. Prince observed this from the people who

¹⁷Prince, *Christian History*, Vol. II, 385.

¹⁸Prince, *Christian History*, 386.

sought him for their soul distress. Note this in his testimony.

Some [were] under flighty, some under strong *Convictions* of their Sins and Sinfulness, Guilt and Condemnation, the Wreath and Curse of GOD upon them, their Impotence and Misery; some for a long Time, even for several Months under these *Convictions*: some fearing least the HOLY SPIRIT should withdraw; others having quenched his Operations, were in great Distress least he should leave them for ever: Persons *far advanced in Years* afraid of being left behind, while others were hastening to the great REDEEMER.

Nor were the same Persons satisfied with coming *once or twice*, as formerly, but again and again, I know not how often; complaining of their evil and cursed Hearts; of their past and present Unbelief, Pride, Hypocrisy, Perfidiousness, Contempt of Christ and God, and Alienation from them, their Love and Captivity to Sin, and utter Impotence to help themselves, or even to believe on Christ, &c.¹⁹

In eighteenth century New England, an earthquake was considered an act of God. Prince was in a unique position to have observed his congregation's reaction to both an earthquake, as well as to Tennent's preaching. Prince believed that the earthquake caused fear, but not conviction. Such fear was short lived, as compared to the convictions that resulted because of Tennent's "searching" ministry. Note this in the following anecdote:

So on the Lord's Day, June 3d last [1743], in our Time of publick Worship in the Forenoon, when we had been about a Quarter of an Hour in Prayer, the mighty Power of God came on with a surprising Roar and

¹⁹Prince, *Christian History*, 392.

Earthquake; which made the House with all the Galleries to rock and tremble, with such a grating Noise as if the Bricks were moving out of their Places to come down and bury us: which exceedingly disturb'd the Congregation, excited Shrieks of many, put many to flying out, and the Generality in Motion. But tho' many were greatly terrified, yet in a Day or two their Terrors seem'd to vanish, and I know of but two or three seized by Convictions on this awful Occasion.

No! Conviction is quite another Sort of a Thing. It is the Work of the SPIRIT of GOD, a sovereign, few and almighty Agent; wherein he gives the sinful Soul such a clear and lively View of the Glory of the Divine Sovereignty, Omnipresence, Holiness, Justice, Truth and Power; the Extensiveness, Spirituality, and Strictness of the Law, the binding Nature, Efficacy, and Dreadfulness of his Curses, the Multitude and Heinousness of its Sins, both of Commission and Omission; the horrible Vileness, Wickedness, Perverseness and Hypocrisy of the Heart, with its utter Impenitence either rightly to repent, or believe in CHRIST, or change itself; so that it sees itself in a lost, undone and perishing State; without the least degree of Worthiness to recommend it to a holy and righteous GOD, and the least Degree of Strength to help itself out of this Condition. These Discoveries are made by Means of some revealed Truths, either in the Reading, Hearing, or Remembrance; when in the Hearing, sometimes by Words of Terror, sometimes by Words of Tenderness: And the HOLY SPIRIT with such internal Evidence and Power so applies them to the Conscience, that they become as sharp Arrows piercing into the Heart, wounding, paining and sticking in it, when all the mechanical Impressions of frightful Sounds are over, sometimes for many Days, Weeks and Months, if not Years together; until this DIVINE AGENT, by these and other Convictions, agreeable to his inspired Word, intirely (sp) subdues the Soul to CHRIST; or being ungratefully treated, withdraws his convincing Influence, and leaves the Heart and Conscience to greater and more dangerous Hardness and Stupidity than ever.

Such were the Convictions wrought in many Hundreds in this TOWN by Mr. Tennent's searching Ministry; And such was the Case of those many scores

of several other Congregations as well as mine, who came to me and others for Directions under them.²⁰

Tennent's searching preaching specifically addressed various groups of people within the congregation. The "bills" which were posted in church by those who were under conviction show that many different people groups responded to the message. Mr. Prince writes:

Agreeable to the numerous Bills of the Awakened put up in publick, sometimes rising to the Number of *Sixty* at once, there repaired to us both *Boys* and *Girls*, young Men and Women, Indians and Negroes, Heads of Families, aged Persons; those who had been in *full Communion* and going on in the Course of Religion *many Years*.²¹

In addition to addressing specific people groups, Tennent's searching preaching also specifically addressed particular spiritual sins. The posted "bills" show the nature and depth of the people's conviction due to such sin. Mr. Prince writes:

And their Cases represented were, a blind Mind, a vile and hard Heart, and some under a deep Sense thereof; some under great Temptations; some in great Concern for their Souls; some in great Distress of Mind for Fear of being unconverted; others for Fear they had been all along building on a Righteousness of their own, and were still in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity.²²

²⁰Prince, *Christian History*, 389,390.

²¹Prince, *Christian History*, 392.

²²Prince, *Christian History*, 392.

Rev. Mr. Prince says that Tennent's ministry so effective that other ministers imitated it as well.

Mr. Tennent's ministry, with the various Cases of those resorting to us, excited us to treat more largely of the Workings of the SPIRIT of Grace as a SPIRIT of *Conviction, Consolation, and Edification*, in the Souls of men, agreeable to the *Holy Scriptures*, and the common Experiences of true Believers.²³

Mr. Prince also relates the effectiveness of other ministers who used Tennent's method.

The same kind of *searching* Preaching by our own ministers and others, I also observed was the most successful Means of bringing People into powerful Convictions, or clear awakening views of their sinful and lost Condition, and their absolute Need of CHRIST to find and save them.²⁴

The Conversion Narrative of a Child

The account of a young child of "7 years and 2 months old", who was converted under Tennent's ministry, has survived. In the following excerpt, note Tennent's evangelistic method involved an interrogative with the young child:

In December 1740 the Revd. Mr. Gilbert Tennent, calling occasionally at the house where the child lived and seeing her there, entered into discourse with her. [He] asked her whether she knew what a vile creature she was by nature, and that everything she did while in a natural- state was hateful to God, and the like. He likewise asked her if she prayed to God,

²³Prince, *Christian History*, 391.

²⁴Prince, *Christian History*, 390.

upon which she cried out in tears that she hoped she did. "Maybe," said he, "you are guilty of lying, stealing, or Sabbath breaking, or spending too much time with your [doll] babies." He also asked her whether she ever hated God, to which she answered that she hoped that she did not.²⁵

The interrogative was effective. When Tennent asked the girl several questions, she responded by using the word "hope." She "hoped" she prayed to God, and she "hoped" she never hated God. Surely, people know immediately whether they pray or not, or whether they harbor a hatred toward God. However, the child's use of the word "hope" shows that she was examining her distant memory for such a sin. Therefore, this interrogatory was just as effective in producing self examination in person, as it was behind the pulpit.

As a result of Tennent's visit, the child began to be more and more concerned about her eternal state. A month following Tennent's visit, "she was observed to give more than ordinary attention to a sermon that was read in the family"²⁶. She was often afraid of "dying before morning",

²⁵James R. Tanis, "A Child of the Great Awakening", *American Presbyterian* (70:2) (Summer 1992), 127.

²⁶Tanis, 129.

and prayed, "That God would give me his regenerating grace, that I might be converted."²⁷

It is unclear from the above article how many weeks had elapsed before the child became sure of her salvation. However, the description of the event is as follows:

Wednesday morning, after reading the 8th chapter to the Romans, she was much affected and made observations on several passages, particularly on those words, "the first fruits of the spirit," saying "Mama, I have read that the first fruits of the spirit are waiting for my redemption; God has touched my heart, and I have touched the hem of His garment, and leaned on His breast. I have sat under His apple tree and His fruit is sweet. God has sent His light and His truth to my heart, and has blessed me from His holy hill, and from Zion His dwelling place. I am a tree planted in Christ's vineyard." And, reading those words in the 50th Psalm, "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee," she said, "Mama, this is me when I was afraid, I called upon God and he heard me; and then I was not afraid." Being asked, "What then?" she answered, "Give God the glory and take comfort to my own soul. If God be for me who can be against me?" In the afternoon, her grandmother, seeing her pleasant and cheerful as usual, asked whether she had those good thoughts still. The child answered with tears, "More and more. My hands are full. My heart is full of the praises of God, and I shall have more."²⁸

This child's conversion narrative shows the effectiveness of Tennent's searching preaching. Like Tanis, who wrote the preceding article, some may criticize

²⁷Tanis, 129.

²⁸Tanis, 128.

Tennent for upsetting a child of such a tender age with "searching preaching". I do not believe that this is fair. It was not unheard of for children to evidence piety at an early age. Jonathan Edwards' wife Sarah Pierrepont "exhibited the life and power of religion, and that in a remarkable manner, when only five years of age."²⁹

Also keep in mind the seriousness with which Tennent sought the child's salvation. Child mortality was very high during Tennent's time. It is probable that Tennent lost some of his own children in their early years, because Alexander writes of Tennent's leaving his family to preach in New England.³⁰ However, there is no evidence that any children who may have been alive in 1740 ever grew to maturity.

On his return homewards, Tennent wrote to George Whitefield about the success of his ministrations in Boston, and specifically mentioned children.

New York, April 25, 1741, Very D.B. In my return homewards, I have been preaching daily, ordinarily three times a day. . . and through pure grace I have met with success much exceeding my expectations. In the town of Boston there were many hundreds, if not

²⁹Dwight, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol.1, xxxix.

³⁰"Mr. Tennent must have been inflamed with a very ardent zeal, situated as he was, the pastor of a church, and the father of a family, to set off in the depth of winter to preach to a strange people." (Alexander, *Log College*, 46).

thousands, as some have judged, under soul concern. When I left that 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 the young and middle aged were converted; and several Negroes were hopefully converted.³¹

Implications for Contemporary Ministry

Many contemporary preachers devote little time in their sermon structure to application. John W. Stott had the following words to say on his prior neglect of sermon application:

In my early days, I used to think that my business was to expound and exegete the text; I am afraid I left the application to the Holy Spirit. It is amazing how you can conceal your laziness with a little pious phraseology! The Holy Spirit certainly can and does apply the Word for the people. But it is wrong to deny our own responsibility in the application of the Word. All great preachers understand this. They focus on the application of the text. This is what the Puritans called 'preaching through to the heart'. This is how my preaching has changed. I have learned to add application to exposition.³²

Stephen Olford, founder of the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee has stated that fifty percent of a sermon should be devoted to

³¹Gillies, *Historical Collections*, 334.

³²Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press), 252.

application³³. Having studied with him for several years, I believe that intensive application of the doctrine to the congregation is one of the secrets of his success. Very few preachers can reach the heart as effectively as Olford.

I submit that contemporary ministers can learn much from Tennent's searching preaching. This involves structuring the sermon to allow more time for sermon application, and by moving the direction of the sermon from an impersonal and logical exegesis to personal application. Additionally, speaking directly to specific groups within the congregation using appropriate supportive rhetorical devices can assist the minister in eliciting self examination within the congregation. Both interrogative as well as repetition are particularly suited to evoking self examination.

Finally, we can see by Tennent's success with the small child that personal visits are effective in conversion. Since our churches become larger and more impersonal, and because people's lives have become increasingly busy, this practice has nearly expired. This is most unfortunate, because people need a spiritual mentor, not just for conversion, but for discipleship as

³³Stephen F. Olford, *Strengthening Expository Preaching Seminar*, Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching, Memphis, TN. Oct. 2001.

well. I submit that personal visitation by a pastor or his designate to encourage and assist people in conversion should be reconsidered and reinstated.

Conclusion

Tennent's preaching of "the terrors" was not effective if people believed they were already converted. His "searching preaching" was designed to evoke self-examination in order to efface any false hopes of security. Once people realized that they had no present hope of security, "the terrors" became effective, and convictions resulted.

Tennent accomplished this by the effective use of sermon's movement from objective and non-threatening to personal. Once the objective facts were accepted, Tennent used intense application to evoke self-examination. When self-examination revealed incongruence between accepted beliefs and behavior, an internal crisis occurred. Reports from Boston suggest that such a crisis angered some at first, but as the power of God accompanied Tennent's preaching, the people were receptive to his exhortations, and "hundreds" of convictions occurred.

Tennent's method of evoking self-examination was probably effective because he spent a significant portion

of his sermon in applying the doctrinal text to each individual. Combined with his use of direct questioning and repetition, the length of application increased the intensity of his address.

Tennent was known to evoke self-examination both in the pulpit as well as in private. His visit to a young child reveals that his repeated use of direct questions was instrumental in the child's conviction and conversion.

The eyewitness testimony Rev. Prince shows that "searching preaching" was proven to be effective. It has been said, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery". If this is true, then the ministers of Boston paid Tennent the sincerest tribute by imitating his method of "searching preaching", and with it they also found success.

It is suggested that contemporary ministers adapt Tennent's technique of "searching preaching". This involves structuring the sermon to allow more time for sermon application, and by moving the direction of the sermon from an impersonal and logical exegesis to personal application. Additionally, speaking directly to specific groups within the congregation using appropriate supportive rhetorical devices can assist the minister in eliciting self-examination within the congregation. Finally, it is suggested that a "one-on-one version" of searching

preaching by means of personal visitation is an important adjunct to ministry to assist in conversion and discipleship.

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS OF PREFACE TO SOLEMN WARNING TO A SECURE WORLD FROM THE GOD OF TERRIBLE MAJESTY, OR THE PRESUMPTUOUS SINNER DETECTED, HIS PLEAS CONSIDERED AND HIS DOOM DISPLAY'D

Tennent's 1734 sermon *A Solemn Warning to a Secure World from the God of Terrible Majesty*¹ is an excellent example of both his searching preaching, as well as his use of the terrors of the law. However, before he submitted this to the publisher, Tennent substantially increased the sermon's length and complexity. Therefore, it no longer qualifies as a sermon, but is better understood as a book. This book was sufficiently important to be published in Boston, and may have influenced Jonathan Edwards's ministry methods and message (See Chapter 2). It was in this book that Tennent used the spider's web illustration to explain the precarious position of the unsaved. Edwards used a similar illustration six years later in his 1741 sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*.

¹Gilbert Tennent, *Solemn Warning to a Secure World From the God of Terrible Majesty or The Presumptuous Sinner Detected, His Pleas Considered, and His Doom Displayed* (Boston: Kneeland & Green for Henschman, 1735).

It is the preface to this book that is the subject of this analysis. I enclose the preface in this project for several reasons. First, it gives an excellent explanation for the use of fear as a motivator in the conversion of hardened sinners, and was the source of many of the quotations that were cited in Chapter 5: Alarming the Secure. Second, it also provides an excellent example of Tennent's "searching preaching" in an urgent exhortation for sinners to awaken to a sense of their imminent, immortal danger and their need to turn to Christ for a remedy. The preface also displays several rhetorical techniques that made the exhortation exceptionally effective.

Audience

Solemn Warning began as a sermon to Tennent's church at Perth Amboy, and was designed to shake secure sinners out of their false hopes and motivate them to continue to seek salvation. The Amboy congregation consisted of people whom he described as "a plainer order of men".² When it evolved into a book, however, it became more of a treatise to explain his methods to critics. For this reason, he

²*Solemn Warning*, v.

refers to respected theologians of his day, including Bishop Stillingfleet, Bishop Hopkins and Mr. Boyes.

Purpose of Writing

Tennent believed that the presence of the unsaved or what he called 'secure sinners' was a significant problem in the church. He wrote to awaken them from their false security.

Style of Preaching

Tennent spoke clearly and to the point. He defended the sharpness of his preaching style saying "[Such a style] is necessary and profitable, considering the general and lamentable security that prevails so exceedingly among the children of this generation."³ Additionally, the important nature of the subject and "hard hearts" of the secure require a pointed, direct approach. He explains this specifically in the following:

As to the sharpness of the stile [sic], I shall only offer this brief apology- that the nature of the subject treated of, and the security of the world require it. And instead of retracting it, I could wish it were much more pointed, it falls so far short of my desire this way. And though I freely acknowledge that planting and watering are nothing to purpose that the most solemn matter and acrid stile [sic] will not avail without the divine Benediction. Yet in

³*Solemn Warning*, ii.

the mean time I believe that God ordinarily uses instruments most suited to the work he designs to accomplish. Blunt instruments (in my opinion) are not suited to pierce hard hearts, or alarm secure souls.⁴

Fear as a Motivator

To defend his use of fear as a motivator in conversion, Tennent appeals to the writings of three respected theologians of his day, Bishop Stillingfleet, Bishop Hopkins and "Learned" Mr. Boyes. Each man makes an excellent point. Stillingfleet says "If [terrors of the Lord] do not persuade men, there is no other reason to expect any other should."⁵ Hopkins believes "Men are more generally apt to be wrought upon by arguments drawn from fear than love."⁶ Boyes asserts "The forethoughts of future punishments are the most likely means to excite our endeavors to prevent it."⁷

Terrors

In his brief Preface, Tennent displays the use of "terrors". Note the following excerpt from *Solemn Warning*:

⁴*Solemn Warning*, ii.

⁵*Solemn Warning*, iii.

⁶*Solemn Warning*, iii.

⁷*Solemn Warning*, iv.

Brethren, you sleep in a greater storm than Jonah did; that only concerned the body, but this the precious soul; that a temporal, but this an eternal death. You are (whether you know it or not sensibly) every moment ready be swallowed up by the boisterous billows of God's justly incensed ire, and the vessel of your souls like to be broken by a dreadful inundation of His vindictive fury and revenge (Deuteronomy 32:41, 35; Romans 12:19)⁸. And yet will you sleep, what metal are you made of?⁹

Direct Address and Antithetic Parallelism

In the above excerpt, note the rhetorical devices Tennent uses to convey fear. First, he uses direct address when he says, "Brethren, you sleep". He also uses antithetic parallelism when he compares and contrasts Jonah with the listener. Jonah and the listener are both in danger, but the danger of the listener is far greater because Jonah's peril concerned only his immortal body, but the listener's peril concerns his immortal soul. Jonah's danger was temporary, but the listener's danger is eternal.

⁸(Deuteronomy 32:41) "When I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me."

(Deuteronomy 32:35) "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

(Romans 12:19) "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

⁹*Solemn Warning*, vii-viii.

Vivid Imagery and Imminent Danger

Tennent also makes effective use of vivid imagery by painting a seascape that conveys a sense God's justified wrath and the peril of the unsaved:

You are. . . every moment ready to be swallowed up by the boisterous billows of God's justly incensed ire, and the vessel of your souls like to be broken by a dreadful inundation of His vindictive fury and revenge.¹⁰

Danger to the individual is conveyed by the words such as "swallowed up" and "broken". Also note that Tennent has conveyed a sense of the imminent danger to the individual when he says "You are. . . every moment ready be swallowed up."

Searching Preaching

The following is a good example of the use of interrogatory in what has been described as "searching preaching". In the following example, Tennent attempts to produce an emotional crisis and evoke self-examination. Here, he begins with a statement, assaults with a rapid series of questions, and concludes with a definite statement.

(Statement:) Beloved brethren, you have often heard your danger described, you have had many a Call, by

¹⁰*Solemn Warning*, viii.

the Word, and Providence of God, as well as by your own Consciences. . .

(Question:) . . .and are you not awakened yet?

(Statement:) O strange! O mournful! Others have been (through grace) convinced and changed effectually by the means you enjoy. . .

(Question:) . . .and won't these be a witness against you at the tribunal of Christ?

(Question:) What will you be able to say in your own vindication?

(Question:) Then won't blushing and confusion cover you, and guilty silence be your answer?

(Question:) What, does the word prove a savor of life unto life to others, and of death unto death to you?

(Statement:) O dreadful!

(Question:) What do you intend to do dear brethren?

(Question:) Will you sleep forever?

(Question:) Will you sleep till death and hell awake you?

(Question:) Or do you think that you may go to heaven in this slumber of carnal security?

(Statement:) If you do, you shall find yourselves miserably mistaken!¹¹

The rapid series of related questions is an effective device because it causes the listener to question himself. If the listener cannot answer the questions adequately, an anxiety provoking crisis situation arises that the listener

¹¹*Solemn Warning*, vii.

seeks to resolve. The listener will attempt to reduce anxiety either by complying with the minister's proposed remedy, or by seeking refuge behind a false hope, i.e., defense mechanism. This is a good example of the interrogatory involved in "searching preaching".

Targeting Specific Groups and Repetition

Tennent strongly criticized ministers who made their sermon application too general to be effective (See Chapter 6: Evoking Self Examination). In contrast, Tennent addresses specific groups within the congregation. In the following excerpts, Tennent does this while using repetition effectively. In this example, Tennent repeats his exhortation to "AWAKE!" no less than thirteen times to different groups of people. These people include those "who sleep", sinners, drunkards, profane swearers, adulterers, whoremongers, Sabbath breakers, profane sinners, covetous gripers, moralists, formalists, backsliders, apostates, and "everyone in a Christless state."¹²

- **Awake**, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Eph.5.14).¹³

¹²Note: I have placed the word "awake" in bold print first, to facilitate reading, and second, because the speaker in all probability emphasized this word loudly.

¹³*Solemn Warning*, viii.

- **Awake** to righteousness and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:34).¹⁴
- **Awake, awake Sinners**, stand up and look where you are hastening, lest you drink of the hand of the Lord, the dregs of the cup of his fury; the cup of trembling, and wring them out (Isaiah 51:17).¹⁵
- **Awake ye drunkards**, and weep and howl", Joel 1:5. For what can you expect (so continuing) but to drink of that cup of trembling I but now mentioned.¹⁶
- **Awake ye profane swearers**, and remember ye will not get a drop of water to cool your cursing, cursed tongues in Hell, when they and you shall flame in the broad burning Lake (Luke 16:24).¹⁷ God has said He will not hold you guiltless, 'that take His name in vain' (Exodus 20:7).¹⁸
- **Awake ye unclean adulterers**, and **whoremongers**, and remember that without speedy repentance, your dismal abode shall be ever with unclean devils, the soul of a God shall avenge upon you (Jeremiah 5:8,29).¹⁹
- **Awake, ye Sabbath breakers** and reform; or God will break you upon the wheels of His vengeance, and

¹⁴*Solemn Warning*, viii.

¹⁵*Solemn Warning*, ix.

¹⁶*Solemn Warning*, ix.

¹⁷(Luke 16:24) "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

¹⁸*Solemn Warning*, ix.

¹⁹*Solemn Warning*, ix.

torture you eternally upon the rack of His justice (Nehemiah 13:16,17,18²⁰).²¹

- And let all other sorts of profane sinners be entreated to **Awake** out of sleep and consider their danger.²²
- **Awake** ye covetous griping Nabals.²³
- **Awake** ye secure moralists, and lifeless, sapless formalists, who are strangers to the power of experimental religion.²⁴
- **Awake**, ye base backsliding hypocrites, and cruel apostates, who once made a profession of religion.²⁵
- **Awake** every of you that are yet in a Christless unconvinced state!²⁶

²⁰ (Nehemiah 13: 16,17,18) "There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath."

²¹ *Solemn Warning*, ix.

²² *Solemn Warning*, ix.

²³ *Solemn Warning*, ix.

²⁴ *Solemn Warning*, ix.

²⁵ *Solemn Warning*, x.

²⁶ *Solemn Warning*, x.

Emoting

In the midst of the litany to "Awake", Tennent verbalizes his anguished emotions over the congregation's perilous state. In the following example, Tennent bemoans their situation with an anguished "O!" three times:

In short, a voluntary desertion of the profession of religion, is a terrible step toward the unpardonable sin. O! Let such consider with trembling hearts, if it is not too late, the Scriptures I have mentioned under this head, as also these that follow. But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in Him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition (Luke 9:62). No man having put his hand to the plow and draw back is fit for the kingdom of God. And if they be not fit for the kingdom of God, they must be fit for the kingdom of the devil. **O terrible portion!** Therefore, repent and do your first works. **O remember** whence you are fallen! And where you are falling!²⁷

Such emoting adds to the intensity of Tennent's delivery. Additionally, this models the appropriate emotional response to the message.

Preaches Good News

After preaching the 'terrors' and encouraging the congregation to self-examination, Tennent changes the tenor of his address to the good news. After repeatedly exhorting his listeners to "Awake!" Tennent says these encouraging words:

²⁷*Solemn Warning*, xi.

If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy. But it would introduce the greatest comfort into your own souls (Galatians 6:16). Then God would rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love, and joy over thee singing (Zephaniah 3:17).²⁸

Tennent's final words are ones of encouragement to those who have found consolation in Christ and conversion for their souls so that they need not be terrified by his discourse. Not only does this good news succor the converted, it also acts as a positive motivator for the unconverted to achieve salvation.

But let no pious experienced Christian needlessly terrify themselves by applying another's portion. The miseries hereafter described are the proper possession and inheritance of graceless and presumptuous sinners. They do not belong to you poor lambs of Jesus, who have been so far convinced of the malignant nature, and dreadful consequences of sin, both in heart and life, that ye have unreservedly, and resolutely closed with Christ, and do afterwards bring forth fruits meet for repentance, such as crowns your profession and experiences. Is not your principle care and sorrow exercised about your souls? If it be so, there is another portion prepared for you by your heavenly Father, a portion of numerous and everlasting blessings, pardon, peace, joy, glory, which I have given a short description of in a use of Consolation in the following discourse.²⁹

²⁸*Solemn Warning*, xii.

²⁹*Solemn Warning*, xii.

Conclusion

In this preface, Tennent displays two of his ministry methods, that of the 'terrors', as well as 'searching preaching'. These methods are supported by the effective use of rhetorical devices such as direct address, vivid imagery, antithetical parallelism, repetition, and interrogatory. Tennent's specific application to various target groups within the congregation can be seen in his litany to "Awake", as well as in his consolation "to pious souls" in the closing.

The preface in its entirety can be found in Appendix 1.

CHAPTER 8

ANALYSIS OF SERMON: *THE SOLEMN SCENE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT*

No discussion of Tennent's ministry method of "alarming the secure sinner" would be complete without an examination of his 1737 sermon, *The Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment*. This was his most powerful evangelistic sermon. It was designed to arouse the congregation from their sleepy spiritual security by shocking them with the knowledge of a certain Day of Judgment. This chapter will examine this sermon in detail, giving special attention to the methods Tennent used to convey his message.

Setting

This sermon took place in the farmlands of Maiden-Head and Hopewell, New-Jersey in 1737. By this time, awakenings had already occurred under Tennent's ministry in New Brunswick (1727), Staten Island (1729), and under the combined efforts of most of the Tennent men in Freehold (1730-1733). By mid-1730's, David Brainerd had seen an awakening among the Native Americans in nearby Cranbury,

NJ. However, the people of Maiden-Head and Hopewell had remained untouched, probably because they had never been organized into churches. The spiritual need of this people group was evangelism.

Audience

Tennent, as leader of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, sought to meet the spiritual needs of this group of farmers by using the most fear-inspiring subject in Scripture, i.e., Judgment Day. Later, when Tennent sent his protégé, the Rev. John Rowland as a permanent minister to this area, Rowland continued to use the same type of subject matter for the first six months of his ministry. Rowland describes the awakening that resulted from this preaching:

The subjects which I chiefly insisted on for about six months, were conviction and conversion; and usually I made choice of the most arousing and awakening texts, to set forth the nature of these doctrines; and I have reason to hope, that the Lord began to accompany his word in a measure from the very first. Some began to be convinced that they were in the way to misery, and unacquainted with the way to the kingdom of heaven. But then let it be observed, that but one or two were taken with convictions at a time, or under one sermon; for many months together their convictions still increased, and the number of the convinced was still multiplied. (Let none suppose, that because I speak of convictions being still carried on, that I mean that sinners must be convinced to some high degree before they can be converted: I only mean that this was the way which the Lord observed in carrying on his work, to keep sinners for a long time under conviction before he manifested his love to them). . . . The frequent opportunities which

I took to examine them were made beneficial, through the divine blessing, to preserve their convictions alive until the time of grace. . . . The attention of all in general was awakened; fathers, mothers, and the youth: some Negroes also seemed very earnest after the word, and were convinced of their sin and misery, and that Christ they must have, or perish forever.¹

From this letter, we can see two points. First, it is clear that the audience to which Tennent addressed *Solemn Scene* was largely, if not entirely unconverted, since the awakening did not occur for a year subsequent to Tennent's sermon. Second, it was the use of such "arousing texts" that was the means of the awakening. This is important, because it shows that the use of 'fear inspiring' or what some would call 'hell fire and damnation' preaching IS effective in producing conversions.

Scripture Text

Solemn Scene was an evangelistic sermon. In order to arouse the congregation, Tennent chose one of the most sobering subjects in the Bible, that of a certain Day of Judgment:

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting

¹Gillies, *Historical Accounts*, 337.

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Preaching the Terrors

Selecting the appropriate fear-inspiring Scripture text is only the beginning of the evangelistic process. Some preachers can sedate the audience with any subject. Instead, the truths of the text must be illuminated in such a way as to evoke the *appropriate* response in the congregation. It is Tennent's goal to shock the audience out of their lethargy, and he makes them aware of it in his introduction. He describes this as follows:

Now seeing the Security, which alas! too much every where prevails, is as prejudicial to all the important and truly valuable Interests of Mankind, as it is unreasonable and general; must it not be an Act of Friendship to a lethargick (sp) and infatuated Generation, to labour to shock them out of their enchanted Slumbers, by setting before them the *Terrors* of that GOD they provoke, the Terrors of that Damnation they demerit: That so they may be brought to some Sense of their Misery, and be thereby prepar'd as Objects for the divine Mercy; it is in Pursuance of this that I have chosen to discourse upon the Verses I have read; which offer to our View a very solemn and magnificent Description of the *general Judgment*.²

Supportive Rhetorical Devices

In order to achieve his goal of jolting the audience out of their sleepy security, Tennent uses rhetorical

²*Solemn Scene*, 218.

devices as a vehicle to drive home his message. The most salient devices are direct address, vivid imagery, antithetical parallelism, rhetorical questions, repetition, and an emotional delivery. An examination of such devices used in *Solemn Scene* is given below.

Vivid Imagery

Tennent's imagery of the unsaved on Judgment Day is unsurpassed. Note the following:

We may reasonably imagine, That when the Souls and Bodies of the Wicked are united, their Hearts will be torn with the most terrible Convulsions of Guilt, Fear and Shame! O! With what Confusion, Horror and Reluctance, will impenitent *Caitiffs*³ be drag'd to the Bar of Judgment, to hear their most secret Impieties openly expos'd, and their awful Doom pronounc'd, before the whole Creation! While Crouds (sp) of innumerable Devils are at their Heels, ready to Witness against them, and hale them to the infernal Furnace!⁴

Note in the above passage the imagery Tennent uses to describe the intensity of guilt, fear and shame of the wicked: "Their hearts will be torn with the most terrible convulsions of guilt, fear and shame." Tennent adds to this scene by describing the further embarrassment and degradation associated with being dragged before the Judgment Bar: "With what Confusion, Horror and Reluctance,

³A mean, evil or cowardly person.

⁴*Solemn Scene*, 228, 229.

will impenitent Caitiffs be drag'd to the Bar of Judgment, to hear their most secret Impieties openly expos'd, and their awful Doom pronounc'd, before the whole Creation!"

In this one sentence, Tennent has escalated the level of "fear" to proportions of "horror". To it, he has added the negative emotions of "confusion" and "reluctance". He has also given an explanation for the feeling of embarrassment. It is the embarrassment of having one's secret sins exposed before the world. Tennent adds to this calamity by introducing demons: "While Crouds (sp) of innumerable Devils are at their Heels, ready to Witness against them, and hale them to the infernal Furnace!"

The next excerpt follows on the heels of the accusing devils:

While before them is that Lord Jesus, who once offered himself to be their Saviour, but now is their angry Judge! When they behold his Eyes as Flames of Fire, and hear his Voice as the Sound of many Waters, how will their Hearts be rack'd with the acutest Pain! Especially when they behold the Elements above their Heads, melting with fervent Heat, and the massy Earth trembling and burning under their Feet; and every where around them the wildest Confusion and most deplorable Ruin blended together in a promiscuous Chaos, void of Beauty and of Order! And in the meantime, none in Heaven or in Earth to pity, or help them in their Extremity! But on the contrary, the great God and the Lord Jesus Christ who here offered his Love, and intreated (sp) them to accept it, in the most importunate and moving Strains, now frowning on them, and laughing at their Calamity! Yea and all the Hosts of Angels, and Armies of glorify'd Saints, rejoicing in their deserved Destruction! In which

God's Justice will have a glorious but terrible Triumph.⁵

In this excerpt, Tennent has increased the level of terror. Using antithetic parallelism, Tennent describes the changing role of Jesus: "Jesus, who once offered himself to be their Saviour, now is their angry Judge!" Tennent then paints a picture of the unsaved standing before Jesus whose eyes burn with "flaming fire", and whose voice thunders as the sound of "many waters". Above their heads, the elements melt with "fervent heat", and beneath their feet, the massy earth quakes "trembling and burning under their Feet". Once again, Tennent contrasts the changing role of Jesus, who had not only "offered his Love", but had also "entreated them to accept it, in the most importunate and moving Strains!" This loving Jesus is now pictured as "frowning on them, and laughing at their Calamity!" Joining Jesus are the angels and armies of glorified saints who are also insensitive to the plight of the doomed unsaved. In fact, they rejoice "in their deserved destruction".

This vivid imagery is effective for two reasons. First, it sketches a concrete image of an abstract concept using present day language. Listeners understand the

⁵*Solemn Scene*, 229.

concept of a future Judgment Day because they can relate to prisoners being dragged before a judicial bench in contemporary society. They may also be able to relate to a massive earthquake, because earthquakes were known to occur in this general region. Second, the imagery becomes more effective when it additionally describes emotions that are totally appropriate to the calamity. By doing this, Tennent has caused the knowledge of an abstract concept (Judgment) to effect an emotion. He has caused a thought to evoke an emotional response. Perhaps that emotional response is fear, guilt, or shame. This action has laid the foundation for change, since fear, guilt and shame are uncomfortable emotions. All that is left for the preacher to do is convert the emotional response into an action that results in conversion.

Rhetorical Questions

Tennent makes effective use of rhetorical questions in this sermon. In the following excerpt, Tennent lists men who became fearful when they were in the presence of God, including Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Belshazzer.

If pious *Moses* was so affected with the Sight of God, upon Mount *Sinai*, that he did exceedingly Fear and Quake, *Heb.* 12. 21. If zealous *Isaiah* was so much affected with Fear, by beholding of a small Glimpse of God's Glory, when the Seraphs cry'd, *Holy, holy, holy,*

is the Lord of Hosts, that he complain'd, Wo is me I am undone! ---Isai. 6.5. If faithful Daniel was so surprised with a Vision, that he swoon'd away with the dread thereof! Dan. 10. 8,11. Then how will you who are condemn'd by complicated Guilt, and cover'd with the basest Deformity; be able to bear up under the Appearance of the Judge of Heaven and Earth; whose Loins will be girded as with the finest Gold of Uphaz; his Body like Beryl, and his Face as the Appearance of Lightning, and his Eyes as Lamps of Fire, his Arms and his Feet like polish'd Brass, and the Voice of his Words like the Voice of a Multitude. If the Joints of Belshazzer's Knees were loosn'd by trembling, in the midst of his Grandeur and Jollitry! By the Appearance of but a Hand-Writing upon the Wall, what Fear and Trembling shall possess you! Guilty Dust?

Tennent has explained that even pious men fear in the presence of God, and the ungodly Belshazzer trembled when he saw the appearance of a mere hand! The implication is that an unsaved man should also be afraid when he is in God's presence. Additionally, Tennent's two-word commentary that the wicked are both "guilty" and nothing more than "dust" also gives the congregation cause to reflect. This is very effective in evoking an emotional reaction of guilt and fear, which are preparative for conviction and conversion.

Repetition

Tennent makes effective use of repetition in his description of the rewards that the righteous will receive

on Judgment Day. In this excerpt, Tennent delivers a litany of nine exhortations to "come."^{*}

Then will follow the Pronunciation (sp) and Execution of the different Sentences upon the Good and Bad. The Case of the Righteous being enquir'd into, their joyful Sentence will ensue; *Then shall the King, the Judge from his Throne of Glory, say to them on his Right Hand, **Come** ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World, Mat. 25.34.* O precious Sentence! O good LORD JESUS! how sweet are thy Words! and how happy are thy People? What can be conceiv'd more full of divine Consolation? Who ever accuses, asperses or condemns you, you are blessed by my Father; justify'd and approv'd of by him, **Come**; on Earth you were slighted and deserted by my Enemies, and your false Friends, but I will never forsake you; **Come**, from a sinful and miserable World under the Shadow of my Wings, into the Embrace of my Bosom, and enjoy the Delights of my Love; **Come**, inherit that glorious kingdom, that princely Portion, which was prepared for you from everlasting, in the Purposes of my Father, and in the Fulness of Time purchased for you by my Blood, and continued to you by my Intercession; **Come**, and possess that unspeakable Honour and unmerited Happiness, for which you were prepared by the sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit; **Come**, not as Sojourners, but as Heirs Inhabitants of an unalienable Portion and everlasting Kingdom! **Come**, and dwell with God and holy Angels; **Come**, and drink the Delights of Heaven, the christal (sp) Streams of Life which flow from the Throne of God; **Come**, ye troubled and weary Souls who have been troubled by Sinners, and weary of Sin, and *inherit the Rest prepared for you!* O! It is not possible to express with Words, the Rivers of Joy and Gladness, which will run into the Hearts of the Glorify'd! and make them triumph on this Occasion with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory!⁶

*"Come" is placed in bold print in this excerpt in order to highlight the litany. Undoubtedly, Tennent emphasized this word in his emotional delivery.

⁶Solemn Scene, 232.

Two litanies are then used to describe the fate of the wicked. In the following excerpt, the wicked are sent to eternal torment. The repeated key words are "GO!", and "FROM!". Note below:

After this will succeed the Sentence of the Wicked: These impure and unholy Souls, being sufficiently detected, and convinc'd of their ungrateful Rebellion against God, in breaking his Law and slighting his Gospel, must then hear these dreadful Words from the Mouth of Christ, *Go ye accursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* What can be conceiv'd more full of Terror than this Sentence? Ye bless'd your selves in your Prosperity and false Hope, and were flattered by others; but now you are accursed by God, cursed to all Eternity: You wanted God to depart from you in this World, you lik'd not the Knowledge of his Ways, and slighted the Company of his Servants, and now you must depart from them forever: *Go ye accursed into never-ending Torments, prepar'd for the vilest and most malignant Spirits: ye wou'd obey their Suggestions, while ye condemned my Authority, quench'd my repeated Calls, and abus'd my Mercy! And now ye must dwell with these infernal Ghosts for ever, and inherit the Burnings prepar'd for them! I will never offer you abused mercy any more; but ye shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from my gracious Presence, by my glorious Power!*

After the Sentence is pronounc'd by the great Judge, immediately it shall be executed. Then will these unhappy Wretches be dragged **from** the Judgment-Seat, to that terrible *Tophet*⁷, whose Flames are kindled by the Breath of God! For ever banished **from** the ravishing Sweets of God's presence, **from** the amiable Society of saints and Angels! **From** the blissful Regions of Light and Love! **From** all the Joys and Glories of the heavenly Paradise! And the least Hope of ever attaining them! **To** be tormented in the

⁷ 'Tophet' is a synonym for hell. Tophet was a location near Jerusalem where human sacrifices were made to Molech. See 2 Kings 23:10.

burning lake, that gloomy Vault of thick Darkness, frightful Horror, and extream (sp) Despair! With the Stings of their accusing Consciences! The Upbraidings and Severities of Devils! The continual Roarings, and awful lamentations of damned Companions; and the fearful and inconceivably terrible Vengeance of the most high God, pour'd forth upon them in full and never-ending Vials. The Shame, Confusion and Anguish of such miserable Souls, cannot be fully conceiv'd or express'd!⁸

Antithetical Parallelism

The litanies of repeated orders, one to "come" and one to "go" are especially effective because they are juxtaposed one after the other, making a very effective use of contrasts. This is another example of Tennent's use of antithetical parallelism, since both the righteous and wicked are judged, but receive opposite rewards.

Structure of Sermon

Tennent follows a sermon structure that was typical for his day. The Puritans believed that "sermon form should follow the sequence of the faculties (in that) knowledge and conviction preceded humiliation and the raptures of spiritual union."⁹ Therefore, a sermon targeted the logic of the mind before it targeted the heart and

⁸*Solemn Scene*, 233, 234.

⁹Eugene E. White, "Puritan Preaching and the Authority of God", *Preaching in American History*, DeWitte Holland, ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969), 57.

feelings of emotion. The first president of Harvard College, Henry Dunster, described this process in his notes on sermon structure:

After explication proves the Doctrine, which you may do by any arguments in logic. . . In handling the Doctrine, be as plain as may be, only look what concerns the understanding of the Doctrine. Look especially at the logic, the rhetorical passages are only profitable in the Uses when you come to the Affections. After proof of the Doctrines and Reasons [is] given, then take away Objections, & answer these, that false logic may not seem to oppose the truth. . . . From the Doctrine, come to Application to the soul wherein consists the life of preaching. You shall first apply it to the Understanding. 2ly [Secondly] to the Will and Affections for therein consists the labor; & as to teach and inform the Understanding, so to stir up the people's heart to the thing taught.¹⁰

Tennent's sermon structure follows the above pattern, by appealing to reason before the emotions. Tennent begins with the Scripture text, and a thorough introduction. The introduction includes his burden for the audience, the background of the Scripture text, and the sermon's dominating theme. The doctrinal section includes a three-point textual outline, or what Tennent calls the "particulars", a thorough exegesis of the text, and logical inferences based on this text. The third section contains what Tennent calls "Improvements", which are logical

¹⁰This excerpt is taken from the Henry Dunster manuscripts in the Massachusetts Historical Society. (White, 57).

inferences based on the text. In this section, he appeals to the sense of logic as well as emotions. *Solemn Warning* has four alliterated "improvements". An outline of the basic sermon structure is as follows:

Sermon Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Scripture text (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)
- B. Burden- This tells why he is preaching this particular message to these particular people.
- C. Dominating theme- This introduces the message core to the people.
- D. Background- This gives the background of the selected Scripture text.

II. Doctrine (Integrating thoughts)

- A. Outline ("Particulars")
- B. Exegesis
- C. Propositions- These are logical inferences based on the text.

III. Improvements- (Application) In this section, the author appeals to the sense of logic as well as the emotions.

- A. Information
- B. Consolation (of the Pious)

C. Congregation (of the Wicked)

D. Exhortation (Motivating thrust: Prepare for Christ's Coming)

Annotated Outline

I. Introduction

A. Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-9

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense Tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.

B. Burden: Tennent feels a burden for the many people who are unconcerned with the perilous nature of their eternal state.

C. Dominating Theme: The people must awaken from their slumbering security because one day they will face the great Judge of the earth whom they have offended!

D. Background: The Last Judgment

1. The Certainty of a Last Judgment (2 Thess 1:6)

a) Judgment is predicted by both the Old and New Testaments.

b) Judgment is implied by the existence of a conscience that feels both guilt and fear.

c) Judgment is reasonable to man because of God's perfect nature.

d) Judgment is logical because God has given Laws to rule mankind. These Laws are enforced by His threats of punishment.

e) Judgment is a righteous in order to repay those who trouble the righteous.

2. The Time of the Last Judgment

a) The time is known only to God.

b) The time will be sudden and unexpected.

3. The Place of the Last Judgment (1 Thess. 4:17)

a) The place will probably be in the air.

b) The place will be visible from the earth.

II. Doctrinal Outline ("Particulars")

A. Designation of the Person of the Judge. (1:7)

1. His kingship gives Jesus the right to judge men and angels.

2. His humanity will make the justice to guilty men more conspicuous.

3. His deity as Savior will expose the sinfulness

of sin. Sin will change the softness of his compassion into the sternest severity.

B. Description of His Pompous Appearance. (1:8)

1. Jesus appears in flaming fire.
2. Jesus is accompanied by his mighty angels.
3. His appearance is associated with fiery volcanic eruptions and mighty earthquakes.

C. Succinct Narrative of the Judicial Process

(Rev. 20:11,12).

1. Christ is seated on the throne.
2. Mankind will appear before Him to receive their sentence.
3. Dead will be judged according to their works.
4. Terrifying description of judicial process.
5. Sheep and goat judgment. Hypocrites will be detected.
 - a) Rewards given to the righteous.
 - b) Sentences given to the wicked.

III. Improvements

- A. Information
- B. Consolation (for pious souls)
- C. Congregation
- D. Exhortation (Motivating Thrust): Prepare for Judgment Day now!

1. Meditation on death and judgment.
2. Prayer for speedy reformation.
3. Repentance
4. Justification
5. Sanctification

Exhortation

After teaching the doctrine to the mind by appealing to the sense of logic, and preaching terrors to the heart with the intention of conviction of sin, Tennent uses the "Exhortation" to direct his listeners to an appropriate response to the message. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists believed that conversion was a process. Tennent believed that his job (with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit) was to initiate that process and see it to completion, when the assurance of salvation could be expressed. In *Solemn Scene*, Tennent exhorts the congregation to heed his admonition to begin this process:

In the last Place, I exhort you my Brethren, in the Name and Bowels of Christ, and by all that should be dear to you, that you would quickly endeavor to prepare for Christ's Coming to Judgment, which may be very speedily to you, even before to-morrow Morning.¹¹

¹¹*Solemn Scene*, 239.

Not only has Tennent emotionally expressed his exhortation to the congregation ("in the name and bowels of Christ, and by all that is dear to you"), he has also told them the importance of an immediate response, i.e., the fact that Judgment Day could be tomorrow. Tennent then prescribes the method by which such preparation can be made.

The Means I would prescribe to you for that End are, a frequent Meditation upon Death and Judgment, Examination, Prayer and a speedy Reformation. *Let the wicked Man forsake his Way.*¹²

Tennent's method of conversion includes meditation, prayer and repentance.

1. Meditation: Tennent recommends "frequent meditation on death, judgment, (self) examination." Meditation on such themes is designed to induce conviction.

2. Prayer: The stage of conviction can at times be exceptionally long until assurance is received. Tennent recommends that the convicted person humbles himself in "prayer for a speedy reformation".

3. Repentance: Repentance is a complete turn around from sin. Tennent describes this to the people by citing Isaiah 55:7, "*Let the wicked man forsake his way.*"

¹²Solemn Scene, 240.

After this, Tennent passionately exhorts the congregation to "become acquainted with experimental and vital religion":

That which I wou'd especially and passionately recommend to you, as a principle and absolutely necessary preparative, for the Judgment of the great God, is that you would speedily and vehemently labour to be acquainted with experimental and vital Religion: Namely, Justification from the Guilt of Sin, by the grace of Christ; and Sanctification from the Power of Sin by the Spirit of Christ.¹³

After these instructions, Tennent makes one more powerful exhortation before closing. He begins with a direct address:

*O Sinner! Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the Way with him: lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no Means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing, Mat.5. 25,26.*¹⁴

Tennent immediately continues with another direct address:

*O Brethren! Wash your Hearts from Wickedness: How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within you. Cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts ye double-minded, be afflicted and mourn and weep.*¹⁵

¹³*Solemn Scene, 240.*

¹⁴*Solemn Scene, 240.*

¹⁵*Solemn Scene, 240.*

He continues this long, emotional exhortation with a series of four short sentences. This change of rhythm arrests the audience's attention, especially if the speaker pauses after each sentence. Note below:

Life is short.
Eternity is long.
Death is near.
And the Judge at the Door.¹⁶

Tennent gives one final set of directions. This includes to "encourage and preserve. . . convictions of sin", to avoid "unnecessary conversation with ungodly people", and to humbly resolve to be "in God's service." This is important, because in a short while, the opportunity for conversion will expire "in a little time":

In a little Time ye will be past all Remedy, if ye repent not; if there be any Convictions of Sin and Danger, in any of you, encourage and preserve them by Consideration and Supplication to God, as the most invaluable Jewels. Shun unnecessary Conversation with ungodly People. *Forsake the Foolish and live.* Be humbly resolute in God's Service, whatever it cost you, for true Religion is its own Reward here, and how much more so will it be hereafter. *The Sufferings of this present World are not worthy to be compar'd with that Weight of Glory which shall be revealed.* If it seem Evil to others to serve God in a profligate and perverse Age, let it not do so to you.¹⁷

¹⁶Solemn Scene, 240.

¹⁷Solemn Scene, 240.

Tennent's closing exhortation is to seek conversion so that Judgment day "will be refreshing", as well as a time to be welcomed.

O Sinners! I beseech you by the tender Mercies of God, that you would not always halt between two Opinions, *God* and *Baal*. If ye will faithfully observe these Things, the Day of *Christ* will be a Day of refreshing to you; and you will long for it, with the poor Church; and say, *Come Lord Jesus come quickly*, even so come thou blessed Son of God! *Amen, Amen.*¹⁸

Conclusion

Tennent chose Judgment Day, the most frightening subject in the Bible to reach this congregation of unsaved people. *Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment* is the best example of Tennent's use of "Terrors of the Lord" as a motivator to evoke fear so as to effect conviction and conversion. We know that this technique was effective in this particular congregation because John Rowland used the same method after Tennent assigned him to these congregations, and as a result, an awakening occurred within six months.

Tennent used various supportive devices to convey the message of this sermon. These include the use of vivid imagery, antithetical parallelism, rhetorical questions, repetition and direct address.

¹⁸*Solemn Scene*, 241.

Tennent began by first appealing to the congregation's sense of logic by a thorough exegesis of the target Scripture, and appealed to their emotions by the choice of a frightening subject matter, which was reinforced by his effective rhetorical techniques. This caused an emotional crisis. The congregation was offered relief from their emotional crisis when they learned of the hope that is afforded to the righteous. A litany of "comes" informed the congregation of the rewards that are afforded to the righteous. This was presented in stark contrast with the horrifying punishment of the wicked.

A final series of exhortations gives those experiencing a spiritual crisis an action plan to relieve their distress, i.e., meditate, pray, repent, be justified, and sanctified. In his final motivating thrust, Tennent tells the congregation to make a choice so that they can look forward with joy to Judgment Day.

See Appendix 2 for the sermon in its entirety.

CHAPTER 9

ANALYSIS OF SERMON: *THE NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN DURABLE HAPPINESS*

This chapter is an analysis of Tennent's 1735 sermon, *The Necessity of Religious Violence in Order to Obtain Durable Happiness*. It is based on Matthew 11:12, "And from the Days of John the Baptist, until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by force." The purpose of this evangelistic sermon is to encourage the congregation to pursue conversion diligently and purposefully. Instead of the "terrors of the law", it uses the "rewards of heaven" as its dominant motivator. This sermon also provides an excellent example of "searching preaching" designed to evoke self-examination. The analysis will explain the setting and audience of the sermon, as well as the various homiletical and rhetorical devices that are used to convey the message. Following the analysis, the sermon is presented in its entirety.

Setting

Tennent preached this sermon to his congregation¹ at Perth Amboy on June 29, 1735. Concurrently, a revival was taking place in New England. Despite the Perth Amboy church's geographical proximity to both New Brunswick and Staten Island (both congregations had experienced an awakening in the latter part of the 1720's), there is no evidence that the Perth Amboy congregation had experienced a similar awakening.

Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment was designed for congregations in "Stage One, The Secure Sinner Stage" of conversion. In order to evoke terror to convince and convict the unconverted, frightening images predominated that message. However, the evangelistic sermon under consideration is geared to the slightly more spiritually advanced congregation in "Stage Two, The Convinced Sinner", or to a lesser extent "Stage Three, The Convicted Sinner". The purpose of this sermon is to encourage such people in the process of conversion to press onward, i.e.,

¹Most sources say that Tennent was the pastor of the New Brunswick church during this time. However, he states that he was "pastorally related" to several congregations: "To my hearers at Amboy, N Brunswick, and other places. . . . "I had preached there [Amboy] and in other places which I am pastorally related to". (Tennent, *Solemn Warning to a Secure World*, vii).

"to use violence" through the difficult process of conviction until they reach assurance.

Sermon Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Scripture text
- B. Burden
- C. Dominating theme

II. Doctrinal Outline ("Propositions")

- A. A commendation of the Baptist's Faithfulness
- B. An Illustration of God's Goodness
- C. A description of "The Way" way to Happiness.

III. "Improvements"

- A. Information
- B. Examination
- C. Exhortation

Introduction

In the brief introduction, Tennent introduces the Scripture text, Matthew 11:12, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."* He explains that God's goodness is demonstrated in three implications of this verse.

1. God prepared happiness for his people.
2. God revealed "The Way" to this happiness.
3. God sent his servants to "inculcate. . .the necessity, importance and reasonableness of traveling in ["The Way"] in order to obtain [happiness]."²

Doctrine

This section is divided into a three point doctrinal outline:

1. A Commendation of the Baptist's Faithfulness
2. An Illustration of God's Goodness
3. A Description of "The Way" to Happiness.

In this section, the first two points are treated briefly. The predominant focus is on point three, "The Way" to happiness.

Tennent begins the doctrinal section by noting Jesus' commendation of John the Baptist's faithfulness. In the following triplet, Tennent notes that during John's "importunate course" of ministry:

*The gospel church began to be remarkably established, its doctrines eagerly embraced and its precepts vehemently practiced.*³

²*Religious Violence*, 1.

³*Religious Violence*, 2.

This triplet shows the effectiveness of John's violence. Next, Tennent shows the violent strivings of men for happiness. "[John's] convinced hearers Longed after and Labour'd for the happiness of the blessed heaven."⁴ Although the Jews were forbidden to touch Mt. Sinai, John's audience was permitted to labor for the happiness of heaven. Tennent concludes, "[We also must also use violence] to ascend the mistical [sp] mountain."⁵

The second doctrinal point pertains to God's goodness. This can be seen in that God not only allowed, but encouraged guilty men to reach heaven.

The third doctrinal point describes "The Way" to heaven. Tennent begins this section by describing the magnificent properties of the Kingdom, as well as the qualifications that are necessary to possess the kingdom. Next he gives a description of the violence that is necessary in order to achieve heaven. According to Tennent, violence is necessary with certain people and problems (God, ourselves, Satan, sin and the world); and in certain practices (in reading the word, hearing the

⁴*Religious Violence, 2.*

⁵*Religions Violence, 2.*

word, and in self-examination). Finally, violence is defended on the basis of Scripture, including its use of violent metaphors such as fighting and wrestling. An annotated outline clarifies this section.

Annotated Outline of Doctrine

``The Violent Take the Kingdom by Force''

- I. Properties of the Kingdom
 - A. An ancient kingdom
 - B. A specious kingdom
 - C. A rich opulent kingdom
 - D. A beautiful, glorious kingdom
 - E. An unshaken and everlasting Kingdom
- II. Qualifications to Possess the Kingdom
 - A. Early endeavors after Christ and holiness, i.e., that of putting Christ before everything else.
 - B. Eager desire for communion with Christ
 - C. Earnest labor for Christ
 - D. Persevering diligence
- III. Violence must be used with certain People and Problems.
 - A. Use violence with God
 - 1. Fervently
 - 2. Affectionately

3. Believingly- relying on His power and promise
4. Argumentatively, earnestly and reverently
5. Importunately and perseveringly- Praying
fervently at all times

B. Use violence with Ourselves- Use violence to resist hindrances to religious duty.

C. Use violence with Satan's Lies

1. "You are not in the right frame of mind to pray".
2. "You have no time to pray".
3. "Only spend a few moments in prayer".
4. "Don't pray. That's a covenant of works".

D. Use violence with the World

1. The business of the world
2. The pleasure of the world
3. The people of the world
4. The god of the world

E. Use violence against Sin

1. Resist indulgences in sin
2. Resist temptations to sin
3. Resist sin through fasting and prayer

IV. Violence should be used in certain Practices:

- A. In reading the holy Word of God
- B. In hearing the Word

D. In self-examination (In self-judging)

E. In consideration: What will happen if. . .?

1. If you neglect these duties?

2. If you perform these duties?

V. WHY should violence be used?

A. Scripture uses violent metaphors

1. Running, wrestling, fighting.

2. All these efforts are to achieve a corruptible crown. We must exert ourselves for an incorruptible crown.

B. Violence is commanded: God commands us to "Strive to enter the strait gate."

C. Violence is required: The nature of the case requires violence.

D. Violence is deserved: The importance of the case deserves it.

Improvement

This final section is divided into three subsections:

1. Information
2. Examination
3. Exhortation

The "Improvement" section begins an intense application of the implications of the text. For example,

the Doctrinal section says "We must. . . ." However, the "Improvement" section uses the personal interrogative, "Do you. . . ?" Note this contrast in the following example:

Doctrinal section: "We must use violence, in reading the Holy Word of God."⁶

Improvement section: "Do you use violence in these following Duties of religion? In reading the Word of God. . . ?"⁷

An annotated outline clarifies this section.

Annotated Outline of "Improvement"

I. Information- The fact that the kingdom suffers violence informs us:

A. Of God's great goodness

1. In preparing such a kingdom for sinners
2. In sending His only Son for sinners
3. In sending His angels
4. In sending His apostles
5. In the easy terms for achieving happiness
 - a. Forsaking sin
 - b. Using violence to attain happiness
6. In sending ministers to urge us

⁶Religious Violence, 23.

⁷Religious Violence, 34.

- 7. In sending His Spirit to seal our attempts.
- B. Of the madness, ingratitude and obstinacy of sinners for rejecting Salvation.

II. Examination: Do you use violence to obtain heaven?

A. Do you seek happiness with. . .

- 1. early endeavor?
- 2. eager desire?
- 3. earnest labor?
- 4. persevering diligence?

B. Do you use violence with God? Do you pray. . .

- 1. Fervently?
- 2. Affectionately?
- 3. Believingly?
- 4. Argumentatively?
- 5. Importunately?

C. Do you use violence with yourselves?

- 1. In opposing sloth?
- 2. In performing all duty?

D. Do you use violence opposing Satan's Temptations?

- 1. In resisting inward impulses to sin?
- 2. In shunning outward incentives to sin?

E. Do you use violence opposing the World's

Temptations?

1. In its business?
 2. In its pleasures?
 3. In its people?
- F. Do you use violence in performing the duties of religion?

1. In READING the Word?

- a. frequently?
- b. seriously?
- c. with personal application and practice?

2. In HEARING the Word?

- a. Do you prepare for service with prayers and meditation?
- b. Do you solemnly listen to the message?
- c. Do you closely apply the message to yourself?
- d. Do you practice what you learned?

3. In EXAMINING yourselves?

- a. Impartially?
- b. Regularly?

4. In JUDGING yourselves

- a. Deliberately?
- b. Decisively?
- c. Habitually?

G. If you DO use violence. . .

1. Bless God for exciting you to do it.
2. Rejoice in God's goodness.
3. Rewards are many.

H. There are those DO NOT use violence.

1. Some delay
2. Some are cold and lukewarm
3. Some sin knowingly, habitually
 - a. Sin commits a violence against one's conscience.
 - b. Some run to temptation.
 - c. Some do not judge themselves accurately.

I. What will happen to the following sinners?

1. "Secure" sinners who have never been convinced of their damnable state.
2. Apostates
3. Formalists (Those who obey religion outwardly, but think adulterous thoughts)
4. Profane people, including drunkards, swearers, adulterers, Sabbath breakers, thieves.

J. All these people storm Hell by violence!

1. Covetous, idolaters, worldly people
2. Filthy hypocrites

- III. Exhortation to use violence to gain Heaven
- A. It is a necessary duty
 - B. It is a beneficial duty
 - C. It is a rational duty
 - D. Others are battering heaven night and day in New England.
 - E. Awake and Strive sinners!
 - F. Consider the violence the Devil uses against you!

Motivating Thrust: Choose to use violence to achieve heavenly happiness.

Effective Homiletical Devices

Selection of Appropriate Scripture Text

If the goal of a sermon is to encourage the congregation to press forward in the conversion process, sermon construction begins with the selection of an appropriate text. In this case, it is Matthew 11:12, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."* Tennent selects this text because he believes it proves the need for a diligent effort ("violence") in the process of conversion. He cites several respected sources, including Lightfoot and others

who hold a similar opinion. Those who disagree with this interpretation may hold to a metaphorical understanding of the text as described by Lange:

The expression is evidently metaphorical, denoting the violent bursting forth of the kingdom of heaven, as the kernel of the ancient theocracy, through the husk of the Old Testament. John and Christ are themselves the violent who take it by force; the former, as commencing the assault; the latter, as completing the conquest. Accordingly, this is a figurative description of the great era which had then commenced.⁸

I believe both opinions are correct. Prior to John the Baptist's ministry, Satan occupied the world, including the territory that was once a theocracy. Both John the Baptist as well as Jesus wrestled that territory from Satan's hands through their ministry, and particularly through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. This is the metaphor theory. However, those who responded to the teachings of John and Jesus used violence to take the kingdom of heaven when they determined to pull themselves from the grip of sin and reach toward the grasp of God. This is the violent conversion theory.

Today, the kingdom of heaven is freely offered, but is not easily accepted. In order to accept salvation, we

⁸John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 206.

must make a violent determination to leave former lifestyles of sin and degradation. We must use violence to suppress our own desires and submit to the Lordship of Christ, and we must use violence to reach the presence of Jesus in order to have an *experiential* awareness of him, and be totally assured of our salvation.

Rewards of Heaven

In *Religious Violence*, Tennent uses the positive images of the glories of heaven to entice the congregation to pursue heaven. Some of Tennent's finest illustrations of the richness of the kingdom of heaven can be found in this sermon.

[Heaven] is a rich opulent Kingdom; it abounds with all things, that are necessary, for Honour, Support, Wealth, Pleasure. There are Thrones of Righteousness, Ensigns of Majesty, Palms of Victory, Mansions of Beauty, Diadems of Glory.

There unambitious Honour bears unsullied Laurels, being fearless of a Rival, or invidious Detractive. The poignant Darts of Malignant Reproach shall never stain the white Names of the Lambs followers in their Fathers Kingdom.

There is the Manna of Angels to feed upon; there be the pure Christal Fountains of Life to bathe in, and drink of, that Spring from the Throne of God, and the Lamb, with an invariable and eternal Tenor; there is the Tree of Life, richly laden with Apples of Salvation, bearing Twelve manner of Fruits, whose Leaves are for the healing of the Nations. (°)

° Rev. 22. 1,2. [Note: Tennent used letters to designate his footnotes.]

There are Streets of Gold, Gates of Pearl, and Walls of Jasper. (^d) But above all, there is a Lamb of God, the Pearl of great Price, who is infinitely more valuable than if the immense Globe of the Earth, the unfathomable Deeps of the Ocean, the broad Sheets of the Christaline or Emperial Heavens were turned into a Body of Massy or Liquid Gold! And this Pearl, dear *Brethren*, whose worth Surpasses the highest Flight of an Angel's Thought to conceive, or his Tongue to express, belongs to every inhabitant of that Kingdom. O Blessed God, how Great and Stupendious is thy Mercy, and dear Affection, that suffers such a Kingdom to be taken through Violence by the guilty, base Creatures.⁹

Note the beauty and symmetry with which Tennent describes the glories of heaven. There are:

Thrones of Righteousness,

Ensigns of Majesty,

Palms of Victory,

Mansions of Beauty,

Diadems of Glory.

The writer has observed congregations becoming more alert when food is used as an illustration in sermons that occur near meal times. Tennent may have had an awareness of this as well. Note the method by which Tennent appeals to the senses through the mention of food and water:

There is the Manna of Angels to feed upon; there be the pure Christal Fountains of Life to bathe in, and drink of, that Spring from the Throne of God, and

^d Rev. 21.

⁹*Religious Violence*, 5,6.

the Lamb, with an invariable and eternal Tenor; there is the Tree of Life, richly laden with Apples of Salvation, bearing Twelve manner of Fruits.¹⁰

Terrors

In *Solemn Scene of the Last Judgment*, terrifying images predominated the sermon because its goal was to reach people in "Stage One" of the process of conversion. While "terrors" do not predominate this sermon, they are nevertheless present to arouse the secure sinner. To evoke terror, Tennent describes the doom that awaits the wicked. He effectively uses supportive rhetorical devices in this description.

In the following excerpt Tennent evokes tension through the use of interrogatives, emotional statements, and a final depiction of doom using vivid imagery:

[Question] "What say you Sinners!

[Question] Will you always slight this great Salvation!

[Question] What!

[Question] Slight the most tremendous Majesty!

[Question] The tenderest expresses of Bowel Mercy!

[Question] The brightest blaze of ravishing and amazing Glory!

¹⁰*Religious Violence*, 5.

[Question] And shall the Holy Jesus have always reason to complain over you! as he did over the obstinate *Jews*?

[Emotion] *O Jerusalem Jerusalem*, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! (^q)

[Question] What ails you poor wretched unconverted Sinners!

[Question] Where is your Reason and Consciences!

[Question] Alas! Have you abandon'd both?

[Question] Aren't you the most infatuated Creatures that ever breath'd? who thus vilely trifle with the great God, and your poor perishing Souls! And sordidly reject the offers of his Love, and thereby your own Life and Happiness: for how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? (^r)

[Emotion] O cruel World!, that thus slight the blessed God! the Holy Jesus, and their own Souls Happiness!

[Exclamation] Your eyes will be open'd by and by to see the horrid glaring Scene of your Shame and Guilt, your Stupidity, obstinacy, madness and misery! If not to your Humiliation and Conversion, then surely among the damned to your Confusion and Torment; then will you fill those dismal Regions with doleful Roarings, hideous Screeches, [and] passionate, but useless lamentations!"¹¹

The emotional statements break up the interrogatives and model emotions that are appropriate to the situation.

^q Mat.23.27.

^r Heb.2.3.

¹¹ *Religious Violence*, 32,33.

The final warning of doom is described with a cacophony of distressful sounds:

Doleful roarings

Hideous screeches

Passionate but useless lamentations.

Tennent makes the most out of this brief treatment of the 'terrors' through the use of such effective rhetorical devices.

Searching Preaching

One means by which Tennent elicits self-examination in the congregation is through the use of lengthy interrogatives. Note the following excerpt taken from the "Examination" section.

Pray Heaven, do you use that Violence to obtain Heaven which I describ'd [sp] in the Doctrinal part of this Discourse? How is it with you? poor Sinners?

Do you seek after Happiness with such early endeavor, eager Desire, earnest labour, and persevering Deligence [sp]?

Do you use Violence with God by praying to him fervently, affectionately, believingly, argumentatively, and importunately?

Do you also use Violence with your selves in opposing your sloth and in a conscienticy [sp] performance of all known Duty? As also in opposing the Temptations of Satan and of Sin, in faithfully resisting its inward Motions and carefully shunning outward Incentives to it?

Do ye also conscientiously oppose the Temptations of the World in the Business of it, yea, pleasures of it, and People of it? Again,

Do ye use Violence in the performance of these following Duties of Religion?

1. In reading the Word of God with such Frequency, Order, Seriousness, Belief, Application and Practice? as was before hinted?

2. In hearing the Word, do you labour and prepare for it, by Meditation and Prayer? and do you Solemnly attend to what you hear, as in the presence of God? Do you closely apply your proper Portion, and Evangelically practice it? And,

3. Do you Examine your selves with such impartiality, and regularly as has been spoken? And,

4. Do you judge your selves deliberately, and decisively, and habitually Practice the great Duty of solemn and affecting Consideration?¹²

Another means of eliciting self examination is through the use of specific references to different groups of people within the congregation. In the following example, Tennent refers specifically to secure sinners, apostates, formalists, profane people, covetous "worldings", and filthy hypocrites. In case people have trouble assigning themselves into one of the above categories, Tennent gives a description of each. Note the following example:

Is it necessary to use Violence in order to obtain eternal Happiness? Then what will become of the following sorts of Sinners?

1. Of the Secure, who have never been so much as convinc'd thoroughly of their damnable Condition, who have never cried out with the Prodigal, *I perish with Hunger* (^y), or with Peters hearers, *Men and Brethren*, what shall we do? (^z)

¹²Religious Violence, 33,34.

^y Luke 15.17.

2. Of Apostates, who have been convinc'd, but draw back to Perdition. (^a) Arn't these posses'd with seven Devils? (^b)

3. Formalists, who content themselves with a dead form of Religion; O! That such wou'd consider Seriously that saying of Christ, *Mat. 5. 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.*

4. Prophane (sic) People of all Sorts, *Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, Adulterers, Sabbath-breakers, Thieves*: Don't all these storm Hell, and endeavor to take Damnation by Violence, out of the Hands of the Devil? They are as earnest, as if they wou'd take up no Denial; But they needn't fear, they shall have their Wages (so continuing) as sure as God is truth. (^c)

5. Covetous, Idolatrous Worldings; these are using Violence indeed, but for this Earth; these merciless Rooks are tearing all they can out of the Hands of it's just Owners; perhaps as if they cou'd never, never, get enough of that Earth, they set their hearts and Souls upon; But I may tell them for their comfort they shall by and by, get their Eyes and Mouths and Hearts full of it in the darksome Grave, where their pamper'd Bodies will quickly become a ga[]ful Skeleton of dry Bones! Let these Earth Worms read their Portion, *Ephes 5.5. [For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.]*

6. Filthy Hypocrites, who have double Tongues and divided Hearts; these Stage Players in Religion,

^z Acts 2.37.

^a Heb.10.38,39.

^b Mat. 12.43---45.

^c 1 Cor.6.9,10.

who gave their Maker the Tongue, the Cap and Knee; for in Speech they profess much Love to God and Violence for Heaven, but in the mean while, in Hearts go after Covetousness and other Lusts. ^(d) Read your Doom, *you hollow hearted Hypocrites*, in the 24th Chapter of St. Matthew the 51st verse. [*He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*]¹³

In addition to specific groups, note that at one point, Tennent singles out the particular sin of adultery existing in the life of the 'formalist'. This is peculiar. One would expect a list of behaviors that typify the 'formalist'. Instead, Tennent specifically cites adultery as the *modus operandii* of the formalist. Obviously, adultery does not necessarily follow formalism. Tennent is a skillful preacher who does not make such mistakes. Therefore, I submit that when Tennent made this statement, he had a particular person in mind. Imagine Tennent looking down from his pulpit and addressing this person with these words:

What will become of the following sinners? . . . Formalists, who content themselves with a dead form of Religion; O! That such wou'd consider Seriously that saying of Christ, Mat.5.28 But I say unto YOU, *That whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.*¹⁴

^dEzek.33.31.

¹³Religious Violence, 39-41.

This is an exceptionally good technique for a minister whose aim is spiritual conviction of a sinner and not popularity.

Closing

The author closes very effectively with a command to obey, and a warning of a blessing and a curse from Deuteronomy 30:15-20, followed by a final exhortation from the epistle to the Hebrews:

See I have set before you this day, Life and Good and Death and Evil, in that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you mayest live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land whither you goest to possess it. But if your heart turn away, so that you wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: That you mayest love the LORD your God, and that you mayest obey his voice, and that you mayest cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days that you mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them (Deut. 30:15-20).

¹⁴Religious Violence, 39.

Let us Labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).

Amen.

This was an effective and dramatic closure for two reasons. First, the relevant Scriptures put an authoritative stamp of approval on his words. Second, Tennent's quote of the Deuteronomic Covenant was particularly relevant to this audience. In this covenant, Moses told his people of the conditions for living in the Promised Land in peace and prosperity, and warned of the curses that would follow those who were disobedient to God's commands. By his reference to this covenant, Tennent surely struck a resonant chord in this group of recent immigrants. This verse should make the congregation think not only of eternal blessings in heaven, but also of the temporal blessings on earth for those who follow God's commands.

I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you mayest live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land whither you goest to possess it.

Similarly, the congregation was also made aware of the curses that would accrue to the disobedient ON EARTH:

But if your heart turn away, so that you wilt not hear. . . I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land.

Closing with this Scripture must have been a particularly effective motivator to this group of struggling immigrants. This was a most effective platform for the final motivating thrust: "Let us Labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:11)."

Conclusion

Religious Violence is an evangelistic sermon that was designed to encourage people to press onward in the conversion process. In this sermon Tennent uses both the positive motivator of the rewards of heaven, as well as the negative motivator of the terrors of judgment and damnation. Effective literary and rhetorical devices predominate this message. 'Searching preaching' is also demonstrated in Tennent's intense application of the message to the audience, which is supported by lengthy interrogatory as well as specific references to each group within the congregation. Tennent's choice closing with the Deuteronomic Covenant which told of the temporal blessings that come with obedience to God's Laws as well as the temporal curses which result from disobeying God's

Laws must have been particularly effective with this group of immigrants.

Appendix 3 contains the sermon in its entirety.

CHAPTER 10

ANALYSIS OF SERMON:

*THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES CONSIDERED*¹

This sermon is an excellent example of Tennent's 'searching preaching'. This is the method that was the most effective in the evangelization of Boston, according to Rev. Mr. Prince.² This sermon is based on the text of Matthew 5:20, "*For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

Setting

Tennent made a preaching tour of New England during the winter of 1740-1741. This sermon was delivered in Boston during the evening lecture, January 27, 1741. The

¹Gilbert Tennent, *The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees Considered in a Sermon on Matth.V. 20. Preach'd at the Evening-Lecture in Boston, January 27. 1740,1.* (Boston: J. Draper for D. Henschman, in Cornhill, 1741). BA copy. Evans number 4821.

²See Chapter 6, "Searching Preaching" for details of this method and an eyewitness account of its effectiveness from the Rev. Mr. Prince.

morning of the lecture, *The New England Weekly Journal*, a Boston paper, devoted two columns on its front page to Tennent. The first article was a letter by Tennent to the author of the *Post Boy* in which Tennent defended leaving his home church to preach in Boston. The second article was a reprint of a private letter from someone who heard Tennent preach in Portsmouth, New-Hampshire. This person recommends "And if you or any of our Friends have not heard him, I can't acquit my self without recommending it to them and you most earnestly, if your Health will admit it."³ Such newspaper coverage may have increased the numbers who attended this Tuesday evening sermon.

By the time of this sermon, opposers to the revival had surfaced in New England. Tennent addresses such people in this sermon, referring to them as 'religious formalists'. Tennent compares them with righteous Pharisees who kept the Law through their own efforts, but who remained unconverted. Pharisees were strict in religious matters, but violently opposed Christ and his followers. Similarly, religious formalists also have a strict form of religion, but oppose the revival and its promoters. Note this in the following:

³Private letter, author's name deleted. *New England Weekly Journal*, Tuesday, January 27, 1741, No. 719.

A pharisaical Righteousness can neither prepare us for nor entitle us to eternal Blessedness; because it may consist with a governing Enmity against God, his Ways and People. This is evident from the Example of the *old Pharisees*, who not withstanding their *Strictness*, were virulent Opposers of Christ and his Followers. And here, *My Brethren*, Let me observe, That if this Work of GOD which is more remarkably begun in *New England* of late, be carried on, you will see some that profess the greatest Regard to Religion now, stand up and oppose it with implacable Hate. *Formalists* cannot brook the *Power of Religion*, our Lord and his Apostles were not opposed by any, so much as by that Sett [sp] of Men. Although *Pharisees* make a *fair Shew* in the *Flesh*, yet are the main Springs of their Obedience, mean and ignoble.⁴

This suggests that formalists are no more converted than the Pharisees.

Audience

In this sermon, Tennent was particularly concerned with the false security that people received from the "Half-Way Covenant", a practice that dominated many of the Congregational churches in New England. This covenant allowed people who had not experienced conversion to achieve a quasi-church membership and participate in the Lord's Supper (See Chapter 4, *Spiritual Problems in the Church*). In Tennent's estimation, such people are "secure sinners". In the introduction, Tennent attributes the decay of religion in New England to this practice:

⁴*Righteousness of Scribes*, 12.

Too many who have not a Righteousness exceeding the Scribes and Pharisees, are too easily admitted as Members of the visible Church.

The lax Method of Admission to sacred Communion, which has too generally obtained in the Protestant Churches, more especially of late, has been, I believe, one great Cause of the lamentable Decay of Religion in them!⁵

Tennent later displays his belief that the admission to the Lord's Supper by means of the Half-Way Covenant gives people a false sense of security or what he calls "foolish confidence." Tennent warns the congregation: "Think not that your being admitted to outward Ordinances will screen you from GOD'S Vengeance; this was the foolish confidence of the carnal Jews."⁶

After Tennent delivered this sermon, many people who had participated in the Lord's Table refrained from doing so. The Boston ministers did not know how to handle such scruples, as their ministry conventions dictated that the Lord's Table was a converting influence (See Chapter 4: Spiritual Problems in the Church).

Was Tennent correct in terms of restricting the Lord's Table to the converted, or were the Boston ministers correct in their belief that communion is a converting influence? Paul's first letter to the Corinthians says:

⁵*Righteousness of Scribes*, 3.

⁶*Righteousness of Scribes*, 8.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:28-31).

This Scripture points to self assessment before participating in communion. Man should "examine himself" so as to determine whether he eats and drinks "unworthily". He is warned to judge himself so that he will not be judged. This is highly suggestive of the need to examine oneself for evidence of conversion from sin to a new life prior to receiving communion. There is no Scriptural support for the idea of Communion being a converting influence. Therefore, this strongly suggests that Tennent was right.

Sermon Outline

1. Introduction (Dominating theme)
 - a. Scripture text
 - b. Burden
 - c. Background
2. Doctrine (Integrating thoughts)
 - a. Outline
 - b. Exegesis
 - c. Propositions
3. "Improvements"
 - a. Illumination: Congregation's lack of righteousness
 - b. Refutation: of false hopes. If you cannot describe your conversion, you are not converted.
 - c. Exhortation: to self examination
 - d. Invitation: to deeply convinced

Introduction

In the introduction, Tennent introduces the Scripture text, his burden for the congregation, and the background of the text.

Text

The Scripture text is taken from Matthew 5:20 in which Jesus says:

For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Burden

Tennent begins with a logical explanation of his burden for the people. The people must take the time and trouble to examine their states before God, and determine the basis they have for assuming they are effectually converted. Why? Tennent says:

If it be good, we need the comfort of it, in a World of Labour and Sorrow; if bad, we need to know it, that so we may be affected with the Miseries of it, and so with Earnestness use proper means to obtain an Escape. If Men know not the Miseries of their natural State, how shall they be duly affected with what they know not? And if they be not deeply affected, how can it be reasonably supposed that they will use Violence to take the Kingdom of God? And without holy Violence or Importunity, what Reason is there to expect an Interest in it?⁷

⁷Tennent, *Righteousness*, 2.

Background

Tennent describes the background of the target verse, which is the quality of righteousness that was characteristic of "good" Scribes and Pharisees. While some Pharisees were gross hypocrites, many diligently pursued religious matters. Tennent explains that the target verse concerns the *righteous* Pharisees. He also explains that in this verse, the *Kingdom of Heaven* does not represent the visible church, and takes the opportunity to assail the "lax Method of Admission to the sacred Communion". Tennent implies that such a convention gives men a false sense of eternal security which he seeks to remove:

[Although they may] obtain a Place in the *visible* Church, yet they shall in no case enter into the *invisible*, viz., the *Kingdom of Heaven*; all their Pleas and Pretences will be baffled and rejected, their Mouths shut, and their false Hopes turned into everlasting Dispair [*sic*] and Horror!⁸

Doctrinal Outline

All of Tennent's sermons consist of a three point doctrinal outline, which he calls "Propositions". In this case, the outline is as follows:

- I. The nature of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

⁸Tennent, *Righteousness*, 4

II. Wherein we must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees upon pain of death.

III. That which Confirms and Illustrates the Propositions.

Annotated Outline of Doctrine

I. The nature of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees

A. Blamelessness or Freedom from gross Crimes.

They were blameless:

1. In duties of worship
2. In prayer
3. In the veneration of God's name

B. A strict Conformity to the moral and ceremonial Laws.

1. In honesty
2. In chastity
3. In missionary activity

C. Examples of Righteousness in the Unsaved

1. Man in the gospel (Mark 10:17)
2. Foolish virgins (chaste and loyal)
3. Paul, before conversion
4. Application: Which of you exceeds the attainments of Paul?

II. Wherein we must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees upon pain of death

A. By imputation, which they rejected

1. They trusted their own righteousness
2. They rejected Christ
3. Instruction: "Those who receive the outward righteousness of CHRIST as Mediator, are first convinc'd by the Law and Spirit, of their Want (lack) of righteousness" (John 16:8,9)⁹.

B. By implantation, which they lacked. We must have an inward righteousness by infusion of the Holy Spirit or implantation.

1. Pharisees wanted new birth without holy principles
2. Pharisees served God in oldness of letter, but not in newness of spirit.
3. Their action was good, but it was performed by their own strength.

III. That which Confirms and Illustrates the Propositions

A. Pharisaical Righteousness does not answer:

1. The demands of the Law. Law demands inner conformity, not merely outward conformity.

⁹*Righteousness of Scribes, 9.*

2. The demands of the Gospel. Gospel demands faith and love.

B. Pharisaical righteousness does not prepare us for nor entitle us to eternal blessedness because it consists of enmity against God, His Ways and People.

1. Pharisees were strict, but virulent opposers to Christ and his followers.

2. (Present day) Religious formalists are also strict in outward appearances, but virulently oppose the revival. They are therefore, not converted. Causes of their outward strictness are:

a. Religious education

b. Lack of temptation. Although a snake has no venom in the winter, he is still a snake.

c. Their desire to have approval of men

d. Outward strictness affords peace of mind.

e. They are obedient 'as slaves' to escape the whip of eternal damnation.

f. They are obedient 'as hirelings' to receive wages of eternal life.

3. Because this outward obedience springs from selfish principles instead of from LOVE to GOD, it is "rotten at the core".

Improvement

In the doctrinal section, Tennent logically conveyed his information and used indirect language. For example, he used the words "Those who receive the outward righteousness of CHRIST as Mediator, are first convinc'd by the Law and Spirit, of their *Want* (lack) of righteousness" (John 16:8,9).¹⁰ However, in this section, Tennent seeks to make direct application of his message to the congregation, and will say "YOU". For example, "What do YOU think of your state towards GOD? Pray, have you a Righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or have you not?"¹¹

The Improvement section is divided into four headings. "Illumination", "Refutation", "Exhortation" and "Invitation." The following is an annotated outline of this section.

Annotated Outline of Improvement

I. Illumination of congregation's lack of righteousness

¹⁰*Righteousness of Scribes, 9.*

¹¹*Righteousness, 14.*

- A. Neglect of family devotions
- B. Neglect of secret devotions
- C. Neglect of church attendance
- D. Profanity of God's name
- E. Sabbath breakers. These are people who "violate his sacred rest".
- F. Habitually dishonest
- G. Unchaste
- H. Uncharitable
- I. Lukewarm about religion

II. Refutation of false hopes

A. False Hopes

1. "I do exceed the righteousness of the scribes."
2. "I believe and trust in Jesus."
3. "I am sincere. They were gross hypocrites."

B. Reply to false hopes.

1. You do not know faith if you cannot tell what it is, nor how you received it. (Here, Tennent is looking for a conversion narrative.)
 - a. You cannot tell what your faith does for you.
 - b. The devils have similar faith and tremble.
 - c. You have hypocritical faith.

2. You say you trust Christ, but it is with a whole heart and unholy practice.
3. You say you are sincere, but you were never without [faith].
4. [Faith] has cost you nothing.
 - a. No sorrow
 - b. No mourning
5. Then you are without [faith] still. (The implication is 'If you cannot describe your conversion, you are not converted.')
6. Your sincerity is mere 'moral earnestness' in seeking yourselves. This describes the Pharisees.

- III. Exhortation to self-examination. Does your righteousness exceed the Scribes and Pharisees?
- A. Aged persons?
 - B. Middle Aged persons?
 - C. Younger brethren, fourteen years and upwards?
 - D. Little children, six years and upwards? "You are not too young to mourn over your sins and come to Christ."
 - E. Formalists, publicans and Pharisees?
 - F. Secure sinners?
 - G. Slightly convinced?

IV. Invitation for deeply convinced.

There is a Balm of Gilead. "[Jesus] invites you that labor and are heavy laden to come to him."¹²

Motivating Thrust

Examine yourselves to see if your righteousness exceeds the Scribes and Pharisees. Then, pursue every effort to seek Jesus. "O don't rest, for Christ's sake, till Jesus be discovered and apply'd to your Souls!"¹³

Effective Homiletical Devices

Tennent's goal is to cause the congregation to examine their states before God, and determine the basis on which they expect to be saved. To accomplish this, he uses the appropriate scripture text, the appropriate sermon structure, and effective rhetorical devices. These are described below.

Appropriate Scripture Text

Many members of the audience believe themselves to be 'somewhat righteous' as a result of their quasi-church membership. In order to cause such people to examine their spiritual states, Tennent asks them to compare themselves

¹²*Righteousness of Scribes*, 18.

¹³*Righteousness of Scribes*, 18.

with the Scribes and Pharisees who also appear to be righteous. The Scripture text says "*That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matt. 5:20). This is an appropriate Scripture text for this theme.

Sermon Structure

The sermon structure itself assists the goal of self-examination. All of Tennent's sermons move from impersonal to personal, i.e., they begin logically and impersonally with an interpretation of Scripture, and then proceed to personal application. This is effective because once the cognitive processes accept the logical information, the behavioral implications will probably follow. To do otherwise would produce cognitive dissonance (See Chapter 6, *Searching Preaching*).

Effective Rhetorical Devices

Tennent uses several rhetorical devices that support his message. The most effective in this sermon are rhetorical questions, simile, vivid imagery, repetition, antithesis, interrogatory, and invectives.

Rhetorical Questions

In the following excerpt, Tennent confronts false hopes pertaining to the congregation's salvation. The false hopes are [1] beliefs in personal righteousness, [2] good parentage, [3] admission to communion, [4] church membership, and [5] inoffensive lifestyle.

In the following excerpt, Tennent provides an information statements and rhetorical questions to evoke self examination and efface false hopes. Note the number of times he uses the second person plural, 'you' and 'your' in order to evoke self-examination.

Refutation 1: False security of personal righteousness

[Statement]:[Paul] says of himself, That *if any Man thinketh, that he hath whereof he might trust in the Flesh, (i.e. in his own Righteousness) he more.* He further adds, That *he was of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of Hebrews; touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning Zeal, persecuting the Church; as touching the Righteousness which is in the Law, blameless. Well, my Fathers and Brethren, See what a dreadful Pitch in Religion this Pharisee came to, and yet was not so much as convinced!*

[Question] Which of **you** now exceeds the Attainments of this Man, while under the Curse of CHRIST?

Refutation 2: False security of hiding behind righteous parents:

[Statement] Don't say within **your** selves, that **you** have *Abraham* to your Father.

[Question] What will **your** good Parentage avail **you**, unless **you** walk in the Steps of their Simplicity,

Faith, and Holiness, but to aggravate **your** everlasting Pains? because of **your** rebellious and ungrateful opposing of the Light of their Instructions and Examples!

[Statement] May I not say unto **you**, as my Master once did to the *Jews*, *Ye are of your Father the Devil; for his Works you will do.* A Pagan could say, *Quoe avi et proavi*, &c. What our Parents and Grandparents have done, are not ours.

Refutation 3: False security of being admitted to communion:

[Statement] Think not that **your** being admitted to outward Ordinances will screen **you** from GOD's Vengeance; this was the foolish Confidence of the carnal *Jews*, who said, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, are these.* *Saul*, a Pharisee, was circumcised, and no doubt he partook of the Passover:

Refutation 4 and 5: False security of church membership, and an inoffensive lifestyle:

[Question] Do **you** depend upon the soundness of your Sect, and inoffensiveness of **your** Life?

[Statement] Why, *Saul* was of the *strictest* Sect of the *Jews*, and as to the Law, blameless.¹⁴

Simile and Vivid Imagery

In the following excerpt, note the effective use of simile that describes the foolishness of sinners who are unconcerned about their eternal state. Tennent says, "Its a sad Sight to behold how merrily [natural men] go on to

¹⁴*Righteousness of Scribes*, 7,8.

Damnation; like Fools in *Bedlam*, they sing and dance in their Shackles."¹⁵

Note also the effective use of vivid imagery of the insane singing and dancing in their shackles. Is this not a true picture of unsaved man driving blissfully to perdition? In this illustration, Tennent may have been attacking the public dancing of unconverted young men and women, a social practice that Whitefield addressed when he preached in New England just months before (See Chapter 2: Tennent's Life and Ministry).¹⁶

Repetition

In the following excerpt, Tennent tries to explain the necessity of the 'sharp Law work of conversion' in order to put to death the 'old self' in order to enable the New Birth (See Chapter 3, Morphology of Conversion). 'The Law' must convince man of his guilt so that he can 'die' to his unregenerate ways. As a result, conversion occurs, and the Law itself dies in the life of the man. Note how effectively Tennent conveys the idea of death with the repeated use of the word "dies".

¹⁵*Righteousness of Scribes*, 10.

¹⁶This was noted by Hopkins, a Yale student. See page 40 of this project for Hopkin's observations (Hopkins, 15).

Like Fools in *Bedlam*, they sing and dance in their Shackles: But when the Law comes, *Sin* revives in their View, both as to its Numbers, Aggravations, and Condemnation, like a Lyon [sp] rampant, ready every moment to devour them! Then, and not 'till then, the Sinner **dies** to himself, **dies** to the Law, **dies** to his former false Peace and Hope, and **dies** to all worldly Hopes, Fears, and Enjoyments! The Law slays him, and he thro' the Law, as an Instrument, open'd and applied, **dies** to the Law, as a Covenant of Works. In this Case the poor Creature cannot rest, 'till CHRIST be revealed and applied to his Soul, by the Word and Spirit of God.¹⁷

Repetition with Antithesis

In the next excerpt, Tennent uses both repetition and antithesis as he describes the 'old' vs. the 'new' in the New Birth.

From those that are born of the Spirit, **old** Things pass away, and all Things become **new**: Their old false Peace, false Hope, Hatred against God's Ways and People, Pride of Heart, Covetousness, and worldly Conversation pass away; and now they see divine Things in a **new** and affecting Manner, and have a **new** Pliableness [sp] of Will, readily¹⁸ to comply with the Terms of the Gospel, a **new** Run of their Affections to God as their Center, a **new** Tenderness of Conscience, a **new** Love to Enemies, a **new** and heavenly Conversation.¹⁹

Analogy

A good use of analogy can be seen in the following excerpt. In it, Tennent uses the analogy of stopping a

¹⁷*Righteousness of Scribes*, 10.

¹⁸Context suggests this should be 'ready to comply', not 'readily to comply'.

¹⁹*Righteousness of Scribes*, 12.

clock for the purpose of resetting it. Similarly, man must pause for an unbiased self-examination in order to reset himself so that New-Birth can occur.

When there is a Fault in the *main Spring* of a Clock, the Motion must be stopped for a Time, and the main Spring set right, before it will answer its Design in measuring of the Hours: And thus must it be with graceless Sinners; they must, by Examination and Conviction, be brought to a solemn Pause, and then get a new Principle of Action infused by the New-Birth, which will naturally and necessarily turn the free and general Byass [sp] of their whole Souls towards GOD, and so prepare them for, and dispose them to acceptable service.²⁰

Analogy with Vivid Imagery

An example of analogy with vivid imagery can be seen in the following excerpt. Tennent has just described the similarity of righteous Pharisees to religious formalists in that they both have outward conformity to the Law, but inwardly are unregenerate. In the following excerpt, Tennent explains that their outward appearance of religion could be due to the lack of temptation. Tennent compares the formalist to a rattlesnake. Even though such a snake is not poisonous in the winter, it does not mean that its nature has changed. It is not poisonous simply because of the cold temperature. However, when warmth comes, the snake is deadly.

²⁰*Righteousness of Scribes*, 11.

Some are regular in Life, thro' Want of much Temptation to the contrary. The Devil does not tempt the Secure much, least he should scare them out of his Clutches. While the strong Man armed keeps the House, all the Goods are in Peace. What tho' a Rattle-Snake does not spit its Venom in the Winter, for want of the warming Beams of the Sun, yet it has the poisonous Nature of a Snake still.²¹

Interrogatory

In order to effect self-examination and conviction, Tennent asks a series of questions:

What you think of your State towards GOD? Pray have you a Righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or have you not? Pause a while, my Brethren, and let your Consciences give an impartial Answer to this important Question: O Conscience! I charge thee, in the Name of the great GOD, to speak the Truth: Is it so, that our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, upon Pain of eternal Death? O what Terror does this speak to those, who habitually fall short of their moral Righteousness!

The Pharisees abounded in the Duties of Devotion: What will become of you then, who knowingly and generally neglect secret or family Devotion, or attending the Places of public Worship? Will not God's Wrath be poured out upon the Families that call not on his Name? If you despise those who are sent by Christ, do you not despise Christ who has sent them, and his Father also? If the Foolishness of Preaching (i.e. a simple Method of Preaching, from the Heart, without the Affectation of Wit or Eloquence, which is reckon'd, by the worldly Wise, Foolishness) be the appointed Mean of saving those that believe, then how shall those be saved who do not attend upon it?

The Pharisees had a great Veneration for the holy Name of GOD, and were strict Observers of the Sabbath. What then shall become of you wicked Creatures, who customarily prophane [sic] his holy Name, and violate

²¹Righteousness of Scribes, 13.

his sacred Rest? Surely the righteous GOD will not hold you guiltless.

Were the Pharisees *honest, chaste, charitable, zealous*? Then how dreadful is your State, who fall short habitually of those Hypocrites, upon whom our Lord denounced so many Curses? Are not some of you habitually dishonest, unchaste, uncharitable, and lukewarm about Religion? Does not a terrible Damnation await you? Surely the Lord will spew such sordid Wretches out of his Mouth, *i.e.* reject you with eternal Abhorrence.²²

In the above excerpt, Tennent has listed sins that are common in the church in order to cause people to reflect on their lack of righteousness and produce conviction. He addresses the following sins: Lack of righteousness in general, neglect of family devotions, neglect of secret devotions, neglect of church attendance, profanity of God's name, Sabbath breakers (These are people who "violate his sacred rest"), habitual dishonesty, lack of chastity, lack of charity, and a lukewarm attitude toward religion.

Emotional Appeal

In the above excerpt, note the emotional appeal that Tennent utters to encourage people to faithfully examine their consciences: "*O Conscience! I charge thee!*" Note also the interjection of terror as a motivator: "*O what Terror does this speak!*":

²²*Righteousness of Scribes*, 14.

Pause a while, *my Brethren*, and let your Consciences give an impartial Answer to this important Question: O Conscience! I charge thee, in the Name of the great GOD, to speak the Truth: Is it so, that our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, upon Pain of eternal Death? O what Terror does this speak to those, who habitually *fall short* of their moral Righteousness!²³

Terror and Invectives

Tennent seeks to motivate the most hardened sinners. He refers to them with the invective "You prophane Herd of Hardened Mortals". To motivate this 'herd', Tennent reaches for his cattle prod, "the Terrors".

You prophane [sic] Herd of *hardened* Mortals, who have not so much as the outward Form of Religion: Hear, with much Confusion and Trembling, your Damnation denounced by the Mouth of Christ, in the Text I am now discoursing upon; *For I say unto you* (who am the Truth and the life) *that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* All ye Publicans and Harlots, behold your dismal Doom expressed, 1 Cor. 6.19²⁴ [in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of

²³*Righteousness of Scribes*, 14.

²⁴This reference is probably a typesetter's error. I submit that Tennent was referring to 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. Additionally, I suggest that in the actual delivery of the sermon, Tennent read the actual Scripture verse. To simply announce the Scripture verse would have very little impact. For example, "All ye Publicans and Harlots, behold your dismal Doom expressed, 1 Cor. 6.9,10!" For this reason, I have added the text of the verse. This increases the intensity of the delivery.

themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God!]²⁵

Later, Tennent seeks to motivate sinners who have the appearance of religion, i.e., the "formalists" who are like publicans and Pharisees. For these, Tennent also uses the prod of "terrors" in verbiage that would equal the horrors of Edgar Allen Poe.

How wretched is the Case of all the *Formalists* in this Assembly? Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, ye make clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, while the inside is left unclean: You are like whited Sepulchers, which appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead Men's Bones, and Rottenness: Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how shall ye escape the Damnation of Hell? Behold, the Ax is laid to the Root of the Tree, every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the Fire.

All you *Publicans* and *Pharisees*, in this Assembly, apply to your own Consciences, the Threatening of our Lord in this Text, *Ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of GOD.* No! let the Devil, and your own false hearts, say what they will to flatter you; the Mouth of Truth says, That ye shall, in no Case, enter into the Kingdom of God. The Door of Heaven is shut against you, and seeing there is no *Purgatory*, where must ye go, why into the Kingdom of Death, of Darkness, of the Devil, of Damnation! There (if ye die *as ye are*) ye will suffer the Loss of the blessed God, and all the Sweets of Heaven. Now your Minds are blinded, your Consciences stupefied, your Hearts hardened, so that you don't perceive your Loss, and ye are amused with worldly Projects, and entertainments: But by and by, your minds will be enlightened to take a View of your dismal, dismal Loss! Your secure Consciences will be alarmed, to sting you with eternal Reflections, which ye can as little endure as avoid. Your cursed Hope,

²⁵*Righteousness of Scribes*, 15.

which makes you easy now, will then give Place to eternal Despair! GOD will rend your Confidence out of your Tabernacle, and bring you before the King of Terrors! You will be stripped naked of all your temporal Comforts, and not have so much as one Drop of Water to cool your flaming Tongues! The Springs of your now frozen Passion, will then be opened, and run with incessant, but useless Streams, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth!* Saith our dear Lord. Never did any so mourn over the untimely Bereavement of a dear Relative, as you will over your lost and damned Souls! But in vain! Now if you would sow in Tears, it might be of saving Service: But then it will be too late, too late! O when you think in the gloomy Vault, of the Calls, Warnings, and Entreaties you have had from GOD and Man, and of your willful Murder and Madness, in rejecting of them, how will it rend your cursed Souls, with the acutest Agonies, when you reflect how you have sold your Souls to the Devil, for a Thing of Naught, and taken such Pains to compass your own Ruin? You will be ready to tear your own Hearts out with indignation, and wish you had no Being!²⁶

Note that these paragraphs increased in intensity not only through imagery, but also through sound. In the first example, Tennent uses the rhythm of short phrases, each of which begin with the letter 'D'. I envision Tennent emphasizing these words as a bell would toll a death knell:

“Go into the Kingdom

of Death-

of Darkness-

of the Devil-

²⁶*Righteousness of Scribes*, 16,17.

Think often upon the Uncertainty of your Lives, the Uncertainty of the Spirit's Strivings, and the dreadful Consequences of expiring Convictions, before Conversion. When the Blossoms are nipped, what Expectation is there of Fruit? Don't rush to the Lord's Table, till ye receive that Jesus, who is there, represented.²⁷

Effects of this Sermon

This is a unique sermon in Tennent's evangelistic repertoire in that there is direct evidence of its effectiveness. This is seen by the following letter, which dates the change in the congregation as the end of January which coincides with the date of this sermon.

As to the church to which I belong---Within [²⁸] Months from the end of Jan 1740, 1 were *Threescore* joined to our *Communicants*: the greater Part of whom gave a more exact Account of the Work of the SPIRIT of God on their Souls in *Effectual Calling*, as described in the *Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, than I was wont to meet with before.²⁹

This shows the tremendous impact that this sermon had on the listeners. Not only did sixty people join themselves to the church as "Communicants", the majority could relate a conversion narrative as seen by statement, "The greater part. . . gave a more exact Account of the

²⁷*Righteousness of Scribes*, 18.

²⁸Manuscript unreadable.

²⁹Prince, *Christian History Vol. II*, 395.

Work of the SPIRIT of God on their Souls in *Effectual Calling.*"

In addition to the conversions, others restrained themselves from partaking in Communion as a result of Tennent's words. Note the testimony of Prince:

Besides *many others* I could not but have Charity for, who restrained from coming to the *Table* of CHRIST for want of a satisfying View of the Work of *Renovation* in them. Mr. Tennent being so exceeding strict in cautioning People from running into *Churches*, taking the sacred Covenant, and receiving the Lord's Supper the Seal thereof, 'till they had *saving Grace*.

Rev. Prince believed that others had experienced conversion and would have sought full church membership, but Tennent's sermon had discouraged them from doing so until they reached assurance:

Diverse [were] brought to very hopeful Dispositions, yea, some I doubt not, to embrace the SAVIOR in all his Offices, were through Fear and Darkness kept from coming into full Communion. Or otherwise, many more I believe, would have enter'd; who had they the like experiences a *Year before*, I doubt not would have readily offered themselves, and we should have as readily received them, and would now, as some of the most hopeful Christians. So far did Mr. Tennent's awakening Ministry shake their Hopes and hinder them, that those whom I apprehended to be *thirsty*, and thought myself obliged to encourage, I found the Impressions of his Preaching had discouraged.³⁰

³⁰Prince, *Christian History Vol. II*, 396.

Additionally, Tennent was effective in warning those who enjoyed full membership (communion) in the church to examine themselves for evidence of conversion. Such people also were apprehensive about partaking the ordinance, and restrained themselves:

Yea, some who had been in *full Communion* were made so suspicious of themselves, as to refrain from partaking; and I had no small pains to remove their Scruples.³¹

Prince describes those who had been convicted and effectually converted under Tennent's ministry.

However, in many of these People, their *Convictions* in a Judgment of Charity, appeared by the same SPIRIT to be carried further than an awakening View of their Sins, their Sinfulness and Misery; even to what the *Assembly's Catechism*, agreeable to *Scripture*, calls an *enlightening their Minds in the Knowledge of CHRIST*, or clear, lively and attractive Views of his perfect Suitableness, All Sufficiency and Willingness as the SON of GOD incarnate and *Mediator*, to receive them, and by his Merits, Intercession, Grace and Spirit to reconcile them to the holy God, and save and make them completely and eternally holy and happy, tho' now the Chief of Sinners: And in such Views as these he melted their frozen Hearts, *renewed their Wills*, overcome them with *Affection* to Him, and *perswaded* [sic] and *enabled them to embrace Him* in his.³²

Conclusion

Righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees is an important evangelistic sermon in that objectively verifiable

³¹Prince, *Christian History*, Vol.II, 397.

³²Prince, *Christian History* Vol. II, 397.

historical evidence exists that proves the effectiveness of Tennent's sermon. Tennent's goal was to remove the false sense of security that many church people had about their salvation. To build his case, Tennent chose an appropriate Scripture, and used a suitable sermon structure. His message was supported by the copious use of effective rhetorical devices that encouraged self-examination and effaced false security. Tennent was also effective in challenging the Half Way Covenant in the minds of many of the congregants, who restrained themselves from partaking of the ordinance as a result of Tennent's preaching. Many gave evidence that they had experienced conversion by giving testimony in a conversion narrative.

The sermon in its entirety is in Appendix 4.

CHAPTER 11

FROM THE GRAVE, TENNENT SPEAKETH

This chapter serves as a conclusion to this project. Its objective is to assimilate the lessons learned from the previous chapters into a cohesive unit so as to declare Tennent's unique contributions to contemporary ministry.

Since conversion is at the heart of a spiritual awakening, the Great Awakening provides an excellent laboratory for investigating the morphology of conversion as well as the evangelistic techniques that are instrumental in effecting the process of conversion. Gilbert Tennent was at the heart of the awakening in the Middle Atlantic colonies, and was very instrumental in the New England Awakening during the winter of 1740-1741. Because of his effectiveness in the conversion of many thousands of men, women and children, it behooves ministers to examine his ministry methods in order to adapt the relevant ones to their own ministry setting.

Conversion Paradigm

The Conversion Decision Process

The most salient difference between conservative ministers of Tennent's time and conservative ministers of today is the understanding of the morphology of conversion. Among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists during Tennent's time, the belief was that conversion was a slow process. Today, the dominant thought is that conversion is a decision.

While it is true that conversion involves a decision, behavioral psychologists recognize that there is a decision making process. If we regard conversion as more of a process than an event, we will maximize the time available within the worship service to enable the people to engage in the decision making process. This can be achieved, as was suggested in Chapter 3, by:

1. Purposeful Preaching: The message should be so clear that the people understand what they should do to comply with God's word. This implies the use of relevant illustrations and applications throughout the sermon. This gives the people time to process the information and make an appropriate decision.

2. Invitation for Inquirers: In addition to an evangelistic invitation for people who have made decisions,

it is recommended that an invitation be given for "inquirers." After meetings, private consultations with a minister, and response cards all assist people in making an informed conversion decision.

3. Conservation of Decision: Instructional classes should be available to both new converts as well as inquirers. The people need to understand the importance of Bible study, prayer and daily quiet time with the Lord in order to receive assurance of their conversion.

The Tripartite Nature of Conversion Decision

Tennent saw conversion as a comprehensive process that includes the person's cognitions, emotions and actions. This tripartite nature of the conversion decision (cognitions, emotions, actions) should be taken into consideration when in the proclamation of the Word, and in the evangelistic invitation. Evangelistic invitations that appeal simply to the emotions will probably not result in lasting decisions, because of the transitory nature of emotions. Similarly, evangelistic invitations that appeal to logic alone are not necessarily effective either. For example, it is logical to accept Christ as Savior when doing so results in eternal life. However, there are expectations of Christians, in terms of church attendance,

and behavioral changes. The person who made a decision based on logic may simply reconsider his decision and fall away from the church.

When an evangelistic appeal takes into consideration the tripartite nature of the conversion decision, the cognitions will be enlightened, the emotions will be engaged, and the will activated. Tennent engaged in these three spheres of man's personality by logical exposition of Scripture (cognitive thrust). He engaged the emotions by his emotional delivery as well as the frightening imagery of the "terrors" for which he was famous. However, he also applied the "balm of Gilead" to sin-sick souls when he told the people of the love of Christ. Tennent noted harvests of souls both when he preached the terrors as well as at sacramental times when the message concerned the love of Christ (emotional thrust).

Tennent also appealed to the people's will (volitional thrust). For example, he concluded *The Necessity of Religious Violence* with Deuteronomic Covenant (Deut. 28). This was a covenant that promised the Hebrew immigrants blessings or curses in their new land, depending in whether or not they would obey the Lord. This must have been an effective motivator to the struggling immigrants of colonial America.

Assurance of Conversion

Tennent saw an awakening in his ministry when he modified the conversion paradigm of his time to include a supernatural experience with God that resulted in assurance. He eschewed the idea that conversion was an affirmation of faith in the tenets of Scripture. He denied the idea that conversion can be reduced to a decision. What Tennent reaped from this method of conversion was not "decision cards", but people whose spirits had been illuminated through an *experience* with God.

People who object to experiential conversions may insist that one does not need to experience *anything* in order to be saved. This may be true. However, when assurance of salvation *is* experienced as a result of man's spirit coming into contact with the Holy Spirit, conversion cannot be denied.

Ministers should refrain from assuring people that they are saved. Man has no infallible knowledge of another person's salvation. Since only God can see into a person's soul, assurance should only come from God. The minister can be instrumental in people's receiving assurance by encouraging them to take part in Bible study and prayer as well as personal devotions and daily quiet time with the Lord.

A corollary of the experiential conversion is the idea that people can have an ongoing experiential relationship with God. One problem with many of today's churches is that very few teach people how to press into a closer relationship with God. This is a problem.

People have a spiritual hunger to experience God. This can be seen in their desire for worship services that lead them into the presence of God. In his book *Putting an End to Worship Wars*, Dr. Towns notes certain trends that have been occurring in worship since World War II. Included in his list are the following:

1. Christians are experiencing a growing thirst for God.
2. Christians are experiencing a growing thirst for worship.
3. The atmospheric presence of God is increasingly felt in worship.¹

Ministers are responding to the people's desire for an experience with God by making adaptations to the music ministry. While this change is applauded, the writer

¹Elmer Towns, *Putting an End to Worship Wars* (Nashville: Broadman, 1997), 140-142.

questions whether this enough. People should know that they are hearing God's words when Scripture is being read, and when the message is being preached. They should know that they are responding to God's words when they make a decision based on the message that was preached.

However, should people's experience of God be limited to Sunday and midweek worship services? Should it not be the minister's duty to teach the congregation how to press in to God at all times, to feel his presence, to sense his love, and to be guided by his directions?

Danger of an Unconverted Ministry

Perhaps the reason why people have never experienced God is because their ministers have never done so. Tennent called such ministers unconverted, and said they are a danger to the ministry. The writer believes that there are good people, saved people in the ministry who have never had an experience with God. However, the writer agrees with Tennent that such people are a problem in the ministry because they can never lead men and women to a higher plane with God because they have never traveled to this plane themselves. On this subject, George Whitefield recorded in his journal:

[Gilbert Tennent] convinced me more and more that we can preach the gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts.²

It is also important for ministers to have an experiential relationship with God because only then can they relate compassionately to people who are under soul distress. When people's souls are crying out for sustenance, ministers without an experiential relationship with Christ neither understand, nor have anything to offer. As Tennent said,

Poor Christians are stunted and starved who are put to feed on such bare pastures, on such "dry nurses," as Rev. Mr. (Arthur) Hildersham justly calls them. It's only when the wise virgins sleep that they can bear with those dead dogs who can't bark; but when the Lord revives His people, they can't but abhor them.³

In the above excerpt, Tennent notes the animosity that arises between a person who is spiritually starved and his unconverted minister. In Tennent's day, people had very little choice in which church they attended. Ministers were few and far between in the early eighteenth century. However, in our day in America, people have a buffet of churches from which to choose, and they can come and go as they please.

²Whitefield, *Journals*, 347,348.

³*Danger*, 383.

The writer suspects that the ministers with no experience in the supernatural will see a decline in church attendance as the people move to charismatic churches where they CAN experience God. The Southern Baptist denomination has reported a decline in church numbers for the last ten years.⁴ However, charismatic churches have been experiencing growth worldwide.⁵ If we are losing potential church members to the charismatic churches, it is time to assess why. While the charismatic churches are sorely lacking in doctrine, they are nevertheless meeting a spiritual need in the people, that of an experiential relationship with God.

⁴ An internet site reports the following statistics based on the Gallup poll: "The only really dramatic, significant change in the Gallup data is a decline in the proportion of Americans who identified themselves as Southern Baptists. From 10% in 1993, the figure declined steadily to 6% in 2001, a change greater than the margin of error, and a change verified by data from other sources. In fact, the Southern Baptist Convention itself, reported a membership decline in 1998, and for other years, in which it has reported growth, the reported growth has been far smaller than the national population growth." <<http://www.adherents.com>>.

⁵ Stanley Burgess, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 287.

Sermon Preparation

Contemporary ministers have much to learn from Tennent regarding sermon preparation. Many of today's sermons spring from a given minister's opinion that is loosely substantiated by a running diatribe of unrelated Scripture verses. A Tennent sermon, however, is an exposition of a single text of Scripture using deductive reasoning. In his book *Anointed Expository Preaching*, Dr. Olford says "True 'heaven-sent' revival and aggressive evangelism will only come when there is a return to [expository] preaching and obeying of God's inerrant Word."⁶ We need to return to expository preaching if we want to see revival.

Another contemporary problem is that so many sermons lack focus or purpose, making them dry and ineffective. In his book *Preaching With Purpose*, Jay Adams declares the importance of purposeful preaching, and laments the lack thereof in contemporary ministry:

There is a need to examine and stress purpose because there is so much purposeless preaching today in which the preacher has only the vaguest idea of what he wants to achieve. . . . The amazing lack of concern for purpose among homileticians and preachers has spawned a brood of preachers who are dull, lifeless, abstract, and impersonal; it has obscured

⁶Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1998), 2.

truth, hindered joyous Christian living, destroyed initiative, and stifled service for Christ.⁷

A Tennent sermon could never be described as dry and ineffective. All his sermons are purpose driven. There is a single dominating theme and motivating thrust in each of his messages.

Sermon Delivery

Tennent's sermons show a dynamic preacher who poured his heart and soul into his messages. Unlike Jonathan Edwards who spoke in low monotones, Tennent thundered his messages. His words illuminated the text with vivid imagery. As Finley observed:

Hell from beneath was laid open before [the sinner], and destruction hath no covering; while the heavens above gathered blackness, and a tempest of wrath seemed ready to be hurled on the guilty head.⁸

Perhaps because of the scope of extra-pulpit ministry with which the minister is challenged today, he does not have the time to perfect his sermon with effective literary and rhetorical devices to make it memorable and give it beauty. This was not the case with Tennent. A Tennent message is more than literature. It is a work of art. He

⁷Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 1.

⁸Finley, "Memoirs of Gilbert Tennent", 402.

makes appropriate use of rhetorical devices such as vivid imagery, antitheses, repetition, direct address, and interrogatives that support his theme. Such attention to detail gives his sermons symmetry and beauty.

Sermon Methods

Terrors of the Lord

One of Tennent's unique contributions to contemporary ministry is conversion by use of "terrors." Tennent fearlessly used 'terrors' to shake people out of their sleepy spiritual security. The awakenings that resulted are proof of the effectiveness of this tactic.

Many contemporary ministers eschew such preaching tactics. However, several noted ministers including Adrian Rogers and Stephen Olford have reported the greatest harvest of souls after sermons on judgment. Furthermore, Dr. Ted Rendall, Chancellor of Prairie Bible Institute says that their study showed the majority of their ministry students were converted after a sermon on judgment.⁹

⁹Interviews with Dr. Stephen Olford and Dr. Ted Rendall, October, 2002, Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching, Memphis, TN. According to Dr. Rendall, each new student was given a survey to determine the subject of the sermon to which they attributed their conversion. Each year that this survey was given, the results were the same. Ministry students attributed their conversion to a sermon on judgment. Dr. Adrian Rogers told institute students that his greatest harvest of souls was after a sermon on

The writer does not suggest that the "terrors" should be a dominant focus in one's preaching at all times. We are called to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Olford, Rogers and Rendall all agree on this point. However, despite the fact that Olford and Rogers preach comprehensively, in their experience, the message that evoked the greatest harvest of souls did in fact concern eternal judgment. What is also important to note is that these men do not avoid messages on judgment.

The writer recently saw an interview of a pastor from a "seeker friendly" church. This pastor avoided sermons relating to judgment or the wrath of God. He said, "Sermons such as 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' are no longer relevant to today's audiences. It would be far more effective to preach on the topic, 'I Went Away on Vacation and Returned Feeling Empty.'"

Tennent was never afraid to tell his congregations about the eternal consequences of their sinful state. We should not neglect this either, if we are truly going to effect evangelistic decisions.

judgment. Dr. Stephen Olford had a similar experience at Calvary Baptist Church in New York City.

Searching Preaching

"Searching Preaching" is another of Tennent's very effective ministry methods. Most contemporary sermons lack the intense application, the 'searching preaching' that evoked self-examination in his congregations. The New England revival of 1740-1, especially as it occurred in Boston was a direct result of this method.

Tennent's Character

Tennent is a man who preached fearlessly and faithfully. Bitter opposition from the enemies of revival did not discourage him. In fact, this opposition may have served to galvanize his determination to awaken others. Neither bitter opposition nor bitter weather stopped Tennent as he went on horseback from town to town in New England during one of its most severe winters. Such determination to evangelize despite physical hardship is a hallmark of great evangelists. David Brainerd suffered similarly to evangelize the natives of New Jersey, and lost his life in the process. George Whitefield's health also suffered as he evangelized in his travels through the American colonies on horseback. How do our present hardships compare with what these men suffered?

Conclusion

Tennent's unique contributions are his experiential conversion paradigm, and his two ministry methods to assist conversion. These include the "terrors", which is intended to frighten and convict the unsaved, and an intense application of the message which has been called "searching preaching." These methods were particularly effective because of his solid biblical exposition, copious use of rhetorical devices, and strong delivery method. Despite these methods, Tennent would have been totally ineffective without his courageous character that kept him going despite opposition and physical hardships.

If we are to learn from Tennent, we must have the courage to examine present paradigms, and be willing to change. Additionally, we must always have the courage and character to preach "Thus says the Lord!" both when it is popular and when it is not.

APPENDIX 1

PREFACE TO
A SOLEMN WARNING TO A SECURE WORLD
FROM THE GOD OF TERRIBLE MAJESTY,
OR THE PRESUMPTUOUS SINNER DETECTED,
HIS PLEAS CONSIDERED AND HIS DOOM DISPLAY'D¹

Candid Reader,

I am sensible that the subject insisted on in the following sheets is none of the most grateful and pleasing to corrupt and degenerate nature, and therefore, if I have aimed at my own honor, I have pursued a wrong method to attain or secure it in choosing this so grating and disgusting a subject, and in treating upon it in such a *pointed stile*. But if it is not the most pleasing, I dare be bold to assert that it is one of the most suitable, necessary and profitable; considering the general and lamentable security that prevails so exceedingly among the children of this generation.

Although the unjust censures of ungodly people are oftentimes so far from being afflictive to me, that they

¹ This text is taken from the 1735 edition located in Special Collections of Speer Library at Princeton Theological Seminary.

afford matters of consolation (Matt. 5:12²). They can't please me better than by giving me the honor of an unjust abuse, except they turn to the blessed JESUS. On the contrary, their praises make me suspicious (with one of the ancients) that I have done something amiss. Yet as to the detractors and aspersers themselves, I cannot but be sorrowful for the sin they contract and the danger they incur by their unjust reproaches! To prevent both of which, I thought it needful to answer to some general objections which I foresaw would (according to human probability) be leveled against the following composure.

And perhaps some may object against the matter of it, as well as against the pointed manner of expression, that both are too terrible. What I have advanced, I think I have proved by plain Scripture evidence. I hope the objector will have more modesty than to find fault with the Sacred oracles, because they don't suit his palate; but if waving that antiquated, though graceful virtue, he will fall soul on the holy Scriptures, I wonder not that he censures me; and as I wonder not at his reflections against myself, so I mind them not any otherwise, than so as to

² (Matthew 5:10) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

esteem them, as a pearl in my crown, as a badge of honor and a cause of triumph. But more particularly, the truth is, such be the miseries of presumptuous and impenitent sinners, in this, and especially in the next world, that what I have offered comes far short of an equal, much less of an excessive description of them. It is a just and received maxim that heaven and hell don't admit a hyperbole. Indeed, a cherub's tongue or quill could scarce expand or display them sufficiently. Conceive of God perfectly, and then you may perfectly conceive of and describe His anger. But this is impossible for a finite understanding as Zophar informs us (Job 11:7,8,9). Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven. What canst thou do? It is deeper than Hell. What canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea! Friend, thou shalt know by experience, either by a sound conviction here, or by a dreadful condemnation hereafter, that I have not equaled, much less exceeded the sorrows and pains of the damned state, in the description I have given of them.

As to the sharpness of the style, I shall only offer this brief apology- that the nature of the subject treated of, and the security of the world require it. And instead

of retracting it, I could wish it were much more pointed- it falls so far short of my desire this way. And though I freely acknowledge that planting and watering are nothing to purpose that the most solemn matter and acrid style, will not avail without the divine benediction. Yet in the mean time I believe that God ordinarily uses instruments most suited to the work he designs to accomplish. Blunt instruments (in my opinion) are not suited to pierce hard hearts, or alarm secure souls.

But to give a satisfactory reply, to this objection complexly considered, if possible, I shall offer to your consideration the sentiments of some great lights of the Protestant Church upon this head, with some reasons they advance to confirm them by. Dr. Stillingfleet, in one of his sermons upon that text, 2 Corinthians 6:11. "*Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" has these words: "That if this reason does not persuade men, there is no reason to expect any other should, if almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite justice cannot affright us, if a judgment to come can't make us tremble, and eternal misery leave no impression upon us, what arguments or methods can we imagine would reclaim us from our sins?"

Bishop Hopkins, in his sermon upon Hebrews 10:30³ has these very memorable expressions, page 367,8. "There are two principle attributes of God, which the Scripture propounds to us as the most powerful and efficacious motives to refrain us from sin, and they are His mercy and His justice. Mercy, though it be a soft, yet it is a strong argument to encourage us to purity and holiness, Romans 2:4⁴. He that can encourage himself in his wickedness, upon the consideration of the infinite free grace of God, doth spurn these very bowels that yearn towards him, and strikes at God with His golden scepter; yea, tears abroad those wounds that were at first opened for him, and casts the blood of the Savior back again in His face. But because ingenuity is perished from off the Earth, and men are more generally apt to be wrought upon by arguments drawn from fear than love, therefore the Scripture propounds to us the dreadful consideration of the justice of God, arrayed in all the terrible circumstances of it-- that if mercy won't allure us, justice may affright

³ (Hebrews 10:30) "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

⁴ (Romans 2:4) "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

us from our sins. As those who are to travel through wilderness and deserts carry fire with them to terrify wild and ravenous beasts to secure themselves from their assaults, so doth the great God who hath to deal with brutish men- men more savage than the wild beasts-- He kindles a fire about Him, and appears to them in flames and fury, so that he might fright them from their bold attempts, who otherwise would be ready to run upon his neck, and "*the thick bosses of his bucklers*" (Job 15:26).

There is a strange dullness and stupor seized us that we can no longer keep waking when we are shook, and therefore, as we used to apply fire and burning coals to lethargic persons to awaken them, so we have need to heap coals of fire upon men's heads, to speak with fiery tongues, and thunder woe and wrath, and judgments against them, that we may rouse the secure and stupid world, and scorch them into life and sense.

Learned Mr. Boyle⁵ has these expressions in his treatise upon the torments of hell, page 255. "That the

⁵ A penciled notation in this first edition volume challenges the spelling of this man's name. It says the man's name was Boyes. This volume says its original owner was Charles Tennent, although the notation could have been from a later owner.

forethoughts of future punishments are the most likely means to excite our endeavors to prevent it."

He adds a weighty pungent reason to confirm his sentiments. "For (says he) this is an argument suited to one of the strongest passions of human nature, our fears. Nay, its almost the only argument that sensual and secure sinners seem at first capable of being affected and moved by. If we endeavor to reclaim them to their duty, by setting before them the endearing obligations of divine love—This is an argument that may indeed touch an ingenuous mind, but it is unlikely to make little impression upon an unthankful and stupid heart. If we would entice them to the paths of holiness, by proposing to them the spiritual joys that attend them, alas they neither understand nor relish them. If we would win and attract them by displaying the glories of heaven before their eyes, the objects are too sublime and spiritual for their gross affections to aspire to: so that we have no argument so proper as this, to set before them the Torments of Hell. For these are the most easily understood and conceived, and if seriously believed and considered, they carry the most irresistible force to awaken the consciences of the most stupid sinners, and convince them the necessity of flying from the wrath to come. For who can dwell with devouring

fire? For who can dwell with everlasting burnings? This is an argument that reaches the Principle of Self Preservation, so deeply rooted in our natures, that strongly prompts us to flee with all possible speed, from what we apprehend to be the greatest and most certain evil. So that if any argument can make impression on an obdurate sinner, it must be this drawn from the prospect of the eternal vengeance, as hardest metals are soonest melted by the fire.

I might add a number of more great names and arguments, but to avoid prolixity, and also because this objection is afterwards considered, I shall proceed to another objection, which is this. Possibly some may object against the method, that it is perplexed and confused. I answer that perhaps the prolixity of the discourse, and the numerousness of the heads contained in it, makes it appear more so than it really is, when the whole frame, and relation of the several parts to each other is complexly considered. Again, I confess that my design was rather to profit a plainer Order of Men, than to please critics and curious persons whose most notable talent is to condemn all, but what they do themselves. If I know anything of my own heart, my scope was rather to wound the heart than to tickle the fancy.

If any should object against the prolixity of the following discourse, I answer, that the matter treated of is various, though the main scope and principle subject is but one, and many of the heads are succinctly and briefly handled, so that I hope the well inclined reader will be rather diverted by a grateful variety, than surfeited and tired by a tedious prolixity; and that the principle points treated of may be found with more ease and expedition, I have annexed by an index, by consulting which the reader may turn to what suits his inclination best.

If any should again object, that considering the meanness of the whole composure, that is but a piece of Pride and Presumption (in so critical and censorious an Age) to expose so young a production to public light; I desire those gentlemen to consider, whether they are not too bold and precipitant in passing such a hasty judgment upon the secret springs of another's actions, which it's God's prerogative and his only (who is *Cardiognostos*, the Searcher of the Hearts) to know immediately and infallibly? And pray, let them consider, that all men have not the same taste, *Trahit sua quemq; Voluptas*: Men's fancies as their features are various, and fancy through our sad degeneracy has too much the ascendant over our judgment: Others may admire what you disdain. *Pro Captu Lectoris habent sua*

Fata Libelli. Books have their different fates according to their reader's fancies.

Further, is it not necessary that every member of Christ's mystical body, should labor to advance the interest of his kingdom, according to their capacity and opportunity? But more especially, those of a public character? The widow's mite was kindly accepted and put into the treasury, though very small and the donor commended, Mark 12:42,43. We don't find that those poor people who could not bring gold and silver and purple, if they did but bring goat's hair, and badger's skins for the service of the temple; I say we don't find that such, and their offerings were rejected. No, but on the contrary, they were accepted, Exodus 35:5, 6, 23. If so, then perhaps a melancholy prospect of the dangerous security, that the generality of mankind are involved in, with an earnest desire after their conviction and conversion and salvation, will be found in the general judgment to be the principle occasion of the composure and publication of the following sheets. I profess that when I preached at Amboy the substance of this tract, in the same order and diction, that it now appears in to public view, I had not thoughts of ever letting it see a brighter light, than the audience that first heard it, but that it should sink with others of

like tendency, I had preached there, and in other places that which I am pastorally related to, in a dark obscurity of silent oblivion. But some opposition being made against some things I had delivered and being desired to give a copy of what I had preached, while I was transcribing the original paper, the suitableness of the subject, to the present secure state of the most of the gospelized world, presenting itself to my mind, had some influence upon me; I was inclined to think, that were these heads already proposed, further enlarged upon, with the addition of some others, they might be serviceable in the hand of Christ to awaken and direct some weaker people who were destitute of better helps. Now after having enlarged the discourse, I was induced by the importunity of some friends, to permit its publication, and thereafter by this consideration, that if it should please almighty God to call me off the fleeting stage of Time, by Death, I might leave a small, a poor man's legacy, to my hearers at Amboy, New Brunswick, and other places, either to convince or condemn the impenitent, and to support and direct such as had learned of the Father, to know the truth as it is in Jesus.

I am not insensible that those very persons, for whose good and benefit this tract was principally composed, and to whom it is especially directed, are like to be most

displeased with the matters contained in it, for many men are so in love with their delusive ease, that they are willing and fond to purchase it at the dearest rate, even at the cost of their present and future happiness; and as they are willingly ignorant of their present danger, and future misery; so they hate and oppose the most direct and awakening methods to correct the one, and prevent the other; and therefore I would earnestly beg these few requests, of the Christless and presumptuous reader, for Christ's sake, and for his own soul's sake, (1) That he would read the whole before he condemn the part. (2) That he would weigh the composure, and its several parts, not in the scales of fancy or prejudice, but in the balances of Scripture, and right reason. And (3) That he be earnest with God by humble supplication, for light and direction.

But I know not how to finish this prefatory discourse, without the addition of a particular address to those of my hearers, that are yet in a state of sin and security.

Beloved brethren, you have often heard your danger described, you have had many a Call, by the Word, and Providence of God, as well as by your own Consciences, and are you not awakened yet? O strange! O mournful! Others have been (through grace) convinced and changed effectually

by the means you enjoy, and won't these be a witness against you at the tribunal of Christ? What will you be able to say in your own vindication? Then won't blushing and confusion cover you, and guilty silence be your answer? What, does the word prove a savor of life unto life to others, and of death unto death to you? O dreadful! What do you intend to do dear brethren? Will you sleep forever? Will you sleep till death and hell awake you? Or do you think that you may go to heaven in this slumber of carnal security? If you do, you shall find yourselves miserably mistaken! (as is fully proved in the following tract). *"Be not deceived brethren, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent (and they only) "take it by force"*, Matthew 11:12. Let me address you as the prophet Elijah did the people of Israel, 1 Kings 18:21. *"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."* Or as the shipmaster to Jonah, who was fast asleep in the midst of a great tempest, Jonah 1:5⁶. *"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not"* (verse 6). It's a just and pertinent

⁶ (Jonah 1:5) "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep."

note of Mr. Henry, upon this passage of Scripture, "That those who sleep in a storm may well be asked what they mean?" Brethren, you sleep in a greater storm than Jonah did; that only concerned the body, but this the precious soul; that a temporal, but this an eternal death. You are (whether you know it or not sensibly) every moment ready be swallowed up by the boisterous billows of God's justly incensed ire, and the vessel of your souls like to be broken by a dreadful inundation of His vindictive fury and revenge (Deuteronomy 32:41⁷, 35⁸; Romans 12:19⁹). And yet will you sleep, what metal are you made of? What God do you fear? Or are you deaf to all the menaces of Heaven?" Will not the terrors of an eternal God and an eternal Hell make you afraid? What mean you? Are you wholly lost to sense, to reason, and to conscience? Are you degenerated into beasts? Or petrified into stones? Are you covered with the Leviathan's scales that no arrow from the bow of

⁷ (Deuteronomy 32:41) "when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me."

⁸ (Deuteronomy 32:35) "To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."

⁹ (Romans 12:19) "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

God will pierce you? Mayn't the example of Jonah's fellow mariners make you ashamed? Jonah 1:5, "*Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man to his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship, into the sea to lighten it of them.*" But perhaps you mock at fear, and are not affrighted, though the heavens look black, and God's lightnings and thunders, from blazing, trembling Mount Sinai, flash and groan, and roar hideously! Though God's law condemn you, and your own consciences tell you, that you shall surely perish, if you die in the same state you are now in, yet you boldly, or rather shall I say impudently, or stupidly brave it out in the face of an angry heaven! And "*run upon the thick bosses of God's bucklers*", and are not afraid when God's great ordnance is leveled at your naked bosom. You won't be persuaded by any importunity to cast these goods out of the ship, (as the mariners did) which will, if retained, sink it in death; I mean your darling lusts which you must forsake or perish (Matt. 5:29¹⁰). Again, the affrighted mariners "*cried every one to his God*" (verse 5). Why don't you awake, poor souls, and cry every one of you to God, with the utmost

¹⁰ (Matthew 5:29) "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

vehemence, as the disciples of Christ did in a storm, when the waves were like to overwhelm the vessel, "Lord save us, we perish!" (Matt. 8:25). Sirs, suffer me to accost you in the language of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 5:14.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". "For the time past of our life may suffice us, to have wrought the will of the gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries", 1 Peter 4:3. "Awake to righteousness and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame", 1 Corinthians 15:34. "And especially knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep". But I can't in regard of you add the Apostle's reason (Romans 13:11¹¹): "For now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed." No brethren! I am obliged in faithfulness to God, and love to you, to tell that inasmuch as you did not, and now do not believe, that your Damnation is nearer than when ye first heard the gospel of Christ and salvation by His blood; because of your unbelieving obstinacy and presumptuous security.

¹¹ (Romans 13:11) "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Awake, awake Sinners, stand up and look where you are hastening, lest you drink of the hand of the Lord, the dregs of the cup of his fury; the cup of trembling, and wring them out", Isaiah 51:17.

Awake ye drunkards, and weep and howl", Joel 1:5. For what can you expect (so continuing) but to drink of that cup of trembling I but now mentioned.

Awake ye profane swearers, and remember ye will not get a drop of water to cool your cursing, cursed tongues in Hell, when they and you shall flame in the broad burning Lake (Luke 16:24¹²). God has said He will not hold you guiltless, "that take His name in vain", Exodus 20:7.

"Awake ye unclean adulterers, and whoremongers, and remember that without speedy repentance, your dismal abode shall be ever with unclean devils, the soul of a God shall avenge upon you. Jeremiah 5:8,29, "every one neighed after his neighbour's wife...Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Awake, ye Sabbath breakers and reform; or God will break you upon the wheels of His vengeance, and torture you

¹² (Luke 16:24) "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

eternally upon the rack of His justice, Nehemiah 13:16, 17, 18¹³.

And let all other sorts of profane sinners be entreated to awake out of sleep and consider their danger.

Awake ye covetous griping Nabals, and read what the Apostle James says to you, chapter 5:1-6. *"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. The rust of your gold and silver shall be a witness against you... You have lived in pleasure upon Earth, and been wanton, you have nourished your hearts as in a Day of Slaughter."* Here we may note by the way, that those who live like beasts here, and will not be induced by any persuasive to repent, reform and act like men, shall howl like beasts hereafter, without being heard or pitied. 1 Corinthians 16:13, *"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"*. Proverbs 1:26, *"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh"*.

Awake ye secure moralists, and lifeless, sapless formalists, who are strangers to the power of experimental

¹³ (Nehemiah 13: 16,17,18) "There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath."

religion. Remember your shadowy appearances, can't deceive the rein trying God. Galatians 6:7, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*". Nor (will) your dry leaves of husky, spiritless duties, secure your guilty souls, from an astonishing, overwhelming inundation of His high and terrible displeasure. Matt. 5:20, "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

Awake, ye base backsliding hypocrites, and cruel apostates, who once made a profession of religion. Then better things were expected of you, but you have wickedly deceived our expectation, and you will in the end as miserably deceive your own, if ye yet foolishly entertain any hopes of heaven, in the state and course you are now in. Remember the blackness of darkness is reserved for such cowardly traitorous runasadoes¹⁴ (sic) and deserters, seeing you are ashamed of Christ, and of His words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of you also "*shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*", Mark 8:38. Hypocrites must

¹⁴ Runaways?

be cut asunder (Matthew 24:51¹⁵). Backsliders shall eat of the fruit of their own ways (their wicked ways, and bitter, bitter fruits, they'll be), and they shall be filled with their own devices, deceived and damned by them, Proverbs 14:14¹⁶. For if they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning, Matthew 12:44,45. 2 Peter 2:21,22 *"It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, that the dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."* Such apostates, for all their specious shows and shams, were but washed dogs and swing at best; that is, their hearts were not changed effectually, they had, and do yet retain base qualities, like those brute creatures, but now mentioned. Such backsliders do pour contempt on Christ, and the gospel of his grace, by bringing a bad report upon

¹⁵ (Matthew 24:51) "He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹⁶ (Proverbs 14:14) "The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his."

them, they do as it were by turning their backs on religion, profess to the world, that they have found some evil in God's ways. By this the venerable name of God is dishonored, His ways reproached, His people grieved, and the hand of his enemies, the wicked, strengthened (1 Timothy 6:1; Romans 2:24; Psalm 25:3). Thus, seeing your sin is a complicated evil, you must expect an aggravated punishment (Hebrews 10:26, 27, 28). If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and the fiery indignation of God to consume the adversaries.

Here, you may observe that enlightened persons are they only, that are like to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin which shall not be pardoned in this, nor in the next world (Hebrews 6:4,5,6). Neither ignorant persons, nor gracious persons are capable of committing the unpardonable sin, not the first, because it must be committed against Light and Knowledge, which they want (Hebrews 10:26). Nor the second, for it must be attended with malice (Hebrews 10:29) which they are assured against (1 John 3.9; 5:18; Isaiah 59:21; Jeremiah 32:40). In short, a voluntary desertion of the profession of religion, is a terrible step toward the unpardonable sin. O! Let such

consider with trembling hearts, if it is not too late, the Scriptures I have mentioned under this head, as also these that follow. But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in Him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition (Luke 9:62). No man having put his hand to the plow and draw back is fit for the kingdom of God. And if they be not fit for the kingdom of God, they must be fit for the kingdom of the devil. O terrible portion! Therefore, repent and do your first works. O remember whence you are fallen! And where you are falling! Otherwise, Christ will come against you quickly, in a Way of just Judgment, and fight against you with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:5,16) With the sword of His wrath (Proverbs 29:1).

Awake every of you that are yet in a Christless unconvinced state! Are you not ashamed to sleep all the day in sloth, while some are still trembling, troubled and distressed about their souls, who are not greater sinners than yourselves? Nay, perhaps not near so great. What sleep? While others are crying night and day with tears and heavy groans to God, pardoning for mercy, who have no more precious souls than you. Sleep! While others are laboring hard and taking heaven by storm! What sleep! While some are traveling fast to the heavenly Jerusalem,

and rejoicing in the Way with joy unspeakable and glorious. What! Will ye draw the curtains of a carnal security, and false hope about you, and sleep to death and hell, even when the meridian sun of the gospel shines full in your face, and life and immortality is brought to light, and God and Christ, his ministers, Word, Providences, and your own consciences, are ringing a loud alarm, a peal of thunder in your ears to awake you! that you may consider your ways, and turn your feet to God's Testimonies. Will you sleep with fire in your bosoms? (the unpardonable guilt of sin) with the curse of God upon your souls, the heavens frowning upon you, and shut against you, the burdened Earth traveling under you, and hell yawning wide to devour and consume you! Mayn't I say to you as Moses to Israel (Deuteronomy 29:4), *"Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day."* O! Is it not to be feared that God, in His justice has left you to a spirit of slumber? *"Because you shut your eyes against the light"* (John 3). *"That you should sleep and never awake"* (Jeremiah 51:57). And I silt make drunk her princes, and her wise men, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake saith the King, whose name is the Lord of

Hosts. (Proverbs 6:9) How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

O sinners! If ye would but take warning in time, and turn to God, how pleasing would this be to the heart of Christ? (Luke 15:5). How pleasing to the great God? (Jeremiah 31:19,20; Luke 15:20). To the holy angels? Luke 15:10. To the bridegroom's friends? Either pious ministers or private Christians? Luke 15:24. As the conversion of sinners is the joy and crown of godly ministers, 1 Thess. 2:19. So their cruel obstinacy and stupidity, cannot on the contrary, but be their grief and sorrow. O! This makes them go with aching hearts, and cry and moan to God and man, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed" (Isaiah 53:1). Woe is me! I am as those that gather the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage. There is no cluster to eat, my soul desired the first ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the Earth; and there is none upright among men (Micah 7:1,2). Pity your poor mourning ministers, and pity your own souls, by endeavoring to turn to God speedily. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy. But it would introduce the greatest comfort into your own souls

(Galatians 6:16). Then God would rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love, and joy over thee singing (Zephaniah 3:17). Now that you and others be awakened out of your security and directed to Christ, I have composed the following discourse, which I now commit into your hands, earnestly praying that you would read it attentively, consider it solemnly, and pray over it earnestly, that it may be blessed to you. I leave this with you as a warning from the great God to convince or condemn you, as a Testimony for Truth, a witness for or against you, as you improve it.

May the God of mercy and power, direct the truths contained in it, to your hearts, and seal them to your consciences; by them convince you of your danger, and turn you to Himself. But let no pious experienced Christian needlessly terrify themselves by applying another's portion. The miseries hereafter described are the proper possession and inheritance of graceless and presumptuous sinners. They do not belong to you poor lambs of Jesus, who have been so far convinced of the malignant nature, and dreadful consequences of sin, both in heart and life, that ye have unreservedly, and resolutely closed with Christ, and do afterwards bring forth fruits meet for repentance, such as crowns your profession and experiences. Is not

your principle care and sorrow exercised about your souls?
If it be so, there is another portion prepared for you by
your heavenly Father, a portion of numerous and everlasting
blessings, pardon, peace, joy, glory, which I have given a
short description of in a use of Consolation in the
following discourse. If any get good by this treatise, I
beg that they would remember me when they are near God
especially, implore heaven that I be made through mercy,
faithful and fruitful to Christ, to the Death. Now that
some poor souls may be deeply convinced of their lost
condition, and guided to Jesus, by the following discourse,
is the earnest desire and prayer of

Your Servant
For Christ's sake,

GILBERT TENNENT

APPENDIX 2

*THE SOLEMN SCENE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT**

[I. Introduction]

[A. Scripture Text]

2 Thessalonians 1: 6-9

*Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense
Tribulation to them that trouble you;*

*And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the
Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty
Angels,*

*In flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know
not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus
Christ;*

*Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction
from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his
Power.*

[B. Burden]

It is a most dreadful and afflictive Sight! to behold
vast Multitudes of unhappy Sinners, who are inconsiderately
hastening upon the swift *Torrent of Time* to that great *Ocean*
of Eternity, whence there is no returning; without
Considering what will be the Consequence of their present

* Gilbert Tennent, *THE Solemn Scene OF THE Last
JUDGMENT*. Open'd in a SERMON, On 2 THES. 1.6,7,8,9,
Preach'd at Maiden Head in New-Jersey, May the 23d, 1737.
(Boston: 1739). Evans number 4435.

Impieties, the severe Examen [sic] they shall undergo before the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, the everlasting State of Misery and Woe which they shall be finally and irrevocably fixed in except they repent; after a few fleeting Moments are expir'd! It's strange, to Amazement, to behold intelligent Creatures endow'd with rational and noble Powers, so far degenerated from their own Order, so far sunk into brutish Stupidity; so far forgetting the Dignity of their Nature and Design of their Being, as to be chiefly intent upon, and prospective about, the securing and amassing temporary and perishing Vanities; while in the mean time they indulge the supinest Negligence about the concerns of their everlasting State!

[C. Dominating Theme: The people must awaken from their slumbering security because one day they will face the great Judge of the earth whom they have offended.]

Now seeing the Security, which alas! too much every where prevails, is as prejudicial to all the important and truly valuable Interests of Mankind, as it is unreasonable and general; must it not be an Act of Friendship to a lethargick [sic] and infatuated Generation, to labour to shock them out of their enchanted Slumbers, by setting before them the *Terrors* of that GOD they provoke, the *Terrors* of that Damnation they demerit: That so they may

be brought to some Sense of their Misery, and be thereby prepar'd as Objects for the divine Mercy; it is in Pursuance of this that I have chosen to discourse upon the Verses I have read; which offer to our View a very solemn and magnificent Description of the *general Judgment*: In which we may Note these Particulars following,

[Doctrinal Outline]

- (1) A *Designation* of the *person of the Judge*.
- (2) A *Description* of his *pompous Appearance*. And
- (3) A *succinct Narrative* of the *judicial Process*.

[D. Background]

[1. The Certainty of a Last Judgment]

But before I proceed to discourse of these Particulars mentioned, let me beg Leave to premise a few words. That there will be a general Judgment of the Quick and Dead, appears evident from the following Considerations, Namely, The *Prophecies* of the Old Testament; *Enoch*, the seventh from Adam, prophesy'd of these things, saying, *Behold the Lord cometh with ten Thousands of his Saints*; Jude 14. The Psalmist also discourseth of this, in the 50th Psalm 3. *Our God shall come and shall not keep Silence: a Fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him*. Very emphatical and solemn,

are the Words of the Prophet *Daniel*, respecting this important Transaction, in the 7th Chap. & 9th Ver. *And I beheld till the Thrones were cast down, & the Antient (sp) of Days did sit, whose Garment was white as Snow, and the Hair of his Head like pure Wool; his Throne was like a fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire; a fiery Stream issued, and came forth from before him, Thousands of Thousands ministred (sp) unto him, and ten Thousands times ten Thousand stood before him. Of this our Lord himself also prophesy'd, Matth.12.36. But I say unto you, that every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment.*

To this awful Truth the *Apostles* likewise gave Witness, according to their Master's precept: *Acts 10.42. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, That it is he, that is ordained by God, to be Judge of Quick and Dead.*

This the Consent of Nations and Consciences of Mankind declare to be an unshaken Verity, by their solemn Appeals to God, when they cannot obtain Justice amongst their fellow Creatures. Yea, even when Men do commit such Crimes as human Laws take Cognizance of; do not their Consciences sting them with a Sense of Guilt, and rack them with the Fears of a future Judgment. This is well expres'd by one

who had nothing but the Light of Nature to direct his Sentiments.

Tacita sudant precordia culpa.

"The Guilt which from unseen Pollution springs,
Pale Sweatings, Horrors, in the Bosom brings."

Of the like Tendency is this memorable passage of another of the said Character.

Turpe quod acturus te sine teste time.

"If thou wouldst do a vile ignoble Deed,
Thy Self, without a Witness, thou mayest dread."

Yea, a *guilty Mind* will sometimes Occasion such uneasy Sensations, by its just Reflections, that the rudest Profligate is not able to extinguish them, by all the impious Arts of Diversion he can invent. While in the mean time *Innocence* inspires its Possessor, with the noblest Pleasure and bravest Magnamity, in attempting, enduring and surmounting, the numerous Difficulties that attend the human Life. Hence are those famous Sayings of the Pagan Poets,

*Nil conscire sibi, nullane pallescere culpa
Marus [] esto*

And [] of *Horace*,

Integer vitae, scelerisq; purus, non eget muri, &c.
"He who of Guilt, has but his Conscience free;
As Walls of Brass, impregnable may be."

This also the *Reason of Man* suggests, from the Consideration of the *divine Perfections*; particularly from the Wisdom, Justice, and Truth of God. Seeing the great God has made rational Creatures capable of moral Government, and propos'd a Law to them as the Rule of it; enforc'd by such Threats and Promises as were worthy of God, and suited to the Nature of Man; sufficient to alarm their Fear, and excite their Hope or Desire, those two governing Passions of the Soul [are] great Sources of Action; it is therefore extreamly [sic] necessary, that those Rewards which Divine Wisdom has projected, and divine Truth and Justice engaged to issue, should be distributed according to the different Actions of Men, otherwise dishonorable Reflections would be cast upon the Attributes of the Deity; namely, either that his Wisdom has fail'd in the proposal or Assignment of the Rewards; or his Truth and Justice in the Execution of them, which to imagine of the blessed God would be the most crimson Blasphemy. Now it often happens in this State of Tryal and Probation, that men receive not Rewards suited to their different Characters. Base and sordid Creatures are often flush'd with prosperous Successes, crown'd with Honours, and caress'd with Pleasures; while brave and virtuous Souls are laden with Reproach, and suffered to grapple with all the

Adversities of Fortune! And that often times for their Firmness of Mind, their Zeal and Fidelity in their Master's Service! Now, Is it not a *righteous thing with God to recompense Tribulation to those that trouble his People?* [2 Thess. I:6] Is it not just that those Pious Souls, who have had their Characters clouded by unjust Aspersions, should have their Innocence vindicated, and their Adversaries put to Shame? But this is sometimes impractable [*sic*] in this World; and therefore there must be a time in the next, when all Wrongs shall be redress'd, and every thing made to appear in its truest Colours.

[2. The Time of the Last Judgment]

As to that determinate *Time* of the last Judgment, that is known only to God, and reserv'd as a secret in the divine Bosom from all Mortals; and that for very wise Reasons; viz. to awaken our Fears, excite our Diligence, and support our Patience: That not knowing the exact Time of our Lord's coming, we may be every Day expecting it, and preparing for it. In the mean time it may be asserted, that the coming of the Son of Man will be very *sudden* and *unexpected*: *The Day of the Lord*, says the Apostle Peter, *will come as a Thief in the Night*, i.e. when it is not looked for, *then the Heavens shall pass away with a great*

Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, 2
 Pet.3.10. *At Midnight, i.e., in the secure State of the*
Church, there will be a great Cry! Behold the Bridegroom
cometh! Go ye out to meet him. As it was in the Days of
Noah and Lot, so will it be in the Days of the Son of Man:
They eat, they drink, married and were given in Marriage.
They shall indulge themselves in the securest Sensuality,
and little dream of so terrible an Event. For as a Snare
will it come on all that dwell on the Face of the Earth.
While Sinners cry, Peace, Peace, sudden Destruction shall
come upon them as a Travail on a Woman with Child.

[3. The Place of the Last Judgment]

The *Place* of Judgment, it is probable, will be the
 Region of the Air; so near to the earth as to render the
 great Judge and his Judicial Process visible to all it's
 Inhabitants. Hence is that of the Apostle to the
Thessalonians, that the Righteous will be caught up in the
Clouds, to meet their Lord in the Air, I Thes. 4.17.

[II. Doctrine or "Particulars"]

Having thus premised a few Hints, respecting those
 things which I deem'd necessary to give Light to the

Subject to be discuss'd, I proceed to consider the Particulars which I before observed were included (expressly) in the Text under our Consideration...

[A. Designation of the Person of the Judge]

Or which is, the *person* who is to pass a final Judgment, upon *Men* and *Angels*, in the Great Day of God; and this is no other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST; him *the Father hath ordained*, to accomplish this important Word, *Acts 17.31*. Though the Son of God in respect of his *Deity* and *essential Glory*, being co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, be the absolute Monarch of the Universe, having an original & unalienable Claim of Right to give Laws to govern the Creatures he has made; and so pass a final Judgment upon their eternal State, according to their Observance or Non-observance of them: Yet as *Man* and *Mediator*, he is inferior to the Father, and so acts by Delegation from him in this great and solemn Transaction: *John 5. 26,27*. *For as the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself, and hath given him Authority to execute Judgment also, because he is the Son of Man*: And indeed it is highly reasonable that the Person who is to transact this grand Affair, should be God and Man in one Person, in order to pass a righteous

Sentence upon all the Thoughts, Words, and actions of reasonable Creatures; and to execute it, nothing less than infinite Knowledge and infinite Power are necessary: Now these are Properties peculiar to the supream [sic] Being. The secret Springs of Action, from which their Guilt or Goodness is principally derived, devoid of all Disguise, are only open to the all-penetrating Eye of God. Not to say that as the divine Nature is only capable to execute so difficult a Task, so it is only worthy of the Honours of it. To pass a determinative Sentence upon the everlasting States of Men and Angels, is a Dignity too sacred and venerable for any mere Creatures to sustain. The holy Lamb of God is only worthy to open the Seals of the Book of God's invariable Purposes, and to assign to Man and Angels, those endless Rewards and Punishments, that are suited to their different Works, Rev.5. 1,12.

And is it not expedient, that he who is vested with the Character of supream Judge, should partake of the human Nature in Union with the Deity? That the judicial Process with embodied Creatures concerning their overt Actions, might be carried on *visibly*, and so the more satisfactorily? Should the *divine Glory* appear in its radiant Majesty and unclouded Brightness, without the Allay of *Humanity*, what Mortal could behold that inaccessible

Light, before which the purest Seraphs veil their Faces!
 What mortal Ear could hear the Thunder of that Voice which
 melts the Mountains, and makes the Pillars of Heaven
 tremble? Hence we are told, that *the Father judgeth no
 Man, (i.e. immediately) but hath committed all Judgment
 unto the Son.*

The *Justice* of the final Sentence will appear the more
 conspicuous, because the Judge is of our own Frame and
 Constitution, *touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities,*
 possess'd of the strongest and tenderest Compassions
 towards us; and therefore will not doom any who are of the
*same Nature with himself, to extream [sic] and endless
 Misery; without the most clamant [sic] Cause and urgent
 Necessity. And,*

The *Sinfulness of Sin* will be doubtless hereby
 expos'd, and made to appear in its crimson Aggravation, and
 flagrant Malignancy; in that it turns the softest
 Compassion, into the sternest Severity; obliging the
 Merciful Savior, who came from the Bosom of his blessed
 Father, (that Throne of the brightest Glory, that Seat of
 the sweetest Felicity, that center of the serenest Majesty)
 into a miserable World, and thereby the most astonishing
 Stoop of a condescending Excellency, having assum'd the
 human Nature into a hypostatical, personal and inseparable

Union with his Deity, endured inconceivable Pain and extream (sp) Misery, in order to save Souls from everlasting and deserved Ruin, and purchase for them an endless and a glorious Life: That he, I say, after such vast Expence (sp) of Labour and of Blood, should be obliged by Sin, to banish Impenitents into eternal Death; *This, This*, affords the most detestable Idea of Sin that can possibly enter into a human Mind. It might be further observed concerning the Wisdom of this Constitution of Christ to be the Judge of the Universe, that thereby the undisturbed Harmony of the divine Attributes, will be eminently apparent; which here we have but very imperfect Notions of. For at the same time will be executed upon different Objects, the mildest Clemency and most awful Severity, the richest mercy and severest Justice, the heaviest Vengeance and the noblest Love!

And as it must needs inspire the Hearts of all good Men with great Magnanimity, and peculiar Pleasure; to think that SAVIOR, whom they love and serve from the Heart, is to be their supream (sp) and final Judge. So on the contrary, it can't but discourage and distress the Hearts of the Ungodly, to think that JESUS whose Doctrine they have discredited, and whose Laws they have disobeyed, will determine their everlasting State. Hence is that solemn

and Soul-affecting Passage of the Apostle *John* in the *Revelations*, the 1st Chapter and the 7th Verse, *Behold he cometh in the Clouds, and every eye shall see him.* To this I may add one Consideration more, namely, That it is more than probable that the power of the last Judgment, is an illustrious Branch of the *Kingly Office* of the Lord Jesus, confer'd upon him by God the Father, as a Reward of his deep Humiliation and astonishing Abasure. See Phil.2. 8,9. *And being found in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death of the Cross; wherefore also God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name.*

[B. A Description of his Pompous Appearance]

This leads me to consider the 2d Particular included in our Text, namely, The *Appearance* of this Judge whom the Father hath constituted, in that terrible Day of God, when the grand and solemn Scene of eternal Judgment shall be open'd; and this no doubt will be full of inexpressible Pomp, and tremendous Majesty; as our Text informs us: *Then the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire.* Now the heavens conceal him, but then they shall disclose their Lord and Ornament to the Admiration of the whole Universe; for every *Eye*

shall see him! The eternal Son of God shall descend visibly from the heavenly Paradise, that Throne of majestick (sp) Beauty and refulgent Glory, attended with all possible Ensigns of Power, and inconceivable Grandeur. He will come guarded with a Train of innumerable and mighty Angels; he will come environed with a vast and glorious Retinue of perfected Spirits; these will attend the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, the descending God, through airy Regions, to the Seat of Judgment; in order to grace that magnificent Solemnity, with the august State! These holy and mighty Angels will doubtless, be employed as Ministers of Justice and mercy at that great Day, in summoning Criminals to the Bar, and executing their woeful Sentence upon them; as well as gathering in the Elect, and accompanying them to their blissful Mansions. No doubt these Nobles of the Court of Heaven will appear in their brightest Robes. And we are told, that our great LORD himself will be reveal'd *in flaming Fire*. When the Law was given by *Moses* upon *Sinai*, the Mount trembled for Fear, and was wrapt [*sic*] in Fire and Smoke: And the Voice of the terrible JEHOVAH proclaim'd is venerable Law from the midst of the Flames; which struck the whole Hosts of *Israel*, with the utmost Consternation. Now if the Lord appear'd with so much Majesty and Terror when the Law was given, how much more

when he comes to avenge the Breaches of it. This Mass of Fire, which the Text mentions, being added to the Splendor of his glorified Body, "will, as one well expresses it, cause him to outshine the *Sun* in his Meridian Bloom and Beauty, and drown all the Lights of Heaven with the conquering Brightness of his Appearance. So that when he comes from his ethereal Palace, and appears upon the eastern Heaven, the immense Sphere of visible Glory that shall surround him, will in the Twinkling of an Eye spread and diffuse it self over all the Creation, and cause both Heaven and Earth to glitter like flaming Fire." It is with the utmost Magnificence, that the holy Scriptures describe the second Coming of the SON OF MAN! When he came as a Saviour, his divine Glory was veil'd with the mantle of his Humanity; he who was God over all blessed for ever, appeared in the Form of a Servant, was willingly expos'd to Poverty and Contempt, with all the painful Maladies to which the human Nature is subject! But when he comes as *Judge* he will assume a Splendor and Greatness suitable to the Glory of his Deity; suitable to the dignity of his Character! The Face of the Heavens will be convuls'd into a flaming Scrowl*, and deep Foundations and the deep

*Note: This is probably a typesetter error. The context suggests 'scowl'.

Foundations of the earth will shake, while its Surface, being torn by Earthquakes, shall send forth Rivers of Fire! In the mean time while the Heavens and earth are covered with a general Ruin! The dreadful Clangor (or Blast) of the Archangel's Trumpet, which shall awake the dead out of their secure Recesses; the awful Roarings of the great Ocean, with terrible Peals of Thunder from the Heavens above, and hideous Murmurs from the Earth beneath; and dreadful Shrieks of the damned Creatures, now expecting to hear their final Doom pronounc'd; shall so mingle and confound their Groans, that the whole Face of things shall present a doleful Scene of the most hideous, horrible and confus'd Ruin! How dreadful will it be at this *Juncto*, for the Wicked, to behold the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, in the most triumphant Manner, with Myriads of the heavenly Hosts attending on him; encompass'd with Power and great Glory! Descending from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel and with the Trump of God! When our Lord appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Raiment was white as the Light: How splendid then must his Vesture be at this glorious Solemnity? We may be help'd to some Idea of the Lustre of Christ's Appearance, by considering that memorable Passage of the Apostle *John*, Rev. 1.13,---17.

And in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man, cloathed (sp) with a Garment down to the Foot, and girt with a golden Girdle; his Head and his Hairs were white as Snow, and his Eyes were as a Flame of Fire, and his Feet like unto fine Brass, as if they burned in a Furnace; and his Voice as the Sound of many Waters. And he had in his right Hand seven Stars; and out of his Mouth went a sharp two-edged Sword: And his Countenance was as the Sun shineth in his Strength. We are also inform'd, that he will come in his own and in his Father's Glory; the Light and Beauty, the Splendor and Majesty of which, is to us, in our present State, unconceivable and inexpressible! "When he comes to Judgment, saith one, it will be with his own glorified Body of pure and immaculate Splendor, with his hair shining like Threads of Light, his Eyes sparkling with Beams of Majesty; displaying a most beautiful Lustre and dazzling Glory round about it." His Throne is said to be great and white, i.e. pure and immaculate, stately and magnificent; and from it are said to proceed Lightnings, and Thunderings and Voices. Yea, so terrible and insupportable will be the Majesty of the Judge seated on his Throne, that the Heavens and Earth are said to flee from his Face! If in the Time of his humble Abasure, there appeared such Majesty in his Aspect, that

those who came to apprehend him went backwards and fell to the Ground, how will his Enemies be able then to abide the Day of Wrath; when he will appear in his most exalted Glory and Magnificence!

[C. Succinct Narrative of the Judicial Process]

I proceed to speak something of the 3d Particular, namely, *The judicial Process*, when the Son of Man is seated on his saphire (sp) Throne, resembling the Body of Heaven in its Brightness, the whole Race of Men shall be gathered before him to receive their Sentence from him! Rev. 20. 11,12. *And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and heaven fled away, and there was no Place found for them. And I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God; and the Books were opened: And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their Works.*

The Thunder of the Archangel's Trumpet, being accompanied with the almighty Power of Christ, shall resound to the utmost Limits of the Globe; strike the Concave of the Heavens, and pierce the darkest Caverns, the most remote and silent Recesses of the Earth and Sea, and rouse their Inhabitants from the Sleep of Death: That the whole rational Creation who have ever lived in all the past Age,

since the Foundation of the World; and shall hereafter come into Existence, to the utmost period and extream (sp) Verge of the Line of Time, may appear at once, in a universal Rendezvous, before the dread Tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ, to receive their final Doom. Then the haughtiest Monarchs, the subtilest (sp) Politicians, the boldest heroes, being disrob'd of the trifling Ensigns of their present State and Greatness, will forget their former Power, Courage and Grandeur, and cry to the Mountains to hide them from the Face of the Lamb that sits upon the Throne. They shall be forced to bow to that Saviour, whom they here contemned, and implore his Favour, but in vain, he will be inexorable to their unseasonable and rueful Crys (sp). Their Lamentations over Sin, and Supplications for Mercy and Pardon, might here in the Time of Life and Health be serviceable to them; but then it will be too late! too late! The Master of the House will rise up, and shut too the Door of mercy and Salvation against such willful Impenitents! (sp)

We may reasonably imagine, That when the Souls and Bodies of the Wicked are united, their Hearts will be torn with the most terrible Convulsions of Guilt, Fear and Shame! O! With what Confusion, Horror and Reluctance, will impenitent *Caitiffs* be drag'd to the Bar of Judgment,

to hear their most secret Impieties openly expos'd, and their awful Doom pronounc'd, before the whole Creation! While Crouds (sp) of innumerable Devils are at their Heels, ready to Witness against them, and hale them to the infernal Furnace! While before them is that Lord Jesus, who once offer'd himself to be their Saviour, but now is their angry Judge! When they behold his Eyes as Flames of Fire, and hear his Voice as the Sound of many Waters, how will their Hearts be rack'd with the acutest Pain! Especially when they behold the Elements above their Heads, melting with fervent Heat, and the massy Earth trembling and burning under their Feet; and every where around them the wildest Confusion and most deplorable Ruin blended together in a promiscuous Chaos, void of Beauty and of Order! And in the mean time, none in Heaven or in Earth to pity, or help them in their Extremity! But on the contrary, the great God and the Lord Jesus Christ who here offer'd his Love, and intreated (sp) them to accept it, in the most importunate and moving Strains, now frowning on them, and laughing at their Calamity! Yea and all the Hosts of Angels, and Armies of glorify'd Saints, rejoicing in their deserved Destruction! In which God's Justice will have a glorious but terrible Triumph.

The vast Assembly of the Quick and Dead being thus brought before the burning Tribunal! There will be a Separation made, the *Goats* will be put at the *Left Hand* of Christ, and the *Sheep* at his *Right!* Mat. 25.32. Here it is impossible fully to discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, presumptuous Hypocrites will croud (sp) amongst pious Souls, with their specious Pretences; and sometimes deceive the most judicious: But there Persons separated from the Congregation of the Righteous, not one abhorred Hypocrite will be suffered to intrude, into that venerable and innumerable Army of the Saints.

Then will all the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of Men, with their several Circumstances, viz. the *Principles* from which they flowed, and *Marks* to which they were directed, be inquir'd into and scan'd. The most secret and disguis'd Impieties, will then be torn open, to the Contempt of God, Angels and good Men: For, *God will judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ*, Rom. 2.16. Then shall neglect of Duty be expos'd, and censur'd, as well as Commissions of Sin; *I was hungry and ye gave me no Meat.* "He that knoweth to do Good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin." Then such as persecute God's People, shall be recompenc'd with inexpressible Tribulation; and "those who know not God, and obey not the Voice of his Gospel, i.e. who rebel against

the Principles of natural and reveal'd Religion; "shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. The Wrath of God will be reveal'd from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, i.e. labour to suppress the Convictions of the Holy Spirit. And alas, how many such Soul-Murders may we fear will be found! Who endeavor to extinguish Trouble for Sin, and put off Convictions of Duty, from one Time to another, *Felix*-like. Then surely such shall not escape who have neglected the great Salvation; made light of the Offers of God's rich and free Grace in the glorious Gospel; "For this is the Condemnation that Light is come into the World, and that Men love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil.

And then not only *great Crimes* will be examined, but those *lesser Evils* which many little consider, and think there is no Harm in now. Our Lord himself informs us, that *every idle Word that Man shall speak, they shall give an Account thereof, in the Day of Judgment.* And alas! What a dreadful Account will this be to many? *Mat. 12.* And as the Wickedness of the Wicked will thus be dissected, and laid open: So on the contrary, the Duties of Piety and Charity, which good Men have done, shall be proclaim'd with

Honour: Their secret Sighs, Prayers, Tears, Sufferings for Righteousness Sake; those silent Virtues, which they here labour'd to conceal, as much as they could from others Observance with a Vail (sp) of Modesty, shall then come into Remembrance, be mentioned honourably, and rewarded openly. *I was hungry and ye gave me Food, sick and in Prison and ye visited me, naked and ye clothed me.* The least charitable Action of a gracious person, even to a *Cup of cold Water*, shall neither be forgotten, or pass unrewarded; for it is a righteous Thing with God, to recompence Tribulation to them that trouble his, and to such as are troubled rest.

Albeit no desirable Reward for our Works (being both finite and imperfect and due to God upon other Accounts) can reasonably be expected, yet a Reward of Grace or Promise, according to their Degree of Eminence, shall surely be conferr'd, *Mat.25. 20,21.* Now is it not righteous in God to perform his Promises. And altho' the Reward vouchsafed in *respect of us*, be an *Act of Grace*; yet in *respect of Christ*, who has by his active and passive Obedience, answered the Demands of the Law for us; it is an *Act of Justice*. Hence is that admirable Passage of *Paul* to the *Romans*, Chap.3. 26. *To declare his Righteousness; that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth*

in Jesus. Agreeable to this are the Words of my Text, Seeing it is a righteous Thing with God to recompence Tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. The Books of God's Law and Gospel shall be opened to shew Man's Duty therefrom; and the Books of God's Remembrance, and Conscience, to shew how they have observed it. These are sufficient Evidences to convict the Wicked, and vindicate the Righteous: For even conscience it self is as a thousand Witnesses, and the Knowledge of God nothing can escape; "The Darkness hides not from him, but the Night shines as the Day." There will be also other Witnesses to compleat (sp) the judicial Process. Satan the Accuser of the Brethren, who now excites to Sin, with the most assiduous Diligence, and crafty Strategems, will then no doubt accuse for it, with the most virulent Malignity.

And wicked Associates, who here Devil-like excites to, and conceal one anothers Impieties, will there accuse and impeach for them. It is probable that all such as have

been debauch'd in Principle or Practice, by the pernicious Influence of bad Advice, or Example, will openly recuse (sp) and curse their Destroyers. And no doubt godly Ministers, Parents, and Masters, who have labour'd with the utmost Earnestness by their Councils, Examples and Tears, to reclaim those that were under their Charge, will bear Witness against them, for rejecting all their Labour of Love against their own Souls. Whatever Excuses obstinate Sinners frame now to palliate their Guilt, in persisting in Sin, and slighting the Offers of God's Grace, they will then be expos'd and condemned. After the Case of the Wicked is fully examined, it will appear plain to the Conviction of Angels, and good Men, yea, of their own Consciences; that whatever they vainly pretend they had no reasonable Excuse for their present Managemens: And so that they themselves were the willful Causes of their own Damnation. This will occasion intolerable and eternal Reflections upon their own Madness and Guilt: This is that Worm which will bite the Souls of the damn'd to all Eternity! Matters by Examination being brought to *this Crisis*, then will follow the Pronunciation (sp) and Execution of the different Sentences upon the Good and Bad. The Case of the Righteous being enquir'd into, their joyful Sentence will ensue; *Then shall the King*, the Judge from

his Throne of Glory, say to them on his Right Hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World, Mat. 25.34. O precious Sentence! O good LORD JESUS! how sweet are thy Words! and how happy are thy People? What can be conceiv'd more full of divine Consolation? Who ever accuses, asperses or condemns you, you are blessed by my Father; justify'd and approv'd of by him, Come; on Earth you were slighted and deserted by my Enemies, and your false Friends, but I will never forsake you; Come, from a sinful and miserable World under the Shadow of my Wings, into the Embrace of my Bosom, and enjoy the Delights of my Love; Come, inherit that glorious kingdom, that princely Portion, which was prepared for you from everlasting, in the Purposes of my Father, and in the Fulness of Time purchased for you by my Blood, and continued to you by my Intercession; Come, and possess that unspeakable Honour and unmerited Happiness, for which you were prepared by the sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit; Come, not as Sojourners, but as Heirs Inhabitants of an unalienable Portion and everlasting Kingdom! Come, and dwell with God and holy Angels; Come, and drink the Delights of Heaven, the christal (sp) Streams of Life which flow from the Throne of God; Come, ye troubled and weary Souls who have been troubled by Sinners, and weary of Sin,

and *inherit the Rest prepared for you!* O! It is not possible to express with Words, the Rivers of Joy and Gladness, which will run into the Hearts of the Glorify'd! and make them triumph on this Occasion with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory!

Now after their joyful Sentence is pass'd, they will be honourably conducted by Hosts of Angels to the City of the great God.

After this will succeed the Sentence of the Wicked: These impure and unholy Souls, being sufficiently detected, and convinc'd of their ungrateful Rebellion against God, in breaking his Law and slighting his Gospel, must then hear these dreadful Words from the Mouth of Christ, *Go ye accursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* What can be conceiv'd more full of Terror than this Sentence? Ye bless'd your selves in your Prosperity and false Hope, and were flattered by others; but now you are accursed by God, cursed to all Eternity: You wanted God to depart from you in this World, you lik'd not the Knowledge of his Ways, and slighted the Company of his Servants, and now you must depart from them forever: *Go ye accursed into never-ending Torments, prepar'd for the vilest and most malignant Spirits: ye wou'd obey their Suggestions, while ye condemned my Authority, quench'd my*

repeated Calls, and abus'd my Mercy! And now ye must dwell with these infernal Ghosts for ever, and inherit the Burnings prepar'd for them! I will never offer you abused mercy any more; but ye shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from my gracious Presence, by my glorious Power!

After the Sentence is pronounc'd by the great Judge, immediately it shall be executed. Then will these unhappy Wretches be dragged from the Judgment-Seat, to that terrible *Tophet*, whose Flames are kindled by the Breath of God! For ever banished from the ravishing Sweets of God's presence, from the amiable Society of saints and Angels! From the blissful Regions of Light and Love! From all the Joys and Glories of the heavenly Paradise! And the least Hope of ever attaining them! To be tormented in the burning lake, that gloomy Vault of thick Darkness, frightful Horror, and extream (sp) Despair! With the Stings of their accusing Consciences! The Upbraidings and Severities of Devils! The continual Roarings, and awful lamentations of damned Companions; and the fearful and inconceivably terrible Vengeance of the most high God, pour'd forth upon them in full and never-ending Vials. The Shame, Confusion and Anguish of such miserable Souls, cannot be fully conceiv'd or express'd!

[III. IMPROVEMENT]

Now it's time that I proceed to some brief IMPROVEMENT of what has been spoken. And,

[A. INFORMATION]

For *Information*: If there is a Judgment to come, as has been proved, then may we learn to think honourably of God's providential Dealings with Mankind. Many entertain unworthy Thoughts of God, and are strengthened in their Impieties because of the Riches of divine Patience towards some, and the Largeness of divine Goodness towards others: This the Psalmist acquaints us of, Psal. 50. *These things thou hast done, and I kept Silence; thou thoughtest I was such a one as thy self.* And Solomon justly observes, that *because Sentence against as evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil.* And as the Sinner is sometimes strengthened in his Iniquity by the divine Clemency and Bounty, which is often extended to and vouchsafed upon, very unworthy Wretches; so the Saint beholding the Wicked triumph, and on the contrary, that Train of Calamities which afflict the Just, is sometimes stumbled in his Faith, and is tempted to think he has washed his Hands in vain: But let both Saint and Sinner consider, that this World is

but a Time of Tryal, Patience and Probation; having Relation to another State and Time, when after the Conclusion of this *Drama*, Rewards will be distributed according to Man's Actions hers; then will God reprove the Sinner, and set his Sins in order before him. Those Impieties he now conceals & forgets, are sealed up amongst God's Treasures, reserved to the day of Judgment to be punished; for to God belongs Vengeance and Recompence. As sure as God is just, so sure shall impenitent Sinners be punish'd. A Delay of the Execution of Justice will not alter its Nature, or satisfy its Demands. But on the contrary the Expence of abus'd Patience will exceedingly heighten them, and so inutterably aggravate the Damned'd Pains. And on the contrary, the religious Labours and patient Sufferings of the Just, will be honourably remembered, and bountifully rewarded, by a good God. The Apostle *Paul* fully confirms this precious Truth in the second Chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, the 6th--- 10th Verse, *Who will* (saith he) *render to every Man according to his Deeds: To them, who by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality; eternal Life: But unto them that are Contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath; Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doeth*

Evil, of the Jew first, (because first in Point of Priviledge) and also of the Gentile.

[B. For Consolation:]

From this subject brings *Consolation* to pious Souls. The Relation they bear to the Judge, the Love they have for him, and Longings after him, will make his Appearance very joyful and refreshing to them. If the Feet of his faithful Messengers were beautiful, how much more will the Person of their Prince and Master be desirable? When he comes to judge the World, then the Troubled shall have rest. Such as are sincerely troubled for their Sins against God, so as to reform from them; such as are unjustly troubled for their Piety towards God, by wicked Men, and bear it patiently; such as are generously troubled for the Sufferings of the Church of God, so as to succor and help them as their Capacity admits; such as are evangelically troubled for their little Progress in Goodness and Usefulness; may expect a perfect, uninterrupted, and eternal Rest, from Sin, and every Sorrow that proceeds from it. All those gracious Souls, who in a good cause are aspers'd with Reproach and Scorn, may expect to have their Innocency vindicated, and their persons honoured; their Righteousness will surely shine as the Light, and their

Judgment as the Noon Day; while their Adversaries will be put to Shame, and covered with Contempt. All such as Sigh for the Abominations of the Land, Sorrow for the Afflictions of *Joseph*, and honestly Lament their own Imperfections, will then be greatly comforted! For then that Light and Joy which is sown in the faithful Promises, and unchangeable Covenant of God, will spring up into a plentiful and everlasting Harvest. Then will those that know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, obtain eternal Life. Then such as labour evangelically to keep God's Law, will be crown'd with Honour and Immortality. Then those that believe and obey the Gospel, will obtain the End of their Earth and Obedience, and the Salvation of their Souls. Then the charitable person will be honoured before all the Hosts of Angels and perfected Spirits; and every one of their and silent Vertues (sp), publicly proclaim'd ! *I was hungry, and ye fed me*— And can we think they will miss a Reward of Grace proportion'd to their Beneficence? Then will all the secret Pieties of modest and humble souls, be open'd, with all their orient Beauties and blushing Excellencies! O Sirs! Shou'd not his be a powerful Inducement to us, to abound in those things which will then so much conduce to our Honour and Benefit.

[C. For the Congregation]:

From this Subject arises unspeakable *Terror*, to the whole Congregation of the Wicked! Is there a Judgment to Come? Then miserable indeed will be [the] Case of such as know not God! i.e. such as have wrong Conceptions of the divine Being, as tho' he were like themselves, and indulg'd Iniquity as much as they; because his Patience suffer'd them to take their Swing in Sin for a Time, without Punishment. But then will they find themselves miserably Mistaken; but alas *too late, too late!*

Such as continue in gross Ignorance to God's Word and Ways, may expect no favour then, *Isai.27. 11.* Such as have no experimental Knowledge of God's Truths, who know not God to be their God in Covenant, will be covered with Shame and banished from Jehovah, *Rom.5. 4,5.* Such as profess they know God, but in Works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate; contradicting, in the Course of their Conversation, the natural Notions of a God, which are insculpted (sp) on the human Mind, will be a terrible Plight at general Judgment; for *Whoremongers and Adulterers God shall judge.* The Apostle Peter observes, *2 Pet.2. 9,10.* that *the Lord knows how to reserve the Unjust to the Day of Judgment to be punished; but chiefly they that walk after the Flesh in the*

Lust of Uncleanness. Hear, ye prophane Souls, what God speaks to you by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor.6. 9,10. Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: Neither Fornicators, nor Idolators, nor adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, not Thieves, not Covetors, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Then secure Sinners in Zion will be afraid, Fearfulness shall surprise the Hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring Fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting Burnings? O ye wicked Prophaners of God's Name and Day, remember that the great God will not hold you guiltless; let the Scoffers at Piety remember, that, so continuing, their Bands of Death and Destruction, will be then made strong. But will the secret Sins of the Wicked be expos'd? Then how will you hide your Faces, you guilty Souls? When God-Man appears to judge the Quick and the Dead; when all your crafty Villanies, and sordid Impieties, which here you labour'd to conceal with so much Art and Pains, shall be brought to the brightest of Light, & open'd in all their crimson Aggravations, to the Abhorrence of God, Men and Angels!

And all you who slight the precepts, promises and Offers of the glorious Gospel of the Grace of God, remember

as you are condemned already, (*John* 3. 36.) that then, except ye repent, that Sentence will [be] executed against you; A terrible Damnation expects you if ye continue in your Sins, it will be more tollerable (sp) for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* in the Day of the Lord, than for you. Hell from beneath is moved to meet you at your coming. If pious *Moses* was so affected with the Sight of God, upon Mount *Sinai*, that he did exceedingly Fear and Quake, *Heb.* 12. 21. If zealous *Isaiah* was so much affected with Fear, by beholding of a small Glimpse of God's Glory, when the Seraphs cry'd, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts*, that he complain'd, *Wo is me I am undone!* ---*Isai.* 6.5. If faithful *Daniel* was so surprised with a Vision, that he swoon'd away with the dread thereof! *Dan.* 10. 8,11. Then how will you who are condemn'd by complicated Guilt, and cover'd with the basest Deformity; be able to bear up under the Appearance of the Judge of Heaven and Earth; whose Loins will be girded as with the finest Gold of *Uphaz*; his Body like Beryl, and his Face as the Appearance of Lightning, and his Eyes as Lamps of Fire, his Arms and his Feet like polish'd Brass, and the Voice of his Words like the Voice of a Multitude. If the Joints of *Belshazzer's* Knees were loosn'd by trembling, in the midst of his Grandeur and Jollitry! By the Appearance of but a Hand-

Writing upon the Wall, what Fear and Trembling shall possess you! Guilty Dust?

Strip'd of all your present Comforts and Ornaments; when you behold the Lord Jesus appearing in the greatest majesty and highest Glory! If the Appearance of a temporal Judge in his scarlet Robes, strikes such a Damp in a guilty Prisoner at the Bar, what Horror shall tear your Bosoms, if ye repent not, when ye behold the Son of God coming in Clouds of Heaven, or seated on his blazing Throne of Judgment! If this Minute we heard the Heavens groan and roar with piercing Claps of Thunder, and were encompass'd with terrible and sudden flashes of Lightning, from the murmuring Clouds, and in the mean time felt the labouring Earth tremble under our Feet, ready to open it's Mouth to devour us, and beheld the Lord Jesus descending to the Seat of Judgment, from the opening Heavens, on a Body of Light brighter than the Sun, with all his holy Angels about him; what pale frightened Countenances and trembling Hearts would there be amongst us, what crying to God for Mercy and Pardon. But because Christ defers his coming, stupid Sinners will not believe it, and consider it, so as to prepare for it! But be assured, my Brethren, that Christ will as certainly come to judge you, as tho' you now saw him coming from Heaven. All ye miserable Souls, who are

guilty of any of those Evils I before express'd, and continue in them, believe it, the Time hastens when the Lord Jesus shall be reveal'd from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on you; to inflict Punishments with Jealousy and incensed Indignation, suited to the number of Heinousness of your Crimes. Then shall you be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. Ye shall be forever deprived of the gracious Presence of God, and expos'd to an intense, continual and eternal Destruction! God's stern Justice and almighty Power, will be glorified, in your utter and eternal Ruin! Dear Brethren! If these Things will not affect you, I know not what will; even a Pagan *Felix* trembled when he heard this Subject discours'd of; but alas some of our Gospel Sinners, are more hardned (sp) than the Pagans!

[D. For Exhortation]

In the last Place, I exhort you my Brethren, in the Name and Bowels of Christ, and by all that should be dear to you, that you would quickly endeavor to *prepare* for Christ's Coming to Judgment, which may be very speedily to you, even before to-morrow Morning.

In the Parable of the Virgins we read, that *at Midnight there was a great Cry, behold the Bridegroom cometh!* The Means I would prescribe to you for that End are, a frequent Meditation upon Death and Judgment, Examination, Prayer and a speedy Reformation. *Let the wicked Man forsake his Way.*--- O! methinks, The Consideration of the last Judgment shou'd deter us from secret Sins, and excite us to secret Duties of Religion! seeing that then that* which is now done in Corners will be published on the House Tops; i.e. in the most open and conspicuous Manner possible. But my dear Brethren! That which I wou'd especially and passionately recommend to you, as a principle and absolutely necessary preparative, for the Judgment of the great God, is that you would speedily and vehemently labour to be acquainted with experimental and vital Religion: Namely, Justification from the Guilt of Sin, by the grace of Christ; and Sanctification from the Power of Sin by the Spirit of Christ.

O Sinner! *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the Way with him: lest at any Time the*

*Note: It appears that the author is using "seeing that then" as a conjunction similar to "therefore". If we make that substitution, the sentence would read "Therefore, that which is now done in Corners will be published."

Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no Means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing, Mat.5. 25,26.

O Brethren! "Wash your Hearts from Wickedness: How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within you. Cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts ye double-minded, be afflicted and mourn and weep:-- Life is short, Eternity is long, Death is near, and the Judge at the Door; in a little Time ye will be past all Remedy, if ye repent not; if there be any Convictions of Sin and Danger, in any of you, encourage and preserve them by Consideration and Supplication to God, as the most invaluable Jewels. Shun unnecessary Conversation with ungodly People. *Forsake the Foolish and live.* Be humbly resolute in God's Service, whatever it cost you, for true Religion is its own Reward here, and how much more so will it be hereafter. *The Sufferings of this present World are not worthy to be compar'd with that Weight of Glory which shall be revealed.* If it seem Evil to others to serve God in a profligate and perverse Age, let it not do so to you. O Sinners! I beseech you by the tender Mercies of God, that you would not always halt between two Opinions, *God and Baal.* If ye will faithfully observe these Things, the Day of *Christ*

will be a Day of refreshing to you; and you will long for it, with the poor Church; and say, *Come Lord Jesus come quickly,* even so come thou blessed Son of God!

Amen, Amen.

APPENDIX 3

*THE NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN DURABLE HAPPINESS**

[Introduction]

Mat. 11 vers. 12. *And from the Days of John the Baptist, until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by force.*

The great goodness of the Blessed God is equally apparent and conspicuous in preparing a Happiness for his people, revealing the way to it, and sending his Servants to inculcate by all Arts of Perswasion possible, the Necessity, Importance and Reasonableness of traveling in the One, in order to obtain the other. Of this the Text under our present Consideration treats, in which we may Note Three Things:

[Doctrinal Outline]

- I. *A Commendation of the Baptists Faithfulness.*
- II. *An Illustration of Gods Goodness.*

* Gilbert Tennent, *The Necessity of Religious Violence* (New York: Bradford, 1735). (Evans 3966, from the copy owned by the Presbyterian Historical Society).

III. *A Description of the Way to Happiness.*

I. As to the Baptists Commendation: It's said, that from his time the Kingdom of Heaven suffered Violence, i.e. from the Time in which he began to preach, the Gospel Church began to be remarkably established; its Doctrines eagerly embraced, and its Precepts vehemently Practiced; and in this importunate painful course, his convinced hearers longed after, and labour'd for the Happiness of the blessed Heaven. To this purpose, *Piseator* and others, speak. *Lightfoot* observes pertinently, that the Jewish People were forbid to touch *Mount Sinai*, but that now we may use Violence in ascending the mystical [sic] Mountain: So *Grotius* also notes, *Suffers Violence, Biazetai*, i.e., is obtained by *Mortification, Repentance, Ignominy, Poverty*, so *Menochius, Basil, Chrisostom, Hilarie, Austine*.

II. God's Goodness is great in not only suffering guilty Creatures to take Heaven by Violence, but even in exciting them to it, and in afflicting them in the performance of it.

III. We have a Description of the Way to the Imperial Heaven in these Words, *and the violent take it by Force:*

These who are truly convinc'd of Sin, of Righteousness and of Judgment (^a) labour to take heaven by storm and will not stick at any cost to obtain it. These seek with importunate vehemence, like *Jacob* of old, and will not cease until they obtain the blessing. (^b) These put a force upon their corrupt Nature, are willing to perform the hardest Services, and undergo the severest sufferings, in order to obtain the great Salvation, (*by force*) as *Dr. Hammond* observes; the *Jews* who were the Children of the Kingdom rejected it, and the despised *Gentiles* imbrac'd it with readiness and vehemence; even the Publicans and Harlots; the poor and Illiterate People, whom the proud Rabbins [*sic*] deem'd accursed.

Again, the Word seems to signify, that the Kingdom of Heaven is not now confin'd to one People as of old, but lies open and exposed, without any National enclosures, that whoever will take persevering pains for it may possess it; so *Brugensis*, *Titinus*, *Hilary* and *Ambrose*. Once more it may signify that the Kingdom of Heaven, is not now so much entail'd on Descent and progeny, as confer'd on persevering Virtue; so *Menochius* and *Maldonate*. We are said to take that by Violence which we tear out of anothers

^a John 16. 8.

^b Gen. 32. 26.

Hands; the Kingdom of Heaven seem'd to belong to the *Jews*, as children by the Covenant, even that Kingdom is seized and taken out of their Slothful indolent Hands, by the inferiour *Gentiles*, through the violence of Faith and earnest Labour.

From the Words of our Text, thus briefly paraphrased, we may observe the following Proposition, *viz.* That these who would obtain an Interest in the Kingdom of Heaven, must use *Violence*, in order to it.

Intreating upon this Proposition, I shall endeavor to shew, 1st, what are the Properties of this Kingdom. 2d, What are the Qualifications of its Possessors, or what is included in that *Violence* which is necessary in order to obtain an Interest in it. 3d. With whom we should use Violence. 4th. In what, 5th, For what. And then Improve it in a Threefold Use. 1. of *Information*, 2. *Examination*, and 3. *Exhortation*.

[1st Proposition: The properties of the Kingdom]

And, 1. I am to shew you what are the Properties of this Kingdom; it will appear, I think, by considering the following particulars, that it has all the amiable Qualities that may command Esteem, or excite, Desire. For,

1. It is an Ancient Kingdom, it had its rise before the Foundation of the Earth were laid, *Gen.1. 1.*

2. A Specious Kingdom: The Globe of the Earth is a vast Body in extent and Magnitude, and yet it is but a small Point, compared with the visible Heavens, which at an immense distance circle and compass it. Now the Emperial, or third Heaven is Superiour to, and therefore doubtless greater than the Christaline. Therefore well might the blessed Jesus inform his mourning Disciples, that in his Fathers House were many Mansions, *John 14. 2.*

3. A rich opulent Kingdom; it abounds with all things, that are necessary, for Honour, Support, Wealth, Pleasure. There are Thrones of Righteousness, Ensigns of Majesty, Palms of Victory, Mansions of Beauty, Diadems of Glory.

There unambitious Honour bears unsullied Laurels, being fearless of a Rival, or invidious Detractive. The poignant Darts of Malignant Reproach shall never stain the white Names of the Lambs followers in their Fathers Kingdom.

There is the Manna of Angels to feed upon; there be the pure Christal Fountains of Life to bathe in, and drink of, that Spring from the Throne of God, and the Lamb, with an invarible and eternal Tenor; there is the Tree of Life, richly laden with Apples of Salvation, bearing Twelve

manner of Fruits, whose Leaves are for the healing of the Nations. (c)

There are Streets of Gold, Gates of Pearl, and Walls of Jasper. (d) But above all, there is a Lamb of God, the Pearl of great Price, who is infinitely more valuable than if the immense Globe of the Earth, the unfathomable Deeps of the Ocean, the broad Sheets of the Christaline or Emperial Heavens were turned into a Body of Massy or Liquid Gold! And this Pearl, *dear Brethren*, whose worth Surpasses the highest Flight of an Angel's Thought to conceive, or his Tongue to express, belongs to every inhabitant of that Kingdom. O Blessed God, how Great and Stupendious is thy Mercy, and dear Affection, that suffers such a Kingdom to be taken through Violence by the guilty, base Creatures. But to proceed,

There are pure and perpetual Pleasures, sinless and unstain'd Delights; for the Lamb is the perpetual source of Light to the Metropolis of that Kingdom; there sin with all its ruful train of Sorrow, Shame, Solitude, Diseases, Darkness and Death, has not access or residence; all Tears are wiped away, Sorrow and Sighing forever flee; the Inhabitants of that Kingdom shall not say, they are sick.

^c Rev. 22. 1,2.

^d Rev. 21.

(^e) So that there will be no Avenues of entrance for that Sable Serjeant *Death* to arrest them: But on the contrary, the Sun of Righteousness will shine with unloaded [*sic*] Lustre upon all the Denizons of that City, opening to their Understandings, all the dark Scenes of Nature, Grace and Providence, shewing the united tendency of every of them to exalt the declaritive [*sic*] Honours of the Divine Perfections, and to secure the compleat [*sic*] Happiness of the Redeemed.

But more particularly expressing the amazing heights of his Wisdom, the Stupenduous [*sic*] depths of his Love, and the awful extent of his Power! what joyful Transports must needs possess the Breasts of the Redeem'd! When without an intercepting Glass they shall perpetually behold the Glorious Perfections of God, the amiable and transcendent Excellencies of the Redeemer, and clearly perceive (without the least doubt to Eternity) every of these engaged to promote their Happiness, and also feel the everlasting Streams of the Divine Love and Affection; and be bless'd with the Social Worship of Saints and Angels, without any defect, variation o[*] Period. But do I pretend

^e Isa. 33. 24

* The mss. copy is unclear. The word may be 'or' or 'of'.

to describe these things! Eye hath not seen, neither hath Ear heard, neither hath it entr'd in the Heart of Man, to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him. (^f)

4. A beautiful and glorious Kingdom; therefore called Paradise, with an Allusion to the earthly *Eden*, which was crowned with a variety of Beauties and innocent Pleasures. That must needs be a beautiful Place, which infinite Wisdom, has contriv'd, and infinite Power fram'd, for the Manifestation of the Perfections of the Deity, and the Consumation of his Peoples Felicity. That must needs be a glorious Place, where a glorious God being seated on a blazing Throne of solemn Majesty, and unexpressible Beauty, makes the Perfections of his blessed Nature shine forth with unvail'd Brightness and Splendor, to the equal wonder and delight of the whole Heavens, like the Sun in his Meridean Altitude, when no disky Cloud hides his Beauty, or intercepts his Rays. The happy Inhabitants of that Kingdom do then with open face (indeed) behold the Glory of God shining in the Face of Christ, and are transformed from Glory to Glory.

5. An unshaken and everlasting Kingdom. It is a City that hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God;

^f 1 Cor. 2. 9.

perfectly free'd from all the vertegenous Vicissitudes, or various Changes of Time, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. But I proceed to the Second propos'd, viz.

[2d Proposition: Description of Necessary Violence]

To shew what is included in that *Violence* which is necessary in order to obtain an interest in eternal Happiness. And,

1. It includes early Endeavors after Christ and Holiness, ^(g) for our *Creator must be remembered in the days of our Youth*; that which we love most, we will seek first; the blessed God being the greatest and best of Beings, and the Auther [*sic*], Preserver and Benefactor of ours, undoubtedly deserves our most ready Regards and intense Affections; and is best able to reward our defective Services, and Satiare our longing Souls. Add to this, that he encourages all those who seek him early, with the promise of a kind Reception. ^(h)

2. *Eager Desire*: It is the distinguishing Character, and prevailing Disposition of a Child of God to Thirst insatiably after Communion with him, and conformity to him,

^g Mat. 6.33. Eccles. 12.1.

^h Prov. 8.17

and a sense of his Love and Favour, more than Life itself,
 and its most amiable Enjoyments, shew me a Token for Good;
 (ⁱ) I have long'd for thy Salvation, O Lord, and thy Law is
 my delight, (^k) O! how vehement are the desires of convinced
 Souls, after the lovely Jesus; & pardon through his Blood,
 they contemn [*sic*] all things else in comparison of this,
 (^l) They are apt to speak in such Language as this, O! for
 a Christ, or I die; O! for a Christ, or I perish; O! if the
 blessed God wou'd but give me an interest in *Jesus* I wou'd
 be well, my hungry Soul wou'd be well satisfied, I wou'd be
 contented with Shame and Poverty, Pain and Death itself:
 O! the importunate pleadings! O! the unutterable Groans of
 such awaken'd Sinners! How do they Scale the Heavens with
 their Tears and Sighs, and will take no denial of Good;
 with what mournful Countenances and longing Hearts, will
 they look up to the visible heavens, the bright Pavement of
 their Fathers Courts! How do such dear Souls sit alone and
 keep Silence (^m) and yet continually breathe forth vehement

ⁱ Ps. 4.6. Ps. 42.1,2. Ps.63. 1.2.3,8. Ps.84.1,2.
 Ps.36.17.

^k Ps. 119.174.

^l Acts 2.37. Phil. 3.8.

^m Lam.3.28.

desires, strong cries, and sad complaints, until the Gracious God, (whose Ears are ever open to the Cries of the poor and oppressed) hears their Groans, and sets them at Liberty (ⁿ).

3. *Earnest Labour*: (^o) The lukewarm indolent Soul is hateful to Christ, and will (so continuing) be surely rejected with Abhorrence (^p) God never intended Heaven to gratify the wishes of sluggish *Balaam's* (^q) or indifferent *Gallio's* (^r) but to give those Rest that are Weary and heavy laden. (^s)

4. *Persevering Diligence* (^t) the Troubles of such as are truly and savingly convinc'd, are not like the morning Cloud and early Dew which soon passeth away, as is the sad

ⁿ Ps.102.20.

^o Luke 13.24.

^p Rev.3.15,16.

^q Numb.23.10.

^r Acts 18.17.

^s Mat.11.28.

^t Ep.6.8

case of many Hypocrites, whom God complains over, (^u) No, no, they want their Hearts thorowly [*sic*] and perpetually broken, and the Laws of God engraven on the Tables of them, as with a Pen of Iron, and the point of a Diamond, and laid in the Rock forever; they want to shed Seas of Grief for their breaches of these holy Laws; how freely can they joyn [*sic*] with *Jeremiah's* Petition, *Jer. 9.1*. It's their chief Sorrow that they Sorrow no more for Sin. But they not only mourn, but labour, *Acts 2. 37*. And observe by the way, that they not only labour for a time, and then leave off, as too many hypocrites do, but they keep seeking till they find, and can't content themselves in the Duty done, without the gracious Presence of God in it, (^a) like the Woman who diligently search'd for the piece of Silver until she found it, (^b) so do they seek after the Happiness of their lost perishing Souls, till they attain Satisfactory Evidences of it, and then they rejoyce indeed, and the whole Heavens with them, because the Child who was lost is

^u Hos.6.4

^a Mat.5.3. Luke 15.18.

^b Luke 15.9.

found, and the Person who was dead is made alive. (c) But I proceed to consider, the Third proposed which was

[3d Proposition]:

To shew with whom we should use *Violence*.

1. With God, in imploring his Mercy both for our selves and others, after the following manner, *viz.*

1. *Fervently*; with great intensesness of Spirit, Summoning all our Powers to, and solemnly engaging them in the Worship of the blessed God. It's such praying that's most like to succeed, the Incense mustbe put upon the burning Coals, (d) for it's the *fervent-Prayer of a Righteous Man that avails much*. (e)

2. *Affectionately*, with flowing Tears and heavy Groans; thus holy *Jacob* wrestled with the Angel, and prevailed, and why? Because he wept, and made Supplication unto him (w) The gracious God inform'd *Hezekiah*, that he had heard his Prayers, for he had seen his Tears, (*) "A crying Prayer, (says one) pierces the depths of Heaven, is like

^c Luke 15.9,24,32.

^d Lev. 16.12,13.

^e Jam. 5.16.

^w Hos. 12. 4.

^x 2 Kings 20.5.

Misick on the Water, Melody in the ears of God; Crys and Groans from a Heart truly broken in Prayer, are like so many Eloquent Advocates at the Throne of Grace.

3. *Believingly relying upon the Power or promise of God,* (^y) We may say at least, with the poor Man, who cry'd, *Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean* (^z)

4. *Argumentatively, Earnestly, but Reverently expostulating* with God, and pleading for Relief, by a variety of Arguments drawn from the Mercy of God, and our former Experiencies* of it; from the Name of God, and our Reliance thereon; from our Relation to the Divine Majesty, from the inflexible Equity, and gracious Promisses** of God, and the Reproach it will be to his Honour, if he will not hear and help his poor opposed and oppressed People.

These Arguments, and many more of the like Nature, we may find dispersed throughout the Sacred records, and frequently us'd by the faithful Servants of God in their distress and extremity *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*

^y James 1.6.

^z Luke 5.12.

* Note: Context suggests "experiences".

** Note: Context suggests 'promises'.

Hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercy, Selah. ^(a) Awful was the threatening of God against *Israel*, *Deut.* 9.14. *Let me alone, that I may destroy them.* And memorable the pleadings of *Moses* to prevent the Execution of it, from the 26th verse of the same Chapter, to the end.

5. *Importunately* and *perseveringly*; being urgent and instant in Prayer. To be so, is not only a Duty but a sign of *Mercy's* being near; when *Elijah* had prayed seven Times, the Cloud appear'd. ^(b) The excellency and efficacy of this way of Praying, is represented by our Lord in Two pathetic Parables. ^(c) Deservedly famous is the instance of the *Woman of Canaan*, who notwithstanding a Series of dejecting discouragements, yet continued instant. ^(d) Go you and do likewise, and thou shan't fare worse.

[Transition: Not only should we use violence with God, we must use violence with ourselves]

^a Ps.77.9. Ps. 74.1. Ps.27.9. Ps.4.1. Ps.9 10. and 31.17.

^b 1 Kings 43.

^c Luke 11.8. Luke 18.5.

^d Matt. []5, 22,---- 28. Note: This may be an error. The context seems to refer to the importunity of the woman with the issue of blood, which is in Matt. 9.20-22.

2. With our selves, in exciting our selves to Duty in general, and to these Duties in particular, to which we have a natural Aversion.

We must stir up ourselves to lay hold on God, and press forward towards the Mark set before us. (^e) As to the Duties of Religion in General; we must use *Violence* in resisting the following Hindrances to them, viz.

1. The Sloth of our Nature, which inclines us to safe ease and indolence, and break through the strong Chains and soft Enchantments of all such Voices which under the pretext of Ease, betrays your thoughtless Souls into endless Pains and Agonies, and utterly bereaves us of true Liberty and Happiness. How long^{1*} wilt thou Sleep, O Sluggard? When wilt thou awake out of thy Sleep? (^f) *Dear Brethren*, We must labour to rouse our selves out of this Sloathful^{**} Security, and resist the flattering Charms of it, as a drowsy Man would do when he perceives the House on fire over his Head. To excite this, we should consider,

^e Phil.3.14.

¹Note: The context suggests that this should be 'long'.

^f Prov. 6.9. John 1.6

^{**} Note: The context suggests that this should be "Slothful".

(1) That as the Sluggards Field is cover'd with Thorns, and his Back with Rags, as *Solomon* instructs us, so Sluggish Souls are over grown with Corruptions, depriv'd of the Robes of the Redeemers Righteousness, and can expect nothing (reasonably) but Shame and contempt. And, (2) That the Sluggards desire, slay him, because his Hands refuse to labour, (^g) So do Sluggish Slothful Sinners deceive and damn themselves, by foolishly imagining their *Balaam* like ineffectual*** Wishes to be signs of a good State. And, (3) Doesn't the Sluggard turn himself upon his Bed, as the Door upon its Hinges, and crying *A little more Sleep, a little more Slumber?* Doesn't he therefore fold his Hands in his Bosom, and eat his own Flesh? And may not carnal Slothful Sinners, that fondly hug their sinful Ease and Security in despite of the Remonstrances of Reason and Conscience, foolishly delaying to seek pardoning Mercy? and courting a little more Sleep, a little more Slumber, also expect to eat their own Flesh i.e., to be fill'd with such Indignation against themselves (perhaps when it's too late to mend the matter) that they will be desirous to tear out their own Bowels for their Madness in neglecting (thro' Sloth) to improve the precious Price out into their Hands,

^g Prov.21.25.

*** Note: Context suggests 'ineffectual'.

in Hell there will be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Once more, (4) The Sluggard will not Plow by reason of cold, and so want's Bread in the Harvest. ^(h) so are there not many sloathful [sic] Souls that neglect these Duties of Religion, which are as necessary to obtain Happiness as plowing is to prepare for a Crop, because of some difficulty that attends the performance? But as there is no Comparison between suffering a little Cold and starving for want of Bread: So is there any paralel [sic] between the temporary Pains of Mortification and the eternal Agonies of Damnation? But

[We must use violence with Satan]

[These are OBJECTIONS to using violence.]

We should equally resist the Temptation of Satan with the Sloth of our own Nature; O how many are the Artful policies and deep devices of Satan to keep the People of God, especially from the sweet Duties of Religion?

[Objection]

1. Sometimes he will tell them that they are not in a right Frame now, your Prayer with such a cold Frame, will signify nothing, it will be but a mere mocking of God, stay a little longer till you get a good frame, and then go to

^h Prov.20.4.

Prayer; and so perhaps the Season of the Day is lost and the poor Soul is brought under Guilt by the sinful Neglect; Satan, thy Temptation is both unreasonable and false.

[Answer]

1. It's unreasonable; it's as if a poor Beggar would neglect asking Alms, 'till it was given him without asking for, (which he cannot reasonably expect) and then go and ask for it. And then,

[Answer]

2. It's false that there is no good in such Prayers as are offer'd with a Cold frame; the Matter is surely good, for it is an Act of Obedience to the divine Command; and oftentimes when the People of God begin with a cold frame, they end in a warm one; for God will meet these that wait upon him in his Way. Diligence after this manner, with a holy Violence is an Evidence of our uprightness, and the good God us not unjust to forget our Work of Labour and of Love. And truly it is an Act of greater Self-denial to be diligent in Duty when God's Face is hid from us, than when we are under the shines of it. Again,

[Objection]

3. Satan will plead, you have no Time, no Time for Prayer; and so point to other Duties you have to do;

Answ. Pray how can this be, for what was all our Time given us? But to serve God and secure an interest in his Love? What have we time to free our Bellies and chatter idle Discourse, and no time to serve the God that made us? O shame! But

[Objection]

4. If Satan finds that we will go to Prayer [he will] do what he can, then he'll listen into your Ear, be short, be short, just run over the Heads of Prayer, and that will do for this time well enough; God knows your wants before you speak, you can't inform him, he is unchangeable, you can't turn him, and also you must beware of vain Repetitions. It's true Satan, we can't inform God, but we should obey him, we can't affect him, but we may in some Sort ourselves. Again.*

[Objection]

7. The Devil will alledge [*sic*] that it favours too much of the Covenant of Works of a legal Spirit to be so Diligent in Duties.

[Answer]

I answer, It's as great a Falsehood as the Father of Lies can invent, and in it he vents his hellish venom with a

* Note: There were no points 5 and 6. Typesetter's error?

view to sully the Beauty and disparage the Honour of the whole Gospel, as if it relax'd in a Measure our Obligations to Holiness, which is the vilest affront to Redeeming Love that can be imagin'd, for our Obligations, instead of being lessened are exceedingly encreased [*sic*] by the condescending goodness of God in Christ, who has come to destroy the works of the Devil, and given us great and precious Promises, yielding the strongest excitements to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit. (ⁱ)

[Objection]

Querie, But isn't it a Sin to strive in our own strength?

[Answer]

I Ans. It is a Sin to depend upon our own strength, or performances, as tho' they could commend us to God, or merit his Favour. But I assert that it is no Sin, but an important Duty for us to use our strength in God's Service, to stir up our selves to take hold upon him, for to him that hath shall be given. (^k) Mat.13.12. But

ⁱ 2 Cor.7.1.

^k Matt. 13.12.

[Transition: Not only should we use violence with God, with ourselves and with Satan. . .]

3. We should use Violence in resisting the Temptations of the World against Duty, as particularly.

1. [We should use Violence in resisting the temptations] Of the Business of the World, and many Hypocrite professors will make the Worship of God, truckle to Mammon, they'll pray a few Words in the Evening, when the Business and Diversions of the House, are over, when they themselves are perhaps half asleep, and the rest a snoreing [sic] sweet Prayers! But will they pray in the Morning? commonly no; have a care of that, they have something of greater Weight to be done, their dearly Beloved Mammon is to be worshipped, and his golden Precepts speedily obey'd, the God of Heaven must take up with the Worlds leavings and Scraps, and be served when they have nothing else to do. What wou'dn't you have them to serve him first whom they love best? I confess it's very natural to do so. We can't well serve two Masters at once, if Christ and Reason may have any Credit, ⁽¹⁾

[We should use Violence in resisting the temptations]...

¹ Matt. 6.24.

2. Of the pleasures of the World: How lively can many be in discourse, in eating and drinking, they can sit up late enough to perform these pleasant tasks; but when wver Prayer comes upon the Board, then their Spirits lag, and they are presently disposed to take a Nap; Is this taking Heaven by Violence!

[We should use Violence in resisting the temptations]..

3. Of the People of it, if any strangers or acquaintances come in, then don't many People shut Prayers out of doors, and perhaps spend their Time in impertinent unedifying Discourse, as if they were ashamed of the Service of God; But I believe they are not ashamed to Eat before them, if* they are to pray. But if we are ashamed of Christ's Worship here without Repentance and Reformation, he will be ashamed of us when he comes in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.

[We should use Violence in resisting the temptations]..

4. Of the God of it, We must use Violence against Satan by discrediting his Fair, but false Promises, by comtemning [*sic*] his empty threats, resisting his sly Disputations; we hadn't best hold a parley with him, for he has too much Subtilty for us to vanquish by dispute, we

* Note: Context prefers "as" more than "if".

stand upon unequal Ground with him, both in respect of Age and Experience, and therefore it's much safer for us to resist him, and then he will fly from us; and to hasten from his crafty Sophisms and strong Temptations upon the Wings of devout Supplication to God, and with Michael the Arch-Angel pray to *Jehovah* to rebuke him. We must fight against all the Hosts of Hell, but it should be in the Armour of God; every Part of which we should be careful to have on in the field of Battle, (which continues during our abode in the Wilderness) it's advisable in our disputes with Devils to observe Martial Order, to eye our Captain General, and obey his Directions, to keep our Faces against the Enemy as well as our respective Places in the Field of Fight, and not to give Ground one Hairs breadth for all the Forces of Hell and Earth, but rather advance by a steady regular Progress upon the Enemy, by which they are discouraged and we strengthened. (^m)

4. We must use Violence against Sin.

1. In resisting its Motions, which is indulged, proceed to outward Acts. (ⁿ) as also

^m Ep.6.13.14.

ⁿ Jam.1.15.

2. In avoiding outward Temptations and enducements [sp] to Sin. These that are Sincere will shun the Appearance of Evil, (^o) but Hypocrites are bold Fellows, they'r not afraid to tread the Devils ground, because they'r ignorant of their own Weakness as well as Satans strength, and are void of real Love to Holiness. And

3. In withdrawing Fewel² from our Lusts, using Moderation in Meats, and sometimes a total Abstinence, which is of vast Service in the course of Christianity, *nam sine cerere et baca friget venus*, without Meats and Drinks lusts languishes. There are some Devils that will not be cast out without Fasting and Prayer, (^q) and labour in Concurrence with the Divine Assistance to strangle the first Conceptions and buds of it, (*obsta principiis*) it's easiest crushing this Cockatrice in the Egg, the longer it's indulged, the stronger and more impetuous it grows, like Water running thro' a small Hole or Crevice in a Mill-dam, if it be for a while neglected, increases to a violent Torrent, and scorns Resistance. To excite you to this noble Work, think of the Words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the *Hebrews* Chap. 12. verse 4. You have not

^o 1 Thes.5.22.

² Note: Probably "fuel".

^q Rom.8.13.

resisted unto blood, striving against Sin. But I proceed to the 4th Proposition, viz. to shew in what we should use Violence.

Now to prevent a tedious prolixity, I shall only transiently touch at a few of many Duties, which I think suit the present State of my Audience.

And,

1. We must use Violence, in reading the holy Word of God, that Magazine of Martial Furniture, that Mine of the purest Gold, that Treasure of Sacred Truth, in which is hid the orient Pearl of everlasting Value. Here is the Pole-star of pure Precepts to direct us. Here is the Manna of precious promises to refresh us. Here are the awful Beacons of dreadful threatenings and example to terrify and affright us from Sin, and guide our wandring [*sic*] Souls into the Port of Bliss.

Now the Violence that we must use, in reading the Scripture is against the Sloth and infidelity of our Natures, and the lightness of our Spirits, we should read the Oracles of God with Order, frequency, seriousness and believing Application. (^r) The *Bereans* were commended for

^r Job. 5.39.

the searching their Scriptures. (^s) it is with a solemn pause, having first implored heaven for Direction and Illumination, that we should open the leaves of the sacred Records, labouring to hear the Voice of God in them, and observing the Characters of divine Majesty engraven on them.

2. [We must use Violence] in hearing the Word: This we shou'd labour to prepare for by considering the Necessity and Importance of this Duty (^t) as well as the Danger, and sin of neglecting or abusing the Oppertunities [*sic*] of performing it. (^u) and by supplicating Heaven for your own Preparation, and the Ministers Direction to speak to your Case. O the Groans upon a Sabbath Morning! Ye ought to endeavour to plow up the fallow Ground of your Hearts by Consideration and Prayer, that there may be some Room for the Seed of the Word in your Hearts, that it may'nt be sow'd among Thorns, (^w) or hard Rocks, and devour'd by the Birds of Prey; and when you come to hear, you should attend carefully to what is spoken, believe firmly what's

^s Acts 17.11.

^t Rom.10.14.

^u Jam.1.21,22. Heb. 2.3.

^w Jer.4.3.

agreeable to the Scriptures of Truth, apply closely what is suitable to your Case, and obey evangelically. (^x) And,

3. [We must use Violence] In Self Examination. (^y) Examine your selves whether ye be in the Faith, prove your own selves; this Examination should be speedy without Delay, impartial without previous Byas, universa; of our State, Frames, Thoughts, Speeches, Actions; without Limitation, regular, without Variation from the Word, which is the proper Test and Touch-stone of Goodness, the Standard of Sincerity, and Scale of Action. And

4. [We must use Violence] In self Judging (^z) for if we Judge our selves, we shall not be judged; this should be deliberate and decisive, after having weighed our Evidences in the Sanctuary's Scales with great Solemnity and Exactness, we should come to a positive conclusive Judgment, concerning the goodness or badness of our State; and not always hang in suspence [sic], between Hope and Fear. If our State be good, we want the Comfort of it in a World of Sorrow, if bad, we need the Consideration of its

^x Acts 16.14. Heb.4.2. Acts 2.37. Jam.1.22

^y 2 Cor. 13.5.

^z 1 Cor.11.31.

Danger and terror, to alarm and excite us to that Pain and Labour which is necessary to obtain an Escape.

5. [We must use Violence] In Consideration (^a) Now as the Neglect of this Duty exposes to the most destructive Dangers, even to be tore in Pieces by the Hand of Justice, so the right performance of it enhances the most valuable and durable Benefits, Conversion to the divine Majesty, and the dear Caresses of the Arms of his Mercy. The Father fell upon the Prodigals Neck and kissed him. (^b) The Subjects to be especially thought of, are the Terrors of an Offended Sovereign, the dangers of a guilty State, the glories of the celestial Paradise, the Horrors of the infernal Furnace, the Charms of Holiness, the deformities of Vice, and Beauties of the divine Goodness; there be many other necessary Duties, such as Family Religion, Instruction of Children, keeping the Sabbath, avoiding excessive Worldly care, et cet. Which I shou'd mention, but the Time would fail me; and therefore we come to the

5th Proposition: Which was to shew, for what we should use Violence, before I propose the particular Reasons, I shall

^a Ps. 50.22.

^b Ezek. 18.28.

first endeavor to confirm the Truth of the general Proposition, which I think is very evident from the various Metaphors in Scripture, representing the Christian Travels to the New *Jerusalem*, such as these following, viz. of Running (^c) Wrestling (^d) Fighting (^e) Now do not every of these clearly and emphatically hold forth the utmost Necessity of Pains and Vehemence in the Service of the most high God? In running a Race, doesn't a Man bend his Body forward, use all his Strength and Swiftness to gain the Prize! So must we *Dear Brethren*, if we would gain, not a Garland of Bays, (which is said to be the Reward of Olimpick [*sic*] contests) but a Spangling never fading Crown of Life and Glory. In Wrestling isn't all the strength of the Body exerted to prevent a shameful Fall? So my *Dear Brethren*, if we who are call'd to contend with Devils, these strong & subtil [*sic*], Spirits do not use much labour and earnestness in Petitioning God, and opposing them, they'l [*sic*] certainly give us a doleful and destructive fall, into the dark Deeps of the damned Dragons. Again, when Men fight, isn't all their Vigor excited and Anger inflam'd to foil their Opponent, and gain the Honours of

^c Heb.12. 1

^d Ep.6.12.

^e 1 Tim.6.12.

the Field of Battle? So must we with the utmost hate and revenge oppose Sin and Satan; (^f) and that not so much for the Honours, as the Benefits of the Victory, which are Noble as our Souls, and lasting as our God.

But more particularly, the Reasons of using Violence are these.

1. God commands it, strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (^g) And surely, a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness woun't [*sic*] command what was unreasonable or unnecessary; won't you obey, poor Sinners, the God that made you, in a case that so highly concerns your greatest Interest!

2. The Nature of the Case requires it; the Duties of Holiness are so contrary to our corrupt Affections that we must do Violence to the one, if we wou'd perform the other: The enemies of Religion are so numerous, so malicious, so politick, so powerful, that without watchful Violence we are in danger, either of being betray'd by the Craft and Subtilty, or vanquished by the might and malice of these

^f 2 Cor. 7.11.

^g Luke 13.24.

restless Enemies of our Souls, who either by artful Ambuscades, or open Assaults continually seek our Ruin,

3. The importance of the Case deserves it: Is there anything of equal Moment with that of Securing, the endless Happiness of our deathless Souls? No surely, for what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul, if he should gain the whole World and lose the same? ^(h) O! the idle Amusements, insipid Pleasures and ensnaring gains of a *vain* World! They are as the emptiest Dreams and basest dross in comparison with it! This is the one thing necessary which whoever obtains, secures not only the best but the most necessary Part. We may apply with too great reason the Words of Christ to *Martha*, to many unconverted Sinners, *Martha, Martha*, thou art careful about many things, but one Thing is needful. ⁽ⁱ⁾

[III. IMPROVEMENT]

I proceed to the Improvement in Three fold Use before mention'd; the First of which, was that of information.

[A. Information]

Doth the Kingdom of Heaven suffer Violence? Then this informs us

^h Mat.16. 6. 26.

ⁱ Luke 10.12.

1. Of the great goodness of God in the following instances.

1. In preparing such a Kingdom for Sinning Mankind, while in the mean time he utterly abandon'd and passed by the whole race of the sinning Angels, Creatures of a nobler Mould and higher Order than we, and never gave them one offer of a pardoning Mercy after their Apostacy.

2. In sending his only begotten Son out of his Bosom in the fullness of Time to take upon him, not the Nature of Angels, but the seed of *Abraham*, in Order by the labours of his Life, and sufferings of his Death to purchase that prepar'd Happiness for his People (^k)

3. In sending a Troop or Choir of his Elect Angels to publish to the perishing World the Birth of this Purchaser and Saviour who is Christ the Lord. (^l) and

4. In sending the apostles further to discover the Beauty and Glory of the purchased Happiness, than was done before under the Shadowy Jewish Oeconomy [*sic*]. Hence we are told, that Life and Immortality was brought to light through the Gospel. (^m)

^k Heb. 10.19.

^l Luke 2.9, 10, 11.

5. In proposing this Happiness on the most equal Terms, viz. The forsaking our Iniquities and using Violence to obtain it. Now our Safety, Liberty and Life, obliges us to comply with the first: And Honour and Gratitude, with the Second.

6. In sending his Ambassadors to urge us by the most proper and powerful perswasives [sic] to a compliance with these equal Terms. And,

7. In sending his blessed Spirit, to Seal their Attempts, and prepare poor Sinners for that glorious Good which the Father had prepared, and God the Son had purchased for them. (ⁿ) These things duly consider'd may make us use the Apostles Exclamation, O the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out. (^o) And in another place, may be able to comprehend with all the Saints, what is the Breadth and Length, and Depth and Height; and to know the love of Christ which

^m 2 Tim.1.10.

ⁿ John 16.8.

^o Rom. 11.33

passeth knowledge, that ye may be fill'd with all the fullness of God. (P)

[Transition: The fact that the kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence also informs us]..

2. Of the great madness, ingratitude and obstinacy of Sinners in slighting and rejecting so great a Salvation; What can be a more Astonishing pitch of folly and madness than to reject the sweetest Life, the most valuable Liberty, and never expiring Glory, for a Bondage, Shame and Death! for the transient trifles and sordid rubbish of this perishing World that can't satisfy us while we have them and must soon be taken from us, or we from them. Or for base lusts that dishonour and enslave us; for Honours that have no substantial Goodness, but the most corrupting fatal Effects!

And what can be more ungrateful and obstinate than to slight the most compassionate and dear Mercy! the most ravishing Goodness and the greatest Glory? Such free, rich, valuable, dearly purchased, and everlasting Benefits! So condescendingly offer'd! So importunately enforc'd! by the softest Charms, the strongest Arguments at the sweetest

^P Eph. 3.18,19.

incentives that are wont to make Impressions on Mens' understandings, or consciences, their Fears or their Love! What say you Sinners! Will you always slight this great Salvation! What! Slight the most tremendous Majesty! The tenderest expresses of Bowel Mercy! the brightest blaze of ravishing and amazing Glory! And shall the Holy Jesus have always reason to complain over you! as he did over the obstinate *Jews*? *O Jerusalem Jerusalem*, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not!

(^q) What ails you poor wretched unconverted Sinners! Where is your Reason and Consciences! Alas! Have you abandon'd both? Aren't you the most infatuated Creatures that ever breath'd? who thus vilely trifle with the great God, and your poor perishing Souls! And sordidly reject the offers of his Love, and thereby your own Life and Happiness: for how shall we escape is we neglect so great Salvation? (^r) *O* cruel World, that thus slight the blessed God! the Holy Jesus, and their own Souls Happiness! Your eyes will be open'd by and by to see the horrid glaring Scene of your Shame and Guilt, your Stupidity, obstinacy, madness and misery! If not to your Humiliation and Conversion, then

^q Mat.23.27.

^r Heb.2.3.

surely among the damned to your Confusion and Torment; then will you fill those dismal Regions with doleful Roarings, hideous Screeches, [and] passionate, but useless lamentations!

But I pass, to the

Second Use [of Violence] which is Examination; pray Heaven, do you use that Violence to obtain Heaven which I describ'd [sp] in the Doctrinal part of this Discourse? How is it with you? poor Sinners? Do you seek after Happiness with such early endeavor, eager Desire, earnest labour, and persevering Deligence [sp]?

Do you use Violence with God by praying to him fervently, affectionately, believingly, argumentatively, and importunately?

Do you also use Violence with your selves in opposing your sloth and in a conscienticy [sic] performance of all known Duty? As also in opposing the Temptations of Satan and of Sin, in faithfully resisting its inward Motions and carefully shunning outward Incentives to it?

Do ye also conscientiously oppose the Temptations of the World in the Business of it, yea, pleasures of it, and People of it? Again,

Do ye use Violence in the performance of these following Duties of Religion?

1. In reading the Word of God with such Frequency, Order, Seriousness, Belief, Application and Practice? as was before hinted?

2. In hearing the Word, do you labour and prepare for it, by Meditation and Prayer? and do you Solemnly attend to what you hear, as in the presence of God? Do you closely apply your proper Portion, and Evangelically practice it? And,

3. Do you Examine your selves with such impartiality, and regularly as has been spoken? And,

4. Do you judge your selves deliberately, and decisively, and habitually Practice the great Duty of solemn and affecting Consideration?

Do you realy [*sic*] use this Violence, my *Brethren* If so, then

[Encouragement]

1. Bless God for exciting you to it, and affecting you in it: Without his preventing influence you would have been as secure and sloathful [*sic*] as others are.

2. Rejoice in his distinguishing Goodness, for this conscientious evangelical Violence, is a sure presage of

eternal Happiness. Our Text informs us, that the Kingdom of heaven suffers Violence, and that the Violent take it by Force: Ye shall reap if ye faint not; he that perseveres to the end shall obtain a Crown of Life that fadeth not away. This may encourage, animate, and content you in all the labours and sufferings of Life; for what are these in Comparison of that weight of Glory which shall be revealed; (^s).

[Warning]

But Alas! What reason is there to fear that a great Number of you have the very contrary qualities to these now mention'd!

Are there not some who instead of seeking Heaven early, delay that grand pursuit, one Month and Year after another, who Instead of being eager in Desire, or earnest in Labour that way, are secure and lukewarm Laodicean-like, inconstant as the Wind that blows in the Affairs of Religion. Don't the Aims, Desires and Labours of most of you bend to an opposite Mark, and run in a quite contrary Vein? How vehement are your desires, how early, earnest, & persevering are your Labours about the enjoyments of this

^s 2 Cor []17. Note: This probably refers to 2 Cor. 4:17 *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"*

dying Life! while in the mean Time the great concerns of your Souls, and eternity are sadly neglected! Doesn't your common vein of Speech betray your Worldly Hearts? they are (saith St. John) of the World; therefore speak they of the World, and the World heareth them, (^t)

Instead of praying fervently, affectionately, believably, argumentatively, importunately, don't you pray coldly, stupidly, presumptuously indifferently, abruptly; and offer Violence to your own Reason and Consciences, in sinning against God, by knowingly, and habitually, breaking his blessed Laws, and slighting his rich Love: (^u) and thereby prove your selves to be the Children of your Father the Devil, (^w) Are there not many, who instead of using Violence with their Corrupt Nature, in opposing sloath, do Violence to their Consciences by indulging it?

Are there not many, who instead opposing Violence in opposing the Temptations of Satan, and the Worlds Business, People Pleasures, do run knowingly into the Way of Temptation? tempt the Devil to tempt them, as if he was too slow in his Work, embarrass themselves in needless, worldly Business, or imploy their thoughts and cares inordinately

^t 1 John 4.5.

^u Matt. 22.5.

^w John 8.44. John 3.8.

about that which is Necessary, and who court and cover needless Conversation with wicked People, and thereby discover their damnable Hypocrisy, and themselves to be the very Sons and Daughters of Death, notwithstanding all their fair pretences?

Are there not many, who instead of using Violence against sinful Motions, secretly indulge them, and thereby prove themselves to be but whited Sepulchres? and who instead of withdrawing the Fuel of Sin, *make provision for the Flesh to fulfill the Lusts thereof,* (*)

And how few among us use such Violence in reading of the Word, as I described? Are not our Bibles almost moulded in our Chests, or upon our Shelves? Who is there that reads that blessed Book with Solemnity and close Application? Who is there among you that hears the Word with such previous Preparation, close Attention, and believing Application, and evangelical Obedience? Don't you hear it with indifferency and unconcernedness, as the Words of a Man, rather than of God? And forget it as fast as you hear it! Don't I saw upon hard Rocks! Where are the effects of a preached Gospel? Where is there one convinced humble Soul among you at present that Labours to take Heaven by Violence.

* Rom.13.14

Again, Instead of examining and judging your selves, as I before described, don't some of you Studiously avoid the knowledge of your State, and are still in suspense between a groundless Hope and a just Fear, and will not come to a conclusive Judgment about your Condition, for fear of the necessary pain that it would Occasion? And to this end, don't you *carefully* ward of all the Strokes, and Arrows of the Word which would wound or awake you? And,

As to the Duty of solemn Consideration upon terrible Subjects, don't you keep your selves as great Strangers to it as you can, lest your present false Peace should be disturbed? Arn't you rushing along, *poor Sinners*, to a vast Eternity in a thoughtless inconsiderate course of Action? In which you will be quickly plung'd? (So continuing) and brought to your Senses with a Vengeance, and made to roar out eternally without hope or help of your present Madness and Folly!

Is it necessary to use Violence in order to obtain eternal Happiness? Then what will become of the following sorts of Sinners?

1. Of the Secure, who have never been so much as convinc'd thoroughly of their damnable Condition, who have

never cried out with the Prodigal, *I perish with Hunger* ^(y),
 or with *Peters* hearers, *Men and Brethren*, what shall we do?
 (^z)

2. Of *Apostates*, who have been convinc'd, but draw
 back to Perdition. (^a) Arn't these posses'd with seven
 Devils? (^b)

3. *Formalists*, who content themselves with a dead form
 of Religion; O! That such wou'd consider Seriously that
 saying of Christ, *Mat. 5. 28 But I say unto you, That*
whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath
committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.

4. *Prophane People* of all Sorts, *Drunkards, Swearers,*
Whoremongers, Adulterers, Sabbath-breakers, Thieves: Don't
 all these storm Hell, and endeavor to take Damnation by
 Violence, out of the Hands of the Devil? They are as
 earnest, as if they wou'd take up no Denial; But they

^y Luke 15.17.

^z Acts 2.37.

^a Heb.10.38,39.

^b Mat. 12.43---45.

needn't fear, they shall have their Wages (so continuing)
as sure as God is truth. (c)

5. *Covetous, Idolatrous Worldings*; these are using
Violence indeed, but for this Earth; these merciless Rooks
are tearing all they can out of the Hands of it's just
Owners; perhaps as if they cou'd never, never, get enough
of that Earth, they set their hearts and Souls upon; But I
may tell them for their comfort they shall by and by, get
their Eyes and Mouths and Hearts full of it in the darksome
Grave, where their pamper'd Bodies will quickly become a
ga[]ful Skeleton of dry Bones! Let these Earth Worms read
their Portion, *Ephes 5.5.* [*For this ye know, that no
whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is
an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ
and of God.*]

6. *Filthy Hypocrites*, who have double Tongues and
divided Hearts; these Stage Players in Religion, who gave
their Maker the Tongue, the Cap and Knee; for in Speech
they profess much Love to God and Violence for Heaven, but
in the mean while, in Hearts go after Covetousness and

^c 1 Cor.6.9,10.

other Lusts. (d) Read your Doom, *you hollow hearted Hypocrites*, in the 24th Chapter of St. Matthew the 51st verse. [*He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*]

Third and last Use [of Violence], is a Use of Exhortation:

Be intreated, *Friends and Brethren*, in the Name of God, to use Violence, in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven; to this end consider, I beseech you, the following Arguments, or Motives. And,

1. It is a necessary Duty, and that in two Respects, viz. of *Command* and *Mean*.

1. Of *Command*, Strive to enter in at the strait gate, *for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able* (e) Let us Labour therefore to enter unto that Rest, lest any Man fall, after the same Example, of unbelief. (f) Isn't it necessary to obey your Creator!

2. Of *Mean*

^d Ezek.33.31.

^e Luke 13.24.

^f Heb.4.11.

[a] In respect of God; we can do nothing to purpose in Religion without his assistance. (^g) which can't ordinarily be obtained without Labour. (ⁱ)

[b] In respect of us.

For 1. The Gate is strait therow* which we are to pass; for Conviction and Conversion is quite contrary to our Natural ease and Inclination.

2. The Way is narrow, which we are to Travel in; the path of Holiness is opposite to our corrupt Dispositions; for the carnal Mind, is Enmity against God. (^k)

3. The Enemies many that we are to Travel through, and very crafty, powerful and invidious; the World, the Devil and the flesh lye continually in Ambush to destroy us, or else Labour by open Combat to make us quit the Field of Battle, or lye at their Feet as bleeding

^g John 15.5.

ⁱ Mat.25.29

* Note: Context suggests this word is 'through'.

^k Rom.8.7. Joh.3.6.

Victims to their Rage: These Considerations prove plainly, the absolute necessity of *Violence*, if we would be *Victorious* and obtain the good we seem to aim at, and propose. If some seek that shall never find, how shall these find that never, or but coldly Seek?

[Not only is *Violence* a *necessary Duty*,]...

2. It's a very *beneficial Duty*, for in the performance of it, we are like to obtain eternal Happiness; and what is so valuable in itself; or should be so much desir'd by us, as this Ancient, spacious, rich, beautiful and everlasting Kingdom?

[*Violence* is a *necessary duty*, a *beneficial duty*, and also]...

3. It is a very *Rational Duty*; in doing this, we comply with the united voice of Reason, of Conscience, of Man, and of God, in obeying our Maker, and securing our greatest Interest. Awake then, *you sluggish Souls*, and strive to enter in at the strait Gate; *for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

4. Others are battering the Heavens night and day, with Tears and Sighs and Groans, as I am informed, they are

comming [sic] to Christ in Flocks in *New England*, at this
 time; and will you forever lye [sic] still in your beds, of
 carnal Security, over the dreadful steeps of Damnation;
 like a sleepy Man, on the top of a Mast! *Wretched Sinners!*
 Isn't there one Soul among you all that will be perswaded
 [sic] to awake this day? Ah! not one prodigal prevail'd
 what to return to his offended Father! Not one *Lidia* open
 her Heart to hear the Word of Christ? *O Doleful! O*
Mournful! Mournful! Mournful! O wretched mould of your
 Hearts! *you hardened Sinners*, suffer me to bewail over you
 in the Language of mourning *Jeremiah*, *Oh! That my head were*
Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might
weep day and night for the slain of the Daughter of my
People. (1)

5. Awake and strive, *Sinners*, to enter in at the strait
 Gate; for see what vehement Labour and Hardship of Travel,
 Heat and Cold, Perils by Land and Sea, many perform, endure
 and expose themselves to, and all to secure a little
 worldly Pelf*; Won't you take as much pains about your
 Souls, as they about their Bodies and Estates, about an

¹ Jer.9.1

* Ill gotten gains.

Eternal, as they about a Temporal good[?] O Shame! O
Wonderful!

6. The Violence that many wicked People take to Damn themselves, by wicked Courses, should make you more painful in seeking the Happiness of your poor Souls; shall they take more pains in the Service of the Devil, than you in the Service of God; more pains for Damnation, than you for your Salvation! O strange madness!

7. See what Violence the Devil uses against you to destroy you; and won't you take as much pains to save your Souls, under God, as the Devil doth to damn them!

I shall conclude with the Words of Moses to the People of Israel, Deut. 30 from verse 15 to 20. See I have set before you this day, Life and Good and Death and Evil, in that I command you this Day &c &c^{*}

["...to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you mayest live and multiply: and the LORD your God

* Note: The author uses the symbols "&c &c" here. However, since he has given us the verses 15-20, I assume that he had left his notes and read directly from the Bible. Therefore, instead of using "&c &c", I have included the Scripture text to which he referred within brackets []. Like Tennent, I have used the KJV, and have followed his example of using 'you' instead of 'thee', and 'your' instead of 'thy'.

shall bless you in the land whither you goest to possess it. But if your heart turn away, so that you wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: That you mayest love the LORD your God, and that you mayest obey his voice, and that you mayest cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”]

And of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews, Heb. 4.11

Let us Labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Amen.

APPENDIX 4

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES¹

Matth. V. xx. *For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

These Words are as weighty and solemn, and as much² deserve and require our serious and speedy Consideration and close Application, as any I know of in the whole Book of God.

It is a most difficult Task to bring back secure Sinners to the serious Search of their State towards God, and their Springs of Action; they conclude without an

¹Gilbert Tennent, *The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees Considered in a Sermon on Matth.V. 20. Preach'd at the Evening-Lecture in Boston, January 27. 1740,1.* (Boston: J. Draper for D. Henchman, in Cornhill, 1741) BA copy. Evans number 4821.

²Typesetter error? Context suggests 'such' instead of 'much'.

impartial Tryal, without Reason, that they are in a safe Condition, and so go on building a Fabrick in the Air.

They endeavor to grow in Grace, before they get Grace. But can the fond and groundless Notions of Men's Brains alter the Nature of God and of Things? Will a Building stand well without a foundation, or upon a sandy one? Would it not be better for Mankind, to labor with Impartiality and Speed to know the worst of their State, while there is an Opportunity to get it alter'd?

Is it reasonable for men, in order to prevent a little necessary and transient Trouble of Mind, to rush upon the Bosses of God's Buckler? To rush against the strongest Remonstrances of Conscience and of God, into inexpressible, incomprehensible, intolerable, and eternal Torments? Is not this just as if a Man, in order to escape the Bite of a Mosquitoe, would run his naked Bosom against a drawn Sword?

I am grieved to behold the preposterous Practice of many of this Generation, who like foolish Children are attempting to raise a Superstructure, before they lay the Foundation.

I would to God, that the golden Saying of our Lord, *A corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit*, was better understood, and more furiously pondered upon, by the Professors of this Age.

If *all that are born of the Flesh, be Flesh* and if *he that is in the Flesh, (i.e. unconverted) cannot please God,* or perform acceptable Service any more than a Thorn can bring forth Figs, or a Thistle Grapes; then it is of the last Moment for us, to begin at the right End of Religion, by enquiring into our Hearts and Principles of Action, and not resting until we come to a scriptural *Conclusion* about our present State. If it be good, we need the Comfort of it, in a World of Labor and Sorrow; if bad, we need to know it, that so we may be affected with Miseries of it, and so with Earnestness use proper Means to obtain an Escape. If Men know not the Miseries of their natural State, how shall they be duly affected with what they know not? And if they be not deeply affected, how can it be reasonably supposed that they will use Violence to take the Kingdom of God? And without a holy Violence or Importunity, what Reason is there to expect an interest in it?

Conscience and Credit excite many Men to take some Care of their outward Actions, and having done this, they rest securely with the old Pharisees: Many nowadays cleanse the *outside* of the Cup and Platter, but leave the inside foul and neglected.

This being the Case of Multitudes at this Time, Is it not necessary to sound the Alarm of God's Judgments; to cry

aloud and not spare, to show to *Judah* their Transgressions, and the House of *Jacob* their Sins? To try by the Terrors of the Lord to persuade Men? For this we have the Example of our Savior in the Text under our present Consideration; which, doubtless, however it may seem to the Sons of this Generation, was a terrible Paradox in the Age in which it was spoken! For then the Scribes and Pharisees had the greatest Fame for Religion, and took more Pains about it than any others; so that the people of that Age had a common Proverb, That if but two were saved, one would be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee.

Seeing that Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel, it is well worth our Labor, to enquire Upon what Terms and Interests therein may be obtained. To this our Lord gives a plain and pungent Answer, in the Words of the Text, which inform us, That except our Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

By the *Kingdom of Heaven* here, we are not to understand the visible Church, as elsewhere the Term is taken, but the Seat of the Blessed; for we have too great Reason to believe, That many who have not a Righteousness

exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, are too easily admitted as Members of the visible Church.

The lax Method of Admission to sacred Communion, which has too generally obtained among the *Protestant Churches*, more especially of late, has been, I believe, one great Cause of the lamentable Decay of Religion in them! This, the first Fathers of this Country, who had much of the Simplicity and Power of the Religion of Christ, were very sensible of, as appeared by their Practice respecting Church Fellowship.

But however Hypocrites may, by their specious Pretences deceive and intrude, or by the Carelessness of Watchmen obtain a Place in the *visible Church*, yet they shall in no Case enter into the *invisible viz. the Kingdom of Heaven*; all their Pleas and Pretences will be baffled and rejected, their Mouths shut, and their false Hopes turned into everlasting Dispair [*sic*] and Horror!

The Paradise of God is compared to a Kingdom, to signify the Order and Harmony that there subsists, as well as the impregnable Strength of the Place, and the universal perpetual Subjection of all its Inhabitants, to the Empire of the great GOD, the King of Kings.

Now in order to explain the solemn Proposition of our Savior in the Words before us, I intend to pursue the following Method,

[Propositions]

In the first Place show, *what the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was.* And

Secondly, *Wherein we must exceed them upon Pain of Death.* And

Thirdly, Offer some things to *confirm and illustrate* the Proposition. We return to the first.

[1: What the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was]

The Scribes were Writers of the Law, and the Pharisees a strict religious Sect of the *Jews*, who trusted they were righteous and despised others, of these many were publick [sic] Teachers of others. But before I speak of the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, I would premise this, viz. That I intend to discourse upon the Attainments of the strictest of them, and that with this View, that what shall be said may have the greater Tendency to convince the Secure.

Some of the Pharisees were gross Hypocrites, who took up a Cloak of Religion, in order to secure worldly Gain; for a *Pretence they made long Prayers*, that they might

devour Widows Houses. Some were much for Ostentation in Alms-giving, and other Duties. But we are not to imagine that this was the Character and Temper of the whole Sect. No, not at all; the *young Man* of the Gospel, *Paul* before his Conversion, and the foolish Virgins were of another Stamp and Disposition; they had a moral Integrity and Seriousness. Now *Brethren*, Until we exceed the highest Reach of the best Sort of the Pharisees and all other Hypocrites that have been upon the Stage of Time, I can't see that we have the least Ground for Peace and Quiet.

The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees may be said to consist in these two Generals, viz. 1st, In a certain *Blamelessness or Freedom from gross Crimes.* And *secondly*, In a strict *Conformity to the moral and ceremonial Laws.*

As to the Law, *Paul*, while a Pharisee, was *blameless*, Phil. 3 Chap. []. But it may not be improper here to enquire more particularly, How strictly and punctually the Pharisees performed the Duties required by the first and second Table of the moral Law, as to the Letter of them.

[Pharisees were blameless in the following practices]

[As to Duties of Worship] They not only believed that there was a God, but were very zealous in celebrating the Duties of his Worship; they were certainly one of the most

sound and orthodox Sects of the Jewish Nation, much preferable to the Sadducees, (who in many Things resemble our modern infidel Deists), they were diligent in attending publick Prayers at the stated Seasons: Hence we find that the Pharisee is said, by our Lord, to go with the Publican to the Temple to pray; as, no doubt many of both sorts do this Night. They were also strict in observing the Duties of Family-Religion; which some think is intended by that Passage of our Lord respecting them, viz. That they prayed standing in the Corners of the Streets, *i.e.* say they, in Corners of Houses; they were not ashamed to perform the Duties of Religion in the most public and conspicuous Places, altho' they must needs know, that this would expose them, in all probability, to the Taunts and the Fleers of the Sadducees, who could not brook even so much as the dead Form of Religion! This is a greater Length than many Pretenders to Christianity come now-a-days, who, when they come to irreligious Places, soon lay aside their Form, and turn with the Tide.

[As to *Prayer*] The old Pharisees prayed secretly many scores of Times in a Day, they had Prayers suited to every Occurrence, which they punctually us'd. It is storied of them, that some of that Sect, in order to excite themselves to secret Devotion in the night Season, were used to put a

brass Bowl by their Bed-side, and hold a Bullet in their Hand, that so by the Bullet's falling into the Bowl, they might be alarmed to Prayer.

[As to Veneration of *God's Name* and Respect of the *Sabbath*] The Pharisees had also a great Veneration for God's Name: they wouldn't mention the Name of JEHOVAH in their common Discourse. And so strict were they in the Observation of the Sabbath, that they superstitiously charg'd our Lord with a Breach of it, for doing Works of Necessity and Mercy, in healing the Sick, and relieving the Necessities of Nature.

[As to *Honesty*;) The Fame which the Pharisees obtain'd and retained as to Religion, necessarily supposes, That a Number of them were strictly honest in their Dealings with Men; for whatsoever Regard Men may pretend to the duties of the first Table of the Law, yet if they observe not the Laws of Honesty, in civil Life, they'll soon crack their Credit.

As to *Chastity*; the Pharisees were so strict, that it is reported of them that they wore deep brimmed Hats, least through the Windows of the Senses, their Minds should be stained by tempting Objects, and thus indulge unchaste Meditations.

[As to *Missionary Activity*] It is certain, that the old Pharisees, had a *Zeal for the Good of the Souls* of their Fellow-Creatures, and this they expressed by much Pain and Labor: They compassed Sea and Land, to make Proselytes [sp] to their Sect. Their Zeal was ting'd with that of a party Spirit; and thus it is with their Successors at this Day. There are many rigid *Bigotts* of all Sects, who are more zealous about *tithing Mint, and Annis, and Cummin,* than about the *weightier Matters of the Law!* more studious to proselite People to their several *Parties,* than to CHRIST. All that are justified by CHRIST'S Blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, upon Earth, will doubtless agree in Heaven; and therefore they should not justle³ in the Way to it.

We are informed, Luke 18.11,12 That *the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, GOD I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican: I fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all I possess.*

But to explain and illustrate this Head of Discourse, let me offer a few Instances more.

[Example of *Young Man in the Gospel*]

³A verb meaning 'jostle'.

That of the *young Man in the Gospel*, is very memorable: He was concerned about the Salvation of his Soul; he gave our Lord a civil Salutation, *Good Master*, said he, *What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* And in his Answer to our Savior, he asserted, that *he had kept all this Laws from his Youth up (i.e. outwardly)* which our Lord did not contradict. Which of you now in this great Assembly exceeds that *young Pharisee?*

[Example of *Paul* before Conversion]

The next Instance I would mention, is that of *Paul* before his Conversion, of which we have an Account, *Phil.* 3d Chap. He says of himself, *That if any Man thinketh, that he hath whereof he might trust in the Flesh, (i.e. in his own Righteousness) he more.* He further adds, *That he was of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of Hebrews; touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning Zeal, persecuting the Church; as touching the Righteousness which is in the Law, blameless.* Well, *my Fathers and Brethren*, See what a dreadful Pitch in Religion this *Pharisee* came to, and yet was not so much as convinced! Which of you now exceeds the Attainments of this Man, while under the Curse of CHRIST? Don't say within your selves, that you have *Abraham* to your Father. What will your good Parentage avail you, unless you walk in the Steps of their

Simplicity, Faith, and Holiness, but to aggravate your everlasting Pains? because of your rebellious and ungrateful opposing of the Light of their Instructions and Examples! May I not say unto, as my Master once did to the *Jews*, *Ye are of your Father the Devil; for his Works you will do.* A *Pagan* could say, *Quoe avi et proavi*, &c. What our Parents and Grandparents have done, are not ours. Think not that your being admitted to outward Ordinances will screen you from GOD's Vengeance; this was the foolish Confidence of the carnal *Jews*, who said, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, are these.* *Saul*, a Pharisee, was circumcised, and no doubt he partook of the Passover: Do you depend upon the soundness of your Sect, and inoffensiveness of your Life; why *Saul* was of the strictest Sect of the *Jews*, and as to the Law, blameless.

[Example of *foolish Virgins*]

The last Instance I shall mention, under this Head, is, that of the *foolish Virgins*, recorded *Matt. 25th* Chap. Were they not called *Virgins* because of their *chaste* and *regular* Conversation; did they not carry Lamps, which shows their Company with the Wife, which supposes that they had some Love to those that were *truly* good? And are not their Lamps said to go out? Which speaks forth the Moving they once had in their Affections towards God and Goodness, like

the stony-ground Hearers, who are said to *receive the Seed of the Word with Joy*, but wanting Root, in Time of Temptation fall away. Had they not a strong confidence that they should be kindly accepted of at last by the Bridegroom? Had not the wise Virgins a good Opinion of them, and did they not take Pains themselves to prepare for the Bridegroom's Coming? And yet, behold and tremble, ye *Pharisees!* when the Bridegroom did come, the marriage chamber Door was stove in their Faces: O confounding dreadful Disappointment! Take Care, Friends, lest after all your soundness in Principle, strictness of Life, Love to God's People, religious Affections, Pains and Confidence, the Door of Mercy, of Hope, and Salvation ben't⁴ shut against you, by and by, forever!

But I proceed to consider the

Second general Head of Discourse, which was, To show wherein we must exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees* upon Pain of Death. I answer, in two Instances, We must receive that Righteousness of the Saviour by *Imputation* which they rejected; and have an inward Righteousness by *Implantation*, which they wanted. And,

I. I say, We must have an outward Righteousness by *Imputation*, which the *Pharisees* rejected.

⁴ 'Be not'

The Pharisees, as to the outward Part of Duty, did well; but herein they unhappily fail'd, they depended upon their Doings for Acceptance with God; they trusted in their own Righteousness and despised others. Yea, they slighted Christ himself, for as *Jesus* observed, *The Whole need no Physician, but the Sick*; they heal'd their flighty Wounds by their dead Performances, and thus remained insensible of their absolute Need of an *almighty* Physician! *Being ignorant of the Righteousness of GOD (i.e., of the Righteousness of the Messiah, which was of God the Father's sending out and Acceptance) and going about to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to the Righteousness of GOD.* They fought after Righteousness (or Justification) and did not find it, because they fought it *not of Faith (i.e. wholly by the Righteousness of Christ, which Faith can only apprehend) but as it were, by the Works of the Law.* Observe, They didn't seek it wholly by the Works of the Law, but in *part*: They thought that their Obedience would do *something* towards their Acceptance with God; that the Almighty would be induc'd hereby to pitty [sp] and pardon them, and that it would be hard Treatment, if the Almighty should reject them, after all their good Meaning's Harmlessness, and religious Labors.

But, to bring the Matter a little closer, for the Discovery of Hypocrites, let it be observ'd, That those who receive the *outward* Righteousness of CHRIST as Mediator, are *first* convinc'd by the Law and Spirit, of their *Want* of Righteousness, according to the Promise of our Savior in his humbled State, *John* 16. 8,9⁵. and these Convictions are full, clear, constant; the Sinner is so convinc'd of Sin, in Life, Heart, State, and has such a View of the Certainty, Dreadfulness, and Eternity of that Damnation he is hereby exposed to, that he deeply distressed in Heart, (*a wounded Spirit who can bear?*) and cannot rest 'till he finds JESUS: And that which encreases [sp] his Uneasiness, is the Sight and sorrowful Sense he has of his Ignorance and Inability to help himself out of his present State of Sin and Misery; and the Despair he has in the Help of all mere Creatures. These Things are set in a strong Light, by that beautiful Passage, in the Epistle of *Paul* to the Romans, 7th Chap. And 3rd Verse, where he says, That *he was alive without the Law once: i.e.* before the Law was opened in its spiritual Breadth by the Holy Ghost to his Mind, and set home with irresistible Energy upon his Heart; he was

⁵John 16:8,9 "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me." (NIV)

alive to *himself*, as his *last End*, to the Law as a Covenant of Works; he expected to *gain* Life by the Law; he was also imaginarily alive, and was very perk and merry, as all natural Men are, before they are wounded by the Law. Its a sad Sight to behold how merrily they go on to Damnation; like Fools in *Bedlam*, they sing and dance in their Shackles: But when the Law comes, *Sin* revives in their View, both as to its Numbers, Aggravations, and Condemnation, like a Lyon [sp] rampant, ready every moment to devour them! *Then*, and not 'till then, the Sinner *dies to himself*, dies to the Law, dies to his former false Peace and Hope, and dies to all worldly Hopes, Fears, and Enjoyments! The Law slays him, and he thro' the Law, as an Instrument, open'd and applied, dies to the Law, as a Covenant of Works. In this Case the poor Creature cannot rest, until CHRIST be revealed and applied to his Soul, by the Word and Spirit of GOD.

Now, When the sick Sinner has got a Discovery of CHRIST'S Fullness, Suitableness, and Willingness to help the Distressed; being sensible of his absolute Need of JESUS, in all his Offices and Relations, he receives him in every of them; and is willing, not only to be govern'd by his Law, but to bear his Cross, in its utmost Extent.

And here let it be observed, That Faith, which receives the Righteousness of CHRIST, has effectual Influence upon the Heart and Practice, it *purifies the Heart, works by Love, and overcomes the World.*

Those Persons who receive the imputed Righteousness of CHRIST, know what it is to be *poor in Spirit*; what it is to have Peace of Conscience, after Distress, upon the Application of Christ to their Souls; as also what it is to have the Love of God spread abroad in their Hearts experimentally; they have a *Tenderness* for God's Honor, Kingdom and People. The

2d Particular, In which we must exceed the Righteousness of the *Scribes* and Pharisees, upon pain of Death, in this, We must have an *inward* Righteousness by *Implantation, or Infusion*, thro' the Spirit, which they wanted.

The *Pharisees* failed in the main Spring of Action: They wanted the *New-Birth*: They were utterly destitute of holy *Principles*, without which, *Actions* cannot be good; they serv'd God in the *oldness of the Letter*, but not in the *newness of the Spirit*. Although the *Matter* of their Actions was good, yet because they perform'd them by their own Strength, and for their own Ends, chiefly; that GOD,

who is a Spirit, and to whom spiritual Service is only acceptable, rejected them.

When there is a Fault in the *main Spring* of a Clock, the Motion must be stopped for a Time, and the main Spring set right, before it will answer its Design in measuring of the Hours: And thus must it be with graceless Sinners; they must, by Examination and Conviction, be brought to a solemn Pause, and then get a new Principle of Action infused by the New-Birth, which will naturally and necessarily turn the free and general Byass [sp] of their whole Souls towards GOD, and so prepare them for, and dispose them to acceptable service.

Now those that are born of the Spirit, receive the Kingdom of God as *little Children*, and generally favor most the Things of the Spirit; as little Children hunger after the Milk of the Breast, thus do they desire after the *sincere Milk of the Word*, i.e. the Truths of CHRIST, spoken simply and savourily from the Heart, without the vain Affection of humane Wit and Eloquence. Little Children mourn at the Absence of their Parents, and grow in stature; thus those who are born of the Spirit, bitterly bewail Christ's Absence, and insatiably thirst and honestly labor for Growth in Knowledge, Holiness, and Usefulness; but Pharisees are contented with their dead dry Round of

Duties, tho' they make no more Progress than a Door on the Hinges, or a turnspit Dog in a Wheel.

From those that are born of the Spirit, *old Things pass away, and all Things become new*: Their old false Peace, false Hope, Hatred against God's Ways and People, Pride of Heart, Covetousness, and worldly Conversation pass away; and now they see divine Things in a new and affecting Manner, and have a new Pliableness [sic] of Will, readily⁶ to comply with the Terms of the Gospel, a new Run of their Affections to God as their Center, a new Tenderness of Conscience, a new Love to Enemies, a new and heavenly Conversation.

I proceed to consider the

3d General Head of Discourse, which was to offer some Considerations tending to *confirm* and illustrate the Proposition of our Lord, in the Text we treat upon.

And here I may observe, That an outward, or *pharisaical* Righteousness, does not answer the Demands of the Law, which proceeding from a pure and perfect Spirit, requires not only an outward but an inward and compleat [sic] Conformity to it: A Pharisaical Righteousness is

⁶Context suggests this should be 'ready to comply', not 'readily to comply'.

defective, and the Law curses for the *least Defect*, Gal 3.10.

Neither does a pharisaical Righteousness answer the *Demands* of the Gospel, because it wants those main Principles of acceptable Service, which the Gospel requires, Namely, *Faith* and *Love*; without which, *whatever we do* is Sin.

A pharisaical Righteousness can neither prepare us for nor entitle us to eternal Blessedness; because it may consist with a governing Enmity against God, his Ways and People. This is evident from the Example of the *old Pharisees*, who not withstanding their *Strictness*, were *virulent Opposers* of Christ and his Followers. And here, *My Brethren*, Let me observe, That if this Work of GOD which is more remarkably begun in *New England* of late, be carried on, you will see some that profess the greatest Regard to Religion now, stand up and oppose it with implacable Hate. *Formalists* cannot brook the *Power* of Religion, our Lord and his Apostles were not opposed by any, so much as by that *Sett [sic]* of Men. Although *Pharisees* make a *fair Shew* in the Flesh, yet are the main Springs of their Obedience, mean and ignoble.

Some are brought to this outward *Strictness*, merely by the Force of a *religious Education*; long Custom makes the

Performance of Duties easy, as it were a second Nature, so that it creates Uneasiness to neglect them.

Some are regular in Life, thro' *Want of much Temptation* to the contrary. The Devil does not tempt the *Secure* much, least he should scare them out of his Clutches. While the *strong Man armed keeps the House, all the Goods are in Peace*. What tho' a *Rattle-Snake* does not spit its *Venom* in the Winter, for want of the warming Beams of the Sun, yet it has the *poisonous Nature* of a *Snake* still.

Some obtain *Credit* among their fellow Creatures, or to preserve it when obtained, labor for the *outward Form*: This is their main Motive, and a wretched one it is.

Some are careful in the outward Duties of Religion, chiefly in order to *acquire* or *preserve Peace of Mind*.

Some perform this outward Obedience, as *Slaves*, principally to escape the Whip of eternal Damnation: If you hold a Whip over a Dog's Head, it will scare him from snatching at a Bone, which notwithstanding he has a great Love to.

Others perform this pharisaical Obedience as *Hirelings*, chiefly out of Respect to the Wages; they imagine that their rotten Truck of graceless Prayers, and other dead Duties, will do something towards the purchasing

of God's Favour for them. They think that if they do what they can, the Almighty will be in their Debt, their Salvation will be certain. They imagine that the Lord will be induc'd by their Doings, to show them Kindness rather than Others. *But it is not him that willeth, nor him that runneth, but of GOD that showeth Mercy.*

Thus you may see, *Brethren*, That all this outward Obedience, inasmuch as it springs not from *Love to God* for himself, as its main Principle, but from *selfish Respects*, is mean and sordid, and though it has a fair Sun, yet it is, upon the aforesaid Account, rotten at the Core.

The IMPROVEMENT of this Subject remains.

And here, *My Fathers and Brethren*, I would solemnly in the Name of the great GOD, my Lord and Master, ask you, *What you think of your State towards GOD?* Pray have you a Righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or have you not? Pause a while, *my Brethren*, and let your Consciences give an impartial Answer to this important Question: O Conscience! I charge thee, in the Name of the great GOD, to speak the Truth: Is it so, that our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, upon Pain of eternal Death? O what Terror

does this speak to those, who habitually *fall short* of their moral Righteousness!

The Pharisees abounded in the *Duties of Devotion*: What will become of you then, who knowingly and generally neglect secret or family Devotion, or attending the Places of public Worship? Will not God's Wrath be poured out upon the Families that call not on his Name? If you despise those who are sent by Christ, do you not despise Christ who has sent them, and his Father also? If the Foolishness of Preaching (*i.e.* a *simple Method* of Preaching, from the Heart, without the Affectation of Wit or Eloquence, which is reckon'd, by the worldly Wise, Foolishness) be the appointed Mean of saving those that believe, then how shall those be saved who do not attend upon it?

The Pharisees had a great Veneration for *the holy Name of GOD*, and were strict Observers of the *Sabbath*. What then shall become of you wicked Creatures, who customarily prophane [*sic*] his holy Name, and violate his sacred Rest? Surely the righteous GOD will not hold you guiltless.

Were the Pharisees *honest, chaste, charitable, zealous*? Then how dreadful is your State, who fall short habitually of those Hypocrites, upon whom our Lord denounced so many Curses? Are not some of you habitually dishonest, unchaste, uncharitable, and lukewarm about

Religion? Does not a terrible Damnation await you? Surely the Lord will spew such sordid Wretches out of his Mouth, *i.e.* reject you with eternal Abhorrence.

You prophane [*sic*] Herd of *hardened* Mortals, who have not so much as the outward Form of Religion: Hear, with much Confusion and Trembling, your Damnation denounced by the Mouth of Christ, in the Text I am now discoursing upon; *For I say unto you* (who am the Truth and the life) *that except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* All ye Publicans and Harlots, behold your dismal Doom expressed, *1 Cor. 6. 19.*⁷ [in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God!"] *Imprime Verba.*

But perhaps you will say, in your Excuse, I do exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, for I

⁷1 Corinthians 6:19 must be a typographical error. I suggest the verse is 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. Tennent did not write out this verse, although he probably quoted it verbatim.

believe and *trust* in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, which they did not; and I am *sincere*, thank God, but they were gross Hypocrites: Therefore I scorn your Comparison! Answer, I say, stay Friend, not so hasty neither; suffer me, for thy Conviction, to speak a Word in behalf of the old Pharisees. You say, you believe and trust in Christ: Well: But what is Faith? You can't tell. I suppose you never saw you were without Faith; never felt your Inability to believe; never felt Opposition made by Satan against your faith; never felt the Effects of Faith on Heart or Life; it's probable your Faith never had so much Influence upon you, as the Faith of the Devils upon them, for they *believe* and *tremble*. You needn't boast of your dead *hypocritical* Faith; you'll surely go to the Devil with it, if you get no better. You say, you *trust in Christ*: Ay, *trust*; without Difficulty; with a whole Heart and unholy Practice: Why, you trust in the Devil, and not in CHRIST; for you have no Word of Christ to trust upon, while in your present Condition. You say, you are *sincere*; but what is *Sincerity*? It's like you can't tell; What were you never without it; has it cost you nothing; no Sorrow, no Mourning; then you are without it still. Why your Sincerity is nothing but a *moral Earnestness* in seeking *yourselves* as your *last End*: And had not the Pharisees

this? Yes, they had, witness *Saul*, and the *young Man* in the Gospel.

Thus it appears, That your Righteousness does not exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and therefore, so continuing, *ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD.*

Dear Brethren and Fathers; Are there not a great Number in this large Assembly, of old, middle-aged, and young persons, who have not exceeded the Righteousness mentioned? You, *aged persons*, What say ye to this? Is not your Religion a mere dead Form, accompanied only with some selfish Earnestness? Are ye not Strangers to the receiving of that outward and inward Righteousness before expressed? Search your Bosoms by what has been said, and see if ye be not in the Gall of Bitterness. I know its hard for *old secure Professors* to begin again, and cast away their false Hopes; its hard, I confess; but yet its harder to be damned. Chuse [*sic*] you which you will.

And you *middle-aged People*, of thirty Years old and upwards, I ask you, in the Name of the great GOD, wherein do you exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? Don't you know in your own Consciences, that many of you are unacquainted with Poverty of Spirit, and the new Birth?

And you, *my younger Brethren*, of fourteen Years and upwards; are not many of you in the same doleful Case? Poor Things, Does not this Text condemn you to Hell, if you continue thus?

I would not pass over the *little Children*, of six Years old and upwards: Although the haughty Pharisees should in their great Wisdom, sneer at my Simplicity; You, dear *little ones*, are not many of you also Strangers to the new Birth? My blessed Master has said, *Suffer little Ones to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*. You are not too young, dear little Creatures! to mourn over Sin, and to come to Christ.

How wretched is the Case of all the *Formalists* in this Assembly? Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, ye make clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, while the inside is left unclean: You are like whited Sepulchers, which appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead Men's Bones, and Rottenness: Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how shall ye escape the Damnation of Hell? Behold, the Ax is laid to the Root of the Tree, every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the Fire.

All you *Publicans* and *Pharisees*, in this Assembly, apply to your own Consciences, the Threatening of our Lord

in this Text, *Ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of GOD.* No! let the Devil, and your own false hearts, say what they will to flatter you; the Mouth of Truth says, That ye shall, in no Case, enter into the Kingdom of God. The Door of Heaven is shut against you, and seeing there is no *Purgatory*, where must ye go, why into the Kingdom of Death, of Darkness, of the Devil, of Damnation! There (if ye die as ye are) ye will suffer the Loss of the blessed God, and all the Sweets of Heaven. Now your Minds are blinded, your Consciences stupefied, your Hearts hardened, so that you don't perceive your Loss, and ye are amused with worldly Projects, and entertainments: But by and by, your minds will be enlightened to take a View of your dismal, dismal Loss! Your secure Consciences will be alarmed, to sting you with eternal Reflections, which ye can as little endure as avoid. Your cursed Hope, which makes you easy now, will then give Place to eternal Despair! GOD will rend your Confidence out of your Tabernacle, and bring you before the King of Terrors! You will be stripped naked of all your temporal Comforts, and not have so much as one Drop of Water to cool your flaming Tongues! The Springs of your now frozen Passion, will then be opened, and run with incessant, but useless Streams, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth!* Saith our

dear Lord. Never did any so mourn over the untimely Bereavement of a dear Relative, as you will over your lost and damned Souls! But in vain! Now if you would sow in Tears, it might be of saving Service: But then it will be too late, too late! O when you think in the gloomy Vault, of the Calls, Warnings, and Entreaties you have had from GOD and Man, and of your willful Murder and Madness, in rejecting of them, how will it rend your cursed Souls, with the acutest Agonies, when you reflect how you have sold your Souls to the Devil, for a Thing of Naught, and taken such Pains to compass your own Ruin? You will be ready to tear your own Hearts out with indignation, and wish you had no Being!

Think, *my Friends*, How dreadful it will be to fall into the Hands of the living GOD! And to be swallowed up in the burning Main of his flaming Jealousy! To have your naked Souls eternally lashed with the Whip of his incensed Indignation!

O how shocking it is, to be exposed to intolerable, continual, inexpressible, unconceivable, unavoidable, and eternal Pains!

Ye *secure Sinners*, think on these Things, till you be awakened, for ye must be awakened, or damned!

You that are but *slightly convinced*, O think on these Things, in order to get your Convictions fastened and riveted. I am jealous over you, *my dear Brethren*, with a godly Jealousy, lest your Convictions die away of their own Accord, or be slightly healed. O don't rest, for Christ's Sake, till Jesus be discovered and applied to your Souls! Think often upon the Uncertainty of your Lives, the Uncertainty of the Spirit's Strivings, and the dreadful Consequences of expiring Convictions, before Conversion. When the Blossoms are nipped, what Expectation is there of Fruit? Don't rush to the Lord's Table, till ye receive that Jesus, who is there, represented.

One Word I must say to those that are *deeply convinced* of their Want of Righteousness. Dear Creatures! There is a *Balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there*; the Lord JESUS has come to *seek and save those that are lost*. He has received a Commission from his Father, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort the Mourners: He invites you that labor and are heavy laden to come to him, and he says he will give them Rest. He is able to save the uttermost, all that come to the Father by him, and he that cometh, he says, he will in no wise cast them off. Don't be discouraged upon the Account of any Opposition that may be made against you, or Contempt that may be cast upon you,

in your Way to CHRIST, either by *Pharisees* or *Publicans*.
Some are so perverse that they will neither enter into the
Kingdom themselves, nor suffer those that are entering to
enter: Methinks they might be contented with their own
Damnation. *Dear Brethren, and Sisters!* Let not those
Things dismay you, it is an Honor to be dishonored by such
People: What are the Trifles that we can suffer here, in
Comparison of the Weight of Glory before us? Go on
therefore, in the Name of GOD, seeking Jesus, sorrowing
till ye find him. *Which, may GOD grant, for CHRIST'S sake.*

Amen.

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